

Peace Moves

H. B. Danesh, M.D.

Introduction

The young people of our time are both informed and concerned about the condition of the world. They know there are many dangers and challenges threatening the welfare of human society. They know, too, about the politics of disunity, power, greed, and mistrust that have caused so much destruction in the past and which could cause even greater catastrophes in the future. These same young people also know that the leadership of the world will be transferred to them in the not too distant future and that they will be called upon to find solutions to the problems of human society.

History shows that although every new generation of youth does everything in its power to improve the conditions of the world, its success nevertheless depends on the level of its preparation—not only to assume leadership but also to improve the quality of that leadership. But to do this, our youth need training and experience for leadership. The lessons given to them must be different from those we learned from our parents. The world we are entrusting to our children is not safe, clean, or free of violence, hunger, or war. The world today is disunited and burdened with many problems, but it is also immeasurably rich with scientific discoveries, technological advancements, and early indications of the awakening of humanity's conscience. The world today is simultaneously exciting and burdened, progressive and retrogressive, peace seeking and aggressive, and concerned and self-centered.

Today's young people need to learn a new way of dealing with the challenges facing them. They need to create a united world, organized in a manner such that all its people will be free and able to live in a safe, just society. A world in which health, education, shelter, food, and other essential needs will be available to everyone as their basic human rights—a world that will provide the opportunity for all people to have meaningful jobs and to be useful, creative citizens. This is a world different from today's world, and its accomplishment will require a new way of thinking about our selves and our relationships with one another.

This book is about these issues. It is written with the conviction that today's youth would rather be challenged, informed, and helped to assume responsibilities than to be patronized, told what to do, or be protected in bomb shelters, drug shelters, or pleasure shelters. This book is written with the view that the future must be better and safer than it is today and that to achieve this goal, all of us must help the younger generation to prepare itself to tackle the needs of humanity at this crucial time in history.

You are invited to study this book and to share it with many others. It is hoped that the book will inspire active involvement in the cause of peace. Such involvement requires dedication, courage, and wisdom. It is indeed very encouraging that you have chosen to participate in this noble quest.

H.B. Danesh, Sarajevo

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Part 2: A Search for Peace

The second round of discussions began in earnest. Students came with many prepared notes and a number of books.

Jacob:

In order to prepare for this meeting, I attended a futurist conference at which one speaker talked about the year 1990 as it would be viewed in 2020. It was a great conference, and this was a really powerful talk. We were told that the year 1990 was chosen because it had both despair and hope, pessimism and optimism. It was also in many ways a typical year characteristic of the second half of the 20th century and the years that have followed. The talk was being held in a vast, airy hall, decorated and perfumed by hundreds of pots of flowers. The session began with soft music, readings, and a short period of silence.

The speaker was a well-known scholar of recent world history. She was also an accomplished poet whose hobby was gardening. She had won many international scholarly and humanitarian awards. When presented to the audience, the most notable qualities of the distinguished speaker were her radiant face and humble demeanor. Because this was such an interesting talk, I decided to bring a videotape of the presentation. I also brought some popcorn. Let's watch it now. I have also the text of the talk for our reference.

Good Morning!

I hope you are all happy. I am exceedingly happy to be with you all. This is truly an international gathering representing all the peoples of the world. I am going to speak to you about the year 1990. My talk will focus on the daily life of people in year 1990, the political situation of this era, and finally the problems that we identified and the solutions we sought for them.

Daily Life in the Year 1990

In the year 1990 there was much disparity in the lives of the peoples of the world. There were the very wealthy, who lived primarily in North America, Western Europe, Japan, and the Arab oil-producing countries. The wealthy also made up practically all the political and military leadership and a very small upper class in almost all countries of the world. The lifestyle of these wealthy people, though varied, had certain common components. No matter how rich they were, they usually sought more wealth. Most of their wealth was accumulated through economic manipulation and/or abuse of power, rather than through merit for services rendered. Much of this wealth was spent in pursuit of personal pleasure and aggrandizement and/or destructive and harmful activities. The more wealth they accumulated, the more greed they displayed and the more anxiety and fear they experienced. In fact, the life of the affluent was riddled with dissatisfaction, anxiety, and disappointment. The constant fear of the loss of their easily accumulated wealth, combined with inhuman working