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Morality Without Borders

A Vision of Humanity as Community

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Abstract

Identity politics is on the rise, and not only in America, but throughout the world. It is an inherent nationalism, and when unbridled and unchecked, unleashes an exclusive ethic into society appealing, not to an expansive moral ought, but one that is narrow and provincial, condemning and vilifying. The fact of national diversity and the imprint of dissimilar value orientations often cause fear and insecurity among groups and sub-groups who are apt to condense their value-orientation vis-à-vis their national or cultural identity, promoting ethical relativism and neglecting core human values. With a diminishing of religion's consecrated and sanctified moral vision, many are falling upon an idealized version of national identity to set the parameters of their moral horizon. This is often expressed as a "moral superiority" implying the dominance of certain traditions and customs over those of others. We must be reminded that autocracy, national or religious, can be a tool of anyone seeking moral supremacy.

Looking back, history teaches that putting up constrictive, dogmatic borders is morally destructive, fencing out those with different views and stifling dialogue and civility within and without. Obviously, putting up ideological boundaries is apt to enclose those who profess a restrictive and/or superior ethic to unproductive and morality corrosive values. Being ethnocentric and tribal seems natural as there is a desire to protect our most cherished beliefs claiming moral superiority. Values are what define us; they are the substance of whom we are and reveal our commitments and convictions and their assumed authority. But our values can also limit our moral acuity, narrowing moral focus and diminishing its energy, unseeking of the commonalities that bind humanity to humanity. Clearly, it's time to change this truncated narrative from an exclusive ethic to a morality without borders, exemplified as humanity as community.

Authoritarianism, displaying autocratic and anti-egalitarian values, is repressive and results in a limited and often amoral view of others. This we are witnessing today from all corners of the political spectrum, and not only in America, but elsewhere as well. For advancing a vision of the morally possible, an inclusive and expansive moral "ought" is needed, but terribly difficult to achieve or even articulate given the fact of cultural diversity, but we try. As Thomas Donaldson (1996, p.52) has noted, "We all learn ethics in the context of our particular cultures, and the power in the principles is deeply tied to the way in which they are expressed. Internationally accepted lists of moral principles, such as the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, draw on many cultural and religious traditions. As philosopher Michael Walzer (1983) has noted, 'There is no

Esperanto (an artificial language devised in 1887 as an international medium of communication, based on roots from the chief European languages) of global ethics.”

We simply express our view of a global ethic as a “moral human ecology” supportive of an unrestrained moral vision drawing both humanity and the environment into its definitive natural fiber. How often we write in abstractions and generalities forgetting the people about whom we talk. Their needs and the inhumanity heaped upon them are seldom noticed. There is some distance between us and others, but with empathy and care and an unrestrictive vision of others, this fissure can be closed. Differing customs and traditions require our reconsideration and respect. What we expose is an ethic of diversity seeking those basic and common values grounded in the idea of “humanity” itself. Given the present-day discombobulation of value, especially moral value, as witnessed in present-day politics, nuclear proliferation, human exploitation and misery in Central America, and continuous war in both Africa and the Middle East, “morality without borders” presents a guiding metaphor beckoning our attention. “Humanity as Community” marks its location for it is a global imperative. Its possibilities are endless as it can become a beacon of hope in a divided world. But don’t expect miracles; this will be a slow and evolutionary process as we naturally hold our values close, seldom unleashing them for public scrutiny.

Philosophically, more than words are needed and more than well-crafted arguments are required for human rights, understood as moral rights, to be judiciously spread around the world. Commitment, respect, planning, and action are also required. For those who are leaders in human rights proliferation as well as ordinary people whose voices need to be heard, this is an enabling vision. It acknowledges the essence of humanity as moral and does not contradict what the religiously oriented call the “sacredness of human life.” It also acknowledges the principles foundational to human rights, such as fairness and justice, decency and responsibility, and the importance of human dignity, integrity, nurture, and care. Not mere generalities, these values are drawn from personal and collective experience and an unhampered propensity to care for others. To say they are innate (Haidt, 2012, p. 31) is perhaps an overreach, but to recognize their human importance is not. As ethicist Kurt Baier pointed out in 1971 (p. 810), morality looks at the world from the point of view of everyone, that “...to be moral...is to recognize that others too, have a right to a worthwhile life.”

