
Discussion

George Jihowski: You said that we should look for a common language, and the common language will come because of the change of the situation. In the past the sources of ethics were authority and religion, but now the source of ethics is nature. We realize that we live in a finite world, and that the world dictates limits to our behavior and our desires. This is very different, previously we had to be threatened with damnation if we did not behave, now nature tells us that we will be damned right here before we die—we do not have to wait for the hereafter. And this puts us in a very different situation, and this language everybody will understand.

Allen Ayer: I would like to tell you a success story which links every one of the speakers' comments this morning. I come from a very poor community in Jamaica. We are supposed to have water, because we have pipes. But no water has flowed through those pipes for the last two and a half years. We are also supposed to be, according to the figures of the World Bank, a place that has education, but most of the people are illiterate, because the school is not properly financed, and most of the time has no furniture.

My wife was taken ill, and no one knew what was wrong with her. Because we are a little better known than the poor, my wife received good treatment. She was given three tickets on two different airlines to go to Harvard to be examined and tested with all the latest technology. Then she was treated at St. Thomas Hospital in London.

When we came back to Jamaica we thought about what society had spent on us, it could have helped educate 2,300 children, it could have helped all the children in my poor community to get rid of worms, which is keeping them from developing and many other things. It could have provided the whole community with water. But because we were well known and because we are in the elite, we got all the benefits. And nothing else went to anybody.

So we started to adopt, in our own home, some of the abandoned children in the community. We had them educated. And before very long, other poorer families in the community did the same. And I can say now that in our community we do not have water yet, or a better school, but every one of those children now has schooling and a home. We have transformed that community.

Yolanda Kakabadse: I will ask the three panelists to react at the end of your comments.

Richard Jordan: I have a very brief informational point. The World Bank has a meditation room. It is rather hard to find, but if you would like to know how, please see me after the session.

Oso Runkum: In this upcoming 21st century, the worst disease is not acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) or malaria, but excessiveness. We need fairness in distribution of

food, but this will only come when we stop being excessive.

Audience comment: Some of us are involved in a review of the world's religions and their implications for ecology. This is a series at the Harvard Center for the Study of World Religion, being cosponsored by the Humane Society of the United States as well as several other funders. We are trying to excavate, or unearth, the ethical resources of the various world religions for a unified global ethic, but specifically for environmental ethics. The last two conferences in this series will invite members from the scientific community, from public policy, from education, and from the ecological sciences to join in this effort, precisely along the lines that Bill Vendley just mentioned, to develop a common discourse. And there will be a final culminating conference at the UN to help build the grounds for this common discourse.

John Behr: In the Declaration of Independence Jefferson said all men are created equal. By the 1920s the concept was broadened by the women's movement, all persons are created equal. And after the fall of Adolph Hitler the idea of political equality and social equality has been accepted, and many of you are arguing for intergenerational equality, and also interspecies equality. My question involves economic equality. We do not have it in the United States; there is no noticeable movement toward it, and the problem is even worse in the rest of the world. So is it a realizable goal, and if so how do we go about it?

Audience comment: My concern is, are we asking the right questions? Because if we ask the wrong question, we will get the wrong answer, which is useless to everybody. For example, when we had the movie *Jurassic Park*, everyone was saying that science can recreate the dinosaurs. And then the question was, is it really valuable to recreate dinosaurs? And there was a lot of concern about that. And the question right now is evolution and preserving a sustainable environment. Are we really asking the right questions?

Yolanda Kakabadse: Before I ask our panelists to react I would like to bring out another issue

that has not been presented as strongly as I would have expected during this panel, and that is the issue of education. It was one of your very strong priorities, Dr. Meyers. I would ask the three of you to comment on the role of this group, of the World Bank, of intergovernmental organizations, in going beyond the traditional things that we have been doing, and how we build a different concept on what education is really about. I think we are all very critical and unhappy about the traditional patterns of education, and we see that creating a global ethic does need another sort of framework. What is the role of education in that?

William Vendley: To make my point in a pithy way, I think amnesia is a poor prerequisite for thinking through the problems of the human family. What I mean by amnesia is the formal exclusion from the discourse of the world's largest repositories of moral and ethical memory—the world's religions. Surely they are relevant to the larger questions of educating ourselves regarding the issues of sustainable development and common living. As I mentioned earlier, it is one thing to grant the relevance of these traditions, it is yet another to make their moral insights available in ways appropriate for public discourse. That brings me to role of the World Bank. Precisely such an institution is public in character, and, therefore, is challenged to serve us all at the deepest level of public discourse. I admire the Bank's attempt to bring representatives of human communities of memory into the heart of the discussion of development.

