

A PERSONAL MANIFESTO

By Dr. Michael W. Fox

I have laboured on many fronts over the past several decades addressing some of the harmful consequences of unbridled anthropocentrism. This is a condition where self-interest precludes consideration and concern for the interests of others, human and non-human. At a talk by H.H. the Dalai Lama, he advised that if we must be selfish, then at least let us be altruistic. Altruism is the highest form of human selfishness. It is an enlightened selfishness when that altruism encompasses all living beings, even those whom we may fear and which could cause harm. This is the antidote to pathological anthropocentrism of culture and civilization, as it is the remedy for narcissism and a host of harmful consequences.

All things causing disease, disharmony, imbalance, (what the Hopis call *koyaanasqatsi*) are connected, the co-factors of disease being now primarily anthropogenic. Americans, for example, actually underwrite with their tax dollars the production costs and market support prices of commodity crops and animal products that are part of the industrialized food system which costs them their health and their lives. This system is a major co-factor of climate change, and causes irreparable environmental destruction and pollution, as well as animal cruelty and suffering, and species and habitat extinction.

A medicine based on the humility and respectfulness of enlightened selfishness first seeks to understand the nature of disease and the often reflective, concurrent disease in nature before deciding how best to heal and prevent disease. When we harm the environment, we harm ourselves, and when we abuse animals we do no less to our own humanity. Earth-care, animal care, and human care are coins of the same ethical currency as are earth-health, animal health and human health.

Civilization is a biological, evolutionary process, and we hairless apes are learning that it is founded and sustained not by power, control, law and order, but by mutual respect, humility and fairness, qualities and principles of being civil that we extend to all living beings because we feel for them. Animals are as much Earth-citizens as are we. So, by extension, regardless of any claim we may have over them, they all have a life of their own. Our duty to care for animals under our dominion is to insure that their basic needs are met, just as we seek for ourselves and which are the basic rights of all members of the life community.

There are many who feel no kinship with other living beings and who are uncivil toward them, showing varying degrees of biopathic behavior, much like the sociopath towards other humans. Regrettably, biopathic behavior has become the cultural norm for industrial civilizations and imperialistic corporations for which the natural world is simply a material resource, animals are mere commodities, a means to an end rather than being ends in themselves. Harvard biologist E. O. Wilson's appeal for biophilia and 'conciliation' with Nature notwithstanding, those core values and perceptions underlying biopathic activities and policies call for the application of bioethics to evaluate and guide all human institutions, both religious and secular. Bioethical principles such as

equalitarianism, respect for all life and ahimsa (avoiding harm) can make our altruism enlightened and our economies sustainable. But they are just as easily ignored behind a corporate façade of biophilia.

Those who speak the universal language of compassion act from the heart of an empathy-based ethics and a justice-based morality infused with understanding and concern. Ascent toward a more enlightened humanism out of the spreading mire of barbarism in every form, secular and otherwise, with its moral inversions, nihilism, denial and corruption of spirit and purpose, requires more than choice and chance, science and faith. It calls for courage, conviction, absolute commitment and dedication to those bioethical principles that frame our humanity and which, like reverence and loyalty, truth and honesty, are absolutes, or they are not at all.

The power of will allied with the Golden rule is greater than the will to power and rule of gold. Then the evolution of the possible human may begin.

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