Introduction

Seeking what identifies us collectively is not, as some believe it to be, self-denying, but is self-affirming, with the possibility of enriching the depth of moral purpose and ethical sensitivity. This identification can be expressed simply as “humanity as community.” Notably, the assumptions brought to this discussion are as important as the explanations given. Thus, no claim to moral objectivity or moral superiority is made as this thesis is simply a rational confirmation of what is believed and intuitively sensed about humanity. Admittedly, this presupposes that all persons, regardless of culture, religious affiliation, ethnicity, race, or gender identification are, as Kurt Baier (1965, p. 366) said, “...equally important centers of craving, impulses, desires, needs, aims, and aspirations; as people with ends of their own, all of which are entitled, prima facie [without extenuating circumstances], to be attained.” Baier (1969, p. 42) further commented, “Let it be granted, then, that principles of behavior can be recommended to everybody if they successfully promote the best possible life for every-

body, and that the best possible life for everybody cannot be achieved in isolation but only in social contexts in which the pursuits of each impinge on the pursuits of others.”

Understanding Baier’s moral directive compels self-reflection, avoiding adherence to an exclusive ethic as morality is essentially a social undertaking. Given the actuality of cultural diversity, we should not fall into the false dilemma asserting that cultural diversity implies ethical relativism. The traditions and practices of societies and cultures change over time, albeit slowly. The interactions of nations and the people within testify to their acknowledgment of core beliefs and common values. Of course, there are those within every society who advocate more narrow views and consider their values superior to others. Also, within such cultures there are many who recognize their innate commonality with others seeking to lift the horizon of their moral acuity. Human nature is not a fixed target, but continues to change, hopefully grasping the moral nature of humanity continuously seeking an inclusive morality.

R. A. Shweder (1990, as noted by Jonathan Haidt, 2012, pp. 166 ff.), has given attention to three major clusters of moral themes that will enlighten this explication: the ethics of autonomy, community, and divinity. An ethic of autonomy is based on the idea that people are self-directed individuals with needs, wants, and personal preferences. Adhering to this ethic only promotes individualism, personal choice, and, in the end, cultural relativism, but, as Haidt points out, its inherent narcissism is potentially community destructive. Supporting this view is Thomas Donaldson (1996, p. 51) who commented, “Cultural relativism is morally blind.” That is, there are fundamental values that cross cultures and, when recognized, from a moral point of view, should be upheld.

An ethic of community understands that people identify themselves as members of larger entities such as families, political parties, and nations, etc. It also understands that many have a limited understanding of community, seeking to narrow its province and its focus. Morally significant, “humanity as community” expands our view of others, our communal interdependence, and the importance of human decency and service. It encourages a morality without conceptual borders. Unsurprisingly, within nations and communities, there is a wide array of values, prioritized differently, requiring dialogue among their citizens. Lest we hover in an inherent moral exclusivity, these values must be flushed out and their overarching moral identity-markers recognized, prioritized, and brought to the forefront of policy-making where consensus and foundation-building are able to grow moral awareness. Donaldson (1996, p. 52) recommends three guiding principles for shaping ethical behavior across cultures: (1) Respect for core human values, which determine the absolute moral threshold for all [international] activities. (2) Respect for local traditions. (3) When deciding what is right and what is wrong, the belief that context matters. Under the theme of “managing for organizational integrity,” Donaldson continues, “Respecting differences is a crucial ethical practice. Research shows that management ethics differ among cultures; respecting those differences means recognizing that some cultures have obvious weaknesses—as well as hidden strengths. ... People often equate respect for local traditions with cultural relativism. That is incorrect. Some practices are clearly wrong. ... Some activities are wrong no matter where they take place. But some practices that are unethical in one setting may be acceptable in another. For instance, the chemical EDB, a soil fungicide, is banned for use in the United States. In hot climates, however, it quickly becomes harmless through exposure to intense solar radiation and high soil temperatures. As long as the chemical is monitored, companies may be able to use EDB ethically in certain parts of the world.” Donaldson’s prin-

ciples, although not absolute, are a practical guide to civil discourse concerning global ethical practices.

Finally, an ethic of divinity focuses on the idea that people believe themselves to be servants of a higher being and should behave accordingly. This is a spiritual view of humanity variously articulated in differing religious cultures necessitating cultural as well as individual sensitivity. Notably, among the great monotheistic religions advocating care, nurture, and love as their guiding ethic, there is among them many whose moral vision is diminished by attitudes of superiority, perfectionism, and/or exclusivity. This diminishing further denigrates the underlying assumptions of their faith; namely, the significance and, perhaps sacredness, of all humanity. Many who are religious have put up walls of protection and exclusivity which remain as mental and emotional barriers to a comprehensive moral understanding of “humanity.” Remembering that “walls” naturally fence us in narrowing our focus, a morality without borders expands opportunities for gathering all humanity into a universal moral perspective.

