

RESEARCH NEEDED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MINIMAL ETHICS BY MANKIND

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The need for reducing conflicts which threaten mankind with destruction becomes increasingly evident. Violent crime rates continue to rise, with no end in sight. Growing demoralizations, due in part to decline in the power of traditional religions to inspire moral conduct, continues without anything apparent to halt it. The dangers of wars, small and large, actual and threatening, supported by arms races between nations already equipped to overkill, continue with nothing in view to terminate them.

These trends are due in part to the fact that people distrust each other. Such distrust originates partly from disagreements, and from beliefs that existing differences are so great that the disagreements cannot be overcome. These disagreements are embedded in philosophies, and ideologies, which presuppose that the differences are ineradicable.

Prevention of self-destruction by mankind seems to require achievement of some minimum agreement about what all men have in common, in the way of values, rights, duties and opportunities, and what differences can and should be tolerated or/and discouraged. Some believe that such a quest is hopeless, because destruction is assured, sooner or later. But even a little reflection can reveal that the disagreements result in part from ignorance of how much unity, and community, already exists.

The following five steps in a research program designed to reduce dangers due to destructive diversity, or beliefs about such diversity, may be taken successively or simultaneously. If, perchance, completion, publication and influence of work at the first, second or third stages suffices to eliminate the dangers, work may stop. But given the present fears of mounting crises, work at all at the same time seems wise.

I. *Discover existing similarities.* (Thesis, which needs demonstrating, but more similarities, biological and cultural, than differences exist among mankind. These similarities tend to be overlooked, and then denied, as we focus attention upon differences.)

A. Discover and expose the facts of sameness.

B. Expose such facts as evidence of already existing unity among mankind. (Most remain unaware of such unity. More common nature and common interests exist than is usually believed. Awareness of such greater commonness, and community, should reduce antipathy.)

II. *Discover complementarity of opposites.* (Thesis, which needs demonstrating, that many, perhaps all, existing opposites are complementary rather than contradictory, as is usually assumed.)

A. Expose complementarity of opposites as existing fact. (This requires rethinking of logical, metaphysical and epistemological assumptions—an endeavor which is already under way.)

B. Discover and expose existing opposites as complementary. (Include "East-West" opposites.)

C. Expose such existing complementarities as signifying additional unity. (That is, in addition to the unity present in existing similarities, there is a unity of opposites, in existing differences, which is too often overlooked. For example, men and women are opposites, and they are clearly complementary. Complementary opposites involve a dynamic, as against merely static, unity. These enrich life rather than destroy it.)

III. *Discover the values of non-destructive differences.* (Differing traits serve as new cultural resources for mankind, provided they do not function destructively. Many traits, once existing only locally, have become traits for all mankind. Such resources should be preserved, and encouraged, not destroyed. The tendency toward unity, when carried toward its extreme, would itself be destructive of values. There is need for greater tolerance of, and appreciation of, different non-destructive values.)

A. Discover and expose which differences are non-destructive.

B. Expose the enrichment possibilities of mankind of existing non-destructive differences, biological and cultural. Expose the significance of increasing tolerance, as needed, as a possible source of further, i.e., enriched, unity for mankind.

IV. *Discover destructive differences.*

A. Expose the existence of destructive diversity. (In ideology, religion, philosophy, politics, ecology, population, as well as war.)

B. Expose ways of diminishing destructive diversity. (Social scientists already know many facts about divisiveness and principles for overcoming divisiveness, psychological, social, economic, as well as ideological, political and military.)

C. Study, and evaluate, which diversities are most destructive and most in need of elimination, and which can be eliminated most easily. Evaluate how many and which destructive diversities must be eliminated in order to obtain minimums of peace and security for mankind.

V. *Discover possibilities for additional unities.*

A. Expose ways for increasing unity. (Social scientists already know much about principles for promoting unification. Expose these principles, this knowledge, and thus practicalities regarding such possibilities.)

B. Study, and evaluate, which additional unities are most needed, which will provide the greatest unity, and which can be most easily, or efficiently, attained. Evaluate how many, and which ones, are needed in

order to obtain the minimum consensus to maintain world peace.

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