Ashok Khosla: Whenever I come to the World Bank they tell that what I think needs to be done cannot be done by the World Bank. And that, of course, is the problem of all bureaucracies. They have budget lines, mandates, governments watching over them, and auditors. And therefore they are basically unable to do the things that really need to be done. What the World Bank needs to do now, if it wants to be relevant in the 21st century to the real issues of people and of sustainable development, is to get beyond the project mode. It has to start looking at broader ways to support capacities, both in countries and

in communities, to identify their own problems, to devise potential solutions to those problems, and to implement those solutions. It will have to do much more institution building, program support, and other things in order to go beyond projects. Projects are good, and they will always make up maybe 80 percent or more in any mechanism of this type, but I think we must open up new windows. Second, there is no question that we are working on scales which are totally divorced from the realities of the future, of sustainable development. In World Bank activities we will have to now find new ways to be able to deal with real issues, which are often decentralized, much smaller, much more remote, and be able to do good things with them.

And the same goes for technology. Today the technology choices are available to choose better and more humane, human-scale technologies. And this will mean developing new partnerships, because the World Bank is not going to be able to do it on its own, and it must find intermediaries and partners who basically can retail, if you like, the World Bank money. It must basically therefore go beyond being an excuse maker. Whenever you talk to the World Bank, they say, "well that cannot be done because we are creatures of the governments." But I see my finance minister jump up and salute when a middle-level World Bank person walks into his room. So I am not sure that they are really creatures of the government, they seem to have a lot of clout. And the same goes for research. The leverage of innovation is so high that we have really got to see mechanisms open up where innovation becomes part of the development process. Similarly with loans: the World Bank is a bank, and therefore it is in the business of loans. But there are also other financial instruments that are very interesting and that need to be explored.

We have about two and a half years before the new millennium. We need to do some fast thinking, because when we get to the 21st century we are going to have to open up many of these things.

Joel Meyers: Just a couple of comments. First of all, to the gentleman who said that nature is going to be the determinant. I still believe

human nature is the determinant, and the task is to deal with human nature, and one of the biggest issues that we confront which we have spoken about is that of individuals versus community. How do we really understand our role as interdependent human beings, dependent on our environment?

I want to thank the gentleman from the West Indies. I would add self-help as a criterion for development. That is, if a community has been able to pull itself together enough to develop programs of self-help, to me that is a wonderful criterion to use in evaluating whether or not we should really devote energy and time to it.

Which brings me to the question our chair has asked about the World Bank. I think traditionally institutions like the World Bank, or any of the organizations we work for, have been seen as providing a service. People come and we provide the service. I sometimes wonder what it would be like if the World Bank were to behave like a very mercenary corporation and say that its business is to create a healthy world. That is its product. So it is going to go out and try and find areas to develop this product in. And it is going to go and offer a community help, money, technical help, teachers, and physicians, to see if it can make a difference on the ground, provided there is a certain response back from the community. And the required response is a willingness to help, a willingness to be open, a willingness to learn, a willingness to be our partner in every way in terms of structures and government, and so on.

So I have an ideal vision in my head of forcing a bit of healthy change so that it really makes a difference at a local level in a way that all of us would applaud. I think this is how the Bank could make a difference, instead of saying, "come to us, and we will evaluate in 20 different ways a program or a place, and then we will see if we can do this." I think the Bank ought to devise a scheme and go out and do it, and offer it as a package, and say, who will buy this and work in this way as a partnership.

Yolanda Kakabadse: I asked the question about education because obviously I had a card to play at the end: I think that this new, mental structure that we have to develop in all our communities, countries, continents, and cultures is to rethink

what sovereignty really means. Are we talking about political boundaries? As the third millennium comes, we will have to reduce the importance, the relevance of political boundaries, and recreate another, a different set of boundaries based on the ecosystem or on the global perception of this planet.

Obviously, that also means rethinking our intergenerational responsibilities. I have heard

individuals responding to this call, saying why should we be responsible for generations we have not even met, that are not yet born? And that is a process of thinking that requires learning, that requires understanding, and that requires learning a different language. We must be bilingual to try to understand other communities, other cultures, and to understand the planet.