There is hope, for many understand their individuality is connected to a larger community of friends and fellow travelers. Individual goals are important, and many have learned that to be successful their goals must be pursued in the context of others. Wisely, Haidt (p. 117) said to pursue individual goals without community perspective is “to weaken the social fabric and destroy the institutions and collective entities upon which everyone depends.” Consequently, one does not have to apologize for their values orientation, only display a willingness to re-consider their beliefs with regard to the values of others, seeking consensus – harmony and accord – within the value-context of community, national, and international diversity (Hester, 1975). Human suffering is both individual and collective; it is impossible to morally separate individual pursuits from the collectivity now pervading all nations; human interdependence calls this forth. Without meandering too deeply into religious doctrine, a simple acknowledgement of others, all others, as a sacred trust to be enhanced within the parameters of individual, national, and international moral capability should become a present-day priority. This is possible and a vision of humanity as community, of morality without physical or conceptual borders, is a suitable ethical guide.

Theoretical Framework: “Humanity as Community” A Socio-Philosophical Explication

Humanity as Community

“Humanity as community” is morally foundational. Exploring its moral potential, it can be framed within a broader contingency, *a moral human ecology*. This is a functional prerequisite and a moral priority recognizing all humans, worldwide, as composing a “greater” moral collectivity. This ideal supports reconstructing a more unified and shared moral view. There is moral strength in this identification, but, as Francis Fukuyama (2018, pp. 71 ff.) has pointed out, it is easier to talk about respect and dignity than to come up with potentially costly plans that would reduce inequality throughout the world. Andreas Schüller (2010, pp. 744 ff.) agreed that even with the *Fundamental Standards of Humanity* developed in the 1980s to ensure the protection of individuals in situations where international humanitarian law was not applicable, an invariable derogation of human rights was still possible. No binding document has been adopted applicable in all situations of internal disturbances and tensions.

Recognizing this, morality signifies not only a behavior; it is a condition of the human heart, acknowledging that no standards, commandments, or constitutions, regardless of their origin, are able to coerce morality out of immorality or excite a narcissistic person or nation to abandon innate self-interests. Beneficially, developments in international law, especially international criminal law, international humanitarian law, as well as human rights law have narrowed the gap between what is and what “ought” to be. A moral foundation is the ground floor of this recognition, responding to others, all others, with decency, dignity, respect, and working to relieve hunger, pain and suffering worldwide. (Fukuyama, 2018, pp. 71-81; See also, Jean-Daniel Vigny, Cecilia Thompson, 2000, pp. 31-42)

We are, near and far, heterogeneous and this is the reality of human diversity; yet, understanding “humanity as community” incites an impartial moral perspective which, we believe, each person is capable of assuming. A moral community is inclusive and its greatest enemy is exclusivity revealing attitudes of pre-eminence among some people and nations. Those who evaluate others negatively, excluding and vilifying them because of religious, ethnic, gender or more subtle differences are diminishing not only their personal moral integrity, but their humanity as well. A moral human ecology is an ideal, suggested as a way to help others achieve the best life possible both individually and collectively.

Preferably, individuals will not be taken in by reductionist approaches to knowledge or value or fall in the trap of confusing subjective experiences with objective reality, such as ensconced in “revealed” truth, tradition and heritage, or by politicians espousing a narrow moral view projected as superior to all others, or the distortions often received from the media. And they will not be taken in by sweeping generalizations disparaging either individuals or groups of individuals as fundamentally immoral, criminal, or unworthy of respect and dignity. Such generalities belittle the needs of persons, their hunger and pain, need for food and clothing, housing, health care, and protection from crime and warfare. Although no moral doctrine is needed to recognize the depth of human need, perhaps a moral vision is required for individuals and nations to do something about it. From the borders of the Ukraine and Bosnia, to those of Syria and the American-Mexico divide, and elsewhere, this is an on-going reality.

A moral human ecology expresses a vision defined by cooperation, accommodation, and articulated as a collective moral consciousness. It is a world in which no one is exempt from moral responsibility and implies an open-ended vision revealed in its inclusiveness the possibilities of which have yet to be attained. It is forward-looking and activated in the existential moment of decision-making with a view of how personal and collective actions impact others. To expand moral hope to an enlarged view of “community,” long-range vision is required, not simply short-term goals. Local communities and national pride are important, as well as self-identity, as we all crave recognition of our personal worth, but such recognition doesn’t compel superiority or a condemnation of others. Neither does it require putting up physical and/or conceptual fences. (Fukuyama, 2018, p xiii) This, of course, necessitates self-reflection about the collective and individual value of persons, our own place in the world, and the policies that guide nations. Furthermore, this expresses an ideal expressed as both a moral and social hope, and, more often than not, hope is relationship dependent finding meaning and purpose within community where it musters the energy to move forward.

On Being Human

A curriculum developed for young people – *The Philosophy for Young Thinkers Curriculum* (Hester & Vincent, 1983-1988) began with the question “What is human about humans?” This is a question we all must answer. From a moral point of view, this question recommends we rise above our individuality and embrace our connectivity, understanding that “humanity” exposes our communal and moral dispositions, accepting of shared human traits and needs. So, to juxtapose our individuality against our collectivity as a shared humanity is a false dichotomy revealing acculturated and ethnocentric biases. Morally speaking, “humanity is community.”

Intentionally we have created elaborate political and religious systems reflecting our values and the various definitive sub-cultures of our lives. From a practical as well as moral point of view, we also project a future hope onto our communal landscape often surpassing our political or religious affiliations, even our present lives. This is a moral hope acknowledging our human connections, inside and outside our immediate environs, and encompassing a holistic view defined as “community.”

“A moral human ecology” encompasses this idea as it accentuates the relations of persons (including the living environment) to one another and to their physical and social surroundings. From this perspective, morality is inclusive as it is expansive, emphasizing human rights and dignity for all people, respectful of diversity, and consequence-sensitive. A moral human ecology is also environmentally sensitive asking that we – individuals, corporations, and nations – work to protect the living environment that sustains our lives. This doesn’t imply that morality is simply about ends only, about consequences and results, and it doesn’t deny the outcomes of our behavior as morally and environmentally unimportant. From a moral point of view, both the intentions and consequences of behavior are significant. Also indispensable is the person or persons involved in moral decision-making, especially national leaders and heads of large international corporations. Moral leadership is required at all levels of government, commerce, and industry.

Black Elk, an Oglala Sioux holy man, understood the importance of his moral connection with a world beyond himself when he prayed, “Hear me, four quarters of the world – a relative I am! Give me the strength to walk the soft earth, a relative to all that is! Give me the eyes to see and the strength to understand, that I may be like you. With your power, only can I face the winds.” (“Black Elk Speaks,” 2018) Black Elk’s perception of “community” captures the connective sense of our common humanity. He possessed a “holistic” view including all people and all natural living things, a moral community of persons encompassing the living environment in which we all participate.

A Moral Human Ecology

Following the Black Elk’s prescription will be challenging, but without it a shared vision of a moral human ecology cannot take root. Sociology professor Don R. Killian draws out attention to this vision with the model below:

A MORAL HUMAN ECOLOGY

Personal Value

Purpose: to identify personal values, value differences, and value choices.

Question: Am I free to believe or do anything I want to believe or do?

Cultural Identity

Purpose: to identify the moral principles common to human life.

Question: Are there common moral principles that can guide my life?

Foundation-
Building

Justifying Our Morality

Purpose: to define and give reasons for a universal or common view of morality.

Shared Moral Ground

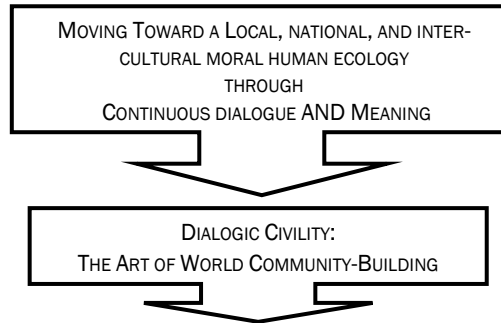
Question: Why should I be moral?

The Moral Ground

Purpose: to define and support an inclusive and common moral point of view of community.

Question: Is a common morality defensible in a global world?

Activation



Early in life, we begin to learn the importance of moral behavior (Haidt, 2012, p. 31 ff.) but as we grow older, we are tasked with expanding our moral propensity from a self-centered disposition to “humanity as community.” This model asks that we acknowledge our collective moral identity, recognize the moral principles we deem humanly essential, and provide reasons and collective opinions moving morality outward into a more unrestrained moral commons. This is no easy task; in fact, it is complex and will expose the stamp of religious and political provincialism. The realities in which we live will often be disorderly requiring great patience and energy to move this vision forward. Much effort is needed and try we must.

Discussion: Bridges that Connect

The seeds of an inclusive moral community, when planted into culture, become foundational, gathering our beliefs and values in harmonious associations. This is an ideal recognizing communities as the building-blocks of culture revealing their intimate nature. Importantly, to widen the idea of “community” is a challenge as Professor Killian has suggested. This understanding acknowledges culture as an extension and expression of a people’s ultimate values. According to Domènec Melé and Carlos Sánchez-Runde (2013, p. 681), “Cultural diversity and globalization bring about a tension between universal ethics and local values and norms. Simultaneously, the current globalization and the existence of an increasingly interconnected world seem to require a common ground to promote dialogue, peace, and a more humane world.” This common ground is discovered in the nature of humanity, itself a moral concept – “humanity as community.”

T. S. Eliot (1973, p. 58) believed that if community is destroyed the possibility of developing a genuine culture may well be destroyed with it. Thus, moral awareness is not a fixed target, but most certainly changes as our relationships change revealing their precarious nature. Relationships are emotional and social bridges connecting people to people and nations to nations. They require our constant attention (Hester, 1995). Consider:

- 1) Moral awareness and vision have social strength and communal capacity.
- 2) Moral behavior is always conditioned by our relationships and an internal awareness of the dignity of others.
- 3) Moral purpose dangles at our fingertips and only the courageously committed are able to see its importance and activate its “oughtness” in their lives.
- 4) Moral-consciousness sponsors a sense of moral community.
- 5) Morality is personal as it is social. It is founded on an understanding of our humanity, its connection to others, the physical environment, and human integrity. It requires self-reflection, rational coherency, and dedicated action.

Insightfully, Wordsworth (1770-1850) spoke of the meaning lying deep within human consciousness and of values binding one generation to another. His words are applicable to the idea of morality without borders as he wrote, “Loyalties and the imaginative sympathies which affirm that all of us are of one race and further, and the living and the dead are of one race too.” Jon Meacham (2018, pp. 62-63) speaks to this as he urges the assertion of hope over fear and to search “for our better angels,” for moral community. To hold high the ideal of “humanity as community” means transposing our awareness of “living in community” to “being community” accentuating our moral nature and lifting our moral horizon.

Certainly, we are held together by common likes and dislikes, loves and hates, and shared values. And where shared values are diminished as unimportant, larger communities, even families, often break down into separate groups defined generally by religious, social, ethnic, and/or political affiliations. Groups may even be reduced to mobs each vying for recognition and freedom of expression as revealed in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017. Sentimental values also take us back to an idyllic past, which we desire to recover, revealing values we believe better than all others. But these can be negations of the present pointing to a loss of moral courage and moral vision. We understand the loss of shared values will be portentous, because when we cease to love the same things, culture itself is disintegrating. Richard N. Goodwin (1974, p. 35) shared a similar thought when he observed, “Indeed, community is built and maintained through value-connections and personal relationships the loss of which, whatever the compensations gained economically or elsewhere, is a genuine loss and threatens [its] fabric.” Although this heightens and seems to support the view of ethical relativism, it does not. Ethical relativism is not an absolute but a changing phenomenon varying from culture to culture. From a moral point of view, seeking an expansive understanding of “humanity as community” will be an ethical challenge for many, but a challenge that needs pursuing. Sissela Bok (2002) asks what moral values, if any, might be capable of being shared across national, ethnic, religious, and other boundaries, under what circumstances, and with what qualifications. She argues that certain basic values can be shared cross-culturally without infringing on the richness of diversity and can provide a starting point for dialogue, negotiation, and cooperation. She takes a stand against the claim that respect for cultural diversity and respect for common values are mutually exclusive.

The questioning of old attitudes and principles is a powerful stimulant to observation, memory, and cogitation necessitating an examination of our basic values. Both the new and the old are a counter-stimulant to each other, challenging and forcing reexamination and attention, not just on local needs, but human need globally. Consequently, a reconsideration of our moral views is necessary. Naturally, we think of “community” as intimate or at least physically and socially identifiable. Humanity asks for more. But widening this view is difficult, as self-interest is an innate energy guiding life. However, no one is asking that we give

up our faith, patriotism, or local identities, only to think of others, both near and far, as morally important. At the foundation of this suggestion is thinking of others as another “me.” This may in fact be a user-illusion, but, from a moral point of view, it has practical significance (Dennett, 2017, p. 335). Morality does have a survival motivation as we all wish to be treated with honesty and respect. Practically, it’s important we all obey the laws providing for order and security. So, functionally, morality bares the stamp of self-interest often turning us inward supporting an exclusive ethic. Moving beyond this will be difficult. On the other hand, from a moral point of view, moral expansion is necessary. Moral growth requires diligence and patience often putting some of our entrenched and provincial ideas at risk. A vision of “humanity as community” is suggestive. This vision asks we put away our ethnocentric biases, negative assumptions about others and other cultures, and flesh out the common values needed for world repair (Hester & Killian, 1975).

We are faced with discovering, within ourselves and others, values commonly shared and reassess our mutual concerns enabling, in positive ways, the possibility of a moral human ecology. And this can never be quantified or fully placed on a statistical model; it will always be a work in progress moving in the direction of greater moral awareness and action. Obviously, we can never grasp the totality of a global moral community nor are we ever disengaged from it. We acknowledge our biases and self-centered needs, but this is only our starting point, our mooring to what has been discovered and what has worked in communities and nations of communities preceding us. This is where we begin, not where we end. Within local and even national communities we are encouraged to evaluate personal and socio-centric values in light of the needs of others, adjust, reconsider, seek common solutions, work together and move forward seeking a collective identity emphasizing our common humanity.

As Kevin Cashman (1998, p. 2 ff.) has reminded, a moral human ecology acknowledges relationships as the bridges that connect authentic self-expression to creating value. Thus, community is the human contextualization of value, meaning, and purpose. Community also defines who we are and specifies the arrangements for human achievement. Moral value, in whatever guise, is fluid and deeply embedded in our diversity. To widen this to a human moral ecology requires an assessment of our local commitments, narcissistic inclinations, corporate goals, and even national purposes. Learning from the past, we know that the Hitlerization or Stalinization of the world is not an option. Autocracy is self-limiting and morally debilitating. To imprison others within a singular view, disregarding their culture is both degrading and demoralizing. Furthermore, it is community destructive. Consensus is what we seek, but not one that compromises the moral nature of humanity, “humanity as community.”

Insightfully, poet Robert Pinsky (2005, pp. 1-18) has reminded us that it is within community and ourselves where we recognize and come to terms with the “stirring of meaning” whose power is social as well as psychological. Thus, “meaning” is a communal phenomenon embodied within a culture and expressed via literature, religious expression, political loyalties, and the media, etc. Moving our community and moral awareness outward, to “humanity as community,” deepens our human connections providing an expanded boundary stone keeping us from being “disorientingly free-floating” (Tarnas, 1991, pp. 396 ff.).

Steven Pinker (2013, pp. 400-405) has also expanded the idea of “meaning through community” with the idea of “meaning as community.” He shared the observation that communi-

ty embodies an “emotion that prompts people to share and sacrifice without an expectation of payback.” This idea, in itself, makes the application of “reciprocity” amoral and contrived, noticing that playing to our self-interest only is morally divisive. Pinker proposed we are able to communicate feelings beyond family to others because our “interests are yoked, like spouses with common children, in-laws with common relatives, friends with common tastes or allies with common enemies.” His suggestion of “meaning as community” enriches our appreciation of human relationships and enables our extension of this paradigm globally. Of course, there are dangers in this idea because not all of us are motivated by moral principles nor seek rational judgments for our behaviors, or are committed to a wider extension of our moral perspicacity. More often than not we think locally and not globally, thereby restricting the widening arch of our moral veracity.

Evolution has hardwired human beings for social relationships (Dennett, 2017, p. 251). Of course, in some there is a deep desire to stand out, become powerful, and dominate others. Some not only wish to be recognized as valuable, they also demand to be respected and many, to be recognized as superior. For purposes of discussion, Professor Killian has often divided people into “lumpers” and “splitters.” There are those who draw people together (lumpers) and others who seek to divide, use, or conquer (splitters). Admittedly, from time to time each of us behaves in our own self-interest. Of course, many of us also help and care for others, act out of a sense of moral priority, and actively engage in building sustaining relationships. Human nature seems to be an inconsistent quagmire of emotions, knee-jerk reactions, and at times reasoned responses to situations including those in our daily circle. It is difficult to unhinge our moral sentiments from self only and connect to what many believe a nondescript and uncaring world. An outward expansion of hard-held moral convictions will require both social/political skill and reason, but also passion and commitment. As Daniel Goleman (2007) observed, “Self-absorption in all its forms kills empathy, let alone compassion. When we focus on ourselves, our world contracts as our problems and preoccupations loom large. But when we focus on others, our world expands. With this expansion, our own problems drift to the periphery of the mind and seem smaller, and we increase our capacity for connection – or compassionate action.”

Attaching the idea of moral *integration* (“lumpers”) to “community,” our values become extensive and inclusive, those produced in the throes of relationship-building and those that can be expanded to others through a civil exchange of ideas and activities. The moral future envisioned and the various moral strands pulled together by ethicists have recognizable parallels, cultural furrows tilled by those who understand the moral dimensions of humanity’s common needs. (Hudson, 1983) Without a constant and continuing practice of moral correlation all criteria of moral meaning go out the window. We have been enlightened – and this is more than an enlightened self-interest – and now is the moment moral behaviors, defined by civility and respect, should become the substance of an expanded dialogical conversation. Arie de Geus (2002, p. 125) has reminded us, “Decisions grow in the topsoil of formal and informal conversation—sometimes structured...sometimes technical...and sometimes ad hoc.” It is an ongoing process of conversation which has the ability (and responsibility) of bringing moral life into the community—the world community. Individuals, organizations, and governments can empower their friends, associates and national partners through the dialogical process because it facilitates their flexibility, creativity, and learning potential, and also enhances their dignity and humanity.

R. C. Arnett (2006, pp. 315 ff.) has advanced this idea as “dialogic civility” or open and honest communication. According to Robyn Penman, “Central to all understandings, however, is the idea that a civil society offers a common space for diverse viewpoints: a place where differences can be heard and not disregarded.” (2014) Thus, our responsibility is to flesh out values having relationship potential, inside and outside of our local communities, and build on these with positive and innovative action. With this we should strive to become competent, but not competent only; we need to make an effort to comprehend what we truly believe is of value and communicate this understanding to others with commitment and fidelity. Flexibility and courage will be needed as we learn from the *Tao Te Ching* (2010), “Whatever is flexible and flowing will tend to grow; whatever is rigid and blocked will wither and die.”

Ethics is fundamentally a socio-cultural phenomenon making communal life possible. Ethics obviously refers to standards of human conduct flowing from a sense of belonging. The value of human dignity and ecological sustainability are the ethical basis for reshaping globalization including the economic processes of interaction and integration associated with social and cultural transformation. When we belong to a community, we normally make an effort to behave according to its norms and practices. We emphasize this as a moral ideal and a normative challenge for experience teaches that moral deviance and unabashed egoism are a present and ongoing reality. Without a collective ethical vision, and a commitment to its guiding precepts, the political and economic entanglements now dominating the global sphere will forever produce uncooperative and volatile activities.

Thus, community cannot be understood only locally or in the temporal language of cause and effect: “If we design this program then others will respond in an appropriate way;” or “If we pass this law, order and commonsense will be brought to communal life.” Rather, “community” implies dialogic civility where individuals and nations of individuals work together to reduce the hunger, fear, crime, and other war-like activities now devastating the marginalized and least among us. The core issues and problems associated with the global community – poverty, crime, the opioid tragedy, lack of educational and medical resources, the immigration crisis at America’s southern border, and war and violence, etc. – must be addressed in a language of *values without barriers*: “We should do this; decent people must strive to live this way.” The value of human dignity and goodness cannot be overemphasized. This is and will always be a normative as well as a physical/political challenge as witnessed in the aftermath of the hurricane that devastated the island of Haiti and the rationalizations offered for America’s neglect before the hurricane occurred and the trepid response to its devastation. Sometimes we block out these situations or choose to forget the pain of others offering only “thoughts and prayers,” but this is not enough. Unapologetically, this is an affair of the heart as well as the mind involving passion and an active commitment to relieve human pain and misery wherever it is found. Unmistakably, our values are exposed in our actions and especially in our inactions.

To build moral communities, we must possess the will to examine ourselves: how we live, and what we believe and value. Self-examination will necessarily involve all of us, not only the economically and politically powerful and not only the great middle class, but those who have been economically, racially, religiously, ethnically, or otherwise marginalized. Self-examination will significantly enrich the concept of “moral community”; it lies deeply within the soil of the moral self and there it must be diligently tilled. If we view our broadened idea of morality as a moral human ecology, then we can logically focus on the interactions and

transactions of people and nations and how they affect the world's human and physical environment as the locus of our concern. Noting that not all humans or nations will act morally all the time, a moral human ecology will also function as a corrective system, reminding us of our moral purposes—goals set high to stretch the idea of the morally possible. This will require:

- Community collaboration among individuals, families and organizations
- Healthy relationships — relationships which promote mutual understanding and consideration
- Tolerance toward others and moral responsibility
- Fairness and trustworthiness among individuals and communities
- Creating institutions and businesses that are non-dehumanizing and morally productive
- Expanding the idea of “community” globally

Philosopher Robert Nozick (1981, p. 532) reminded us more than thirty years ago, “A person who is responsive to the value of others establishes a closer linkage and hence a tighter organic unity with those others (than one who is unresponsive), and that is valuable.” Almost a decade later, Nozick (1990, p. 166) concluded, “In wanting ourselves to be of value and our lives and activities to have value, we want these to exhibit a high degree of organic unity...We want to encompass a diversity of traits and phenomena, uniting these through many cross-connections in a tightly integrated way, feeding these productively into our activities.” He continued, “Value is not the only relevant evaluative dimension. We also want our lives and our existence to have meaning. *Value* involves something's being integrated within its own boundaries, while *meaning* involves its having some connection beyond these boundaries...To seek to give life meaning is to seek to transcend the limits of one's individual life...connecting with things so as somehow to incorporate these things, either within ourselves or into an enlarged identity.”

The idea of “organic unity” thus enriches the idea of a moral human ecology – of meaning as community – as it recognizes human choice, purpose, value, and meaning as forces for strengthening a widened and collective view of humanity. As a human community, we understand that morality is something lying deeply with the social consciousness of all humanity. It is not simply a philosophical position. Philip Selznick (1994, p. 8) was aware of this saying, “Moral persons and institutions are implicated selves whose moral virtues depend on special forms of communal implication”; and “A genuine culture is not a collection of abstract principles or precepts. It is a web of person-centered meanings whose coherence makes possible a world taken for granted, whose directives trump desire and chasten inclination.” This discloses the relational connections and moral aspects of communities contained in laws, religions, and unwritten rules of participation. Can this web of meaning be extended outwardly and become humanity relevant rather than humanity limiting? This remains a challenge. Ethnocentric biases linger as the bane of global and environmental moral responsibility.

We remain hopeful. In commenting about the politics of meaning, Michael Lerner (1996) stressed the possibility of moral hope emphasizing a universal ethic, noting that all people deserve to be cared for and cherished and that we all should be more attuned to their and our own ethical and spiritual needs. Lerner advised that we should not be naive about our response to others because there is a shadow side to all of us. Speaking about this phe-

nomenon, he said, “Anyone who has witnessed the violence of the twentieth century will rightly resist any theory of human reality that seems to deny the role of cruelty and evil. But this recognition ought not to prevent our quest to develop the psychological, social, and spiritual tools that might allow us to take steps toward decreasing the pain in this world.”

Conclusion

“Humanity as community” is a metaphor, an ideal, enriching the organic composition of humanity and perhaps its sacredness. It is a normative quality suggesting an enlarged concept of what it means to be human necessitating the naturalness of human moral connection and the need for persons and communities to listen and hear the views of others. It is “morality without borders.” But none of this is “fixed” by nature revealing its impermanence. Morality is thus conditional, conditioned on the purposeful efforts of people, communities, and nations to activate their moral energies and lengthen them to include others, all others.

Bob Clifford (2005), in a paper delivered to the American Political Science Association, commented, “...aggrieved groups around the world have portrayed their problems as human rights issues.” He went on to point out that although the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was widely conceived, “for the most of its history a limited set of civil and political rights have garnered the bulk of international attention and resource.” In many cases, he noted, efforts to develop new rights have met resistance from not only national bodies, but from businesses and powerful economic and religious interest groups. Clifford said that many believe if we advocate for a human rights proliferation this may cheapen traditionally provincial values and concerns, even civil and political rights. But will it? This conclusion seems contrived and hides the motive of presumed ethical superiority and, perhaps, a hidden bias toward people of color enhancing ethical relativism and preventing civil dialogue.

Given the international economic crisis of 2008-2009 and the looming financial crisis of 2019, it seems that selfish-interests have already replaced many values thought of as moral. Selfishness or egoism lifts the self above the obligatory behaviors required by our moral consciousness in a self-serving illusion of our importance. Consequently, as our moral veracity shrinks, we often think of others negatively and often pragmatically – without economic worth or not having any utility value except serving our own needs. It is past time to revisit the idea of globally shared ethics and reset our moral intentions. Honesty, responsibility, and integrity are the same – East, West, North, and South.

We are under no illusion that the paradigm of a moral human ecology will ever come to pass. There are a variety of value orientations operative in our world, each screaming for absolute status and each demanding that we live according to its dictates. Also, the presuppositions and biases of our own culture often limit our ability to conceptualize and understand the views of others, blinding us to assumptions of our own assumed moral supremacy. Thus, we are challenged by our personal and cultural individualism to shift “civility” from its community and national orientations into a global direction thereby uplifting the image of “humanity as community,” a moral vision extending beyond our present understanding and the realities of an exclusive ethic that diminishes rather than replenishes hope and human possibility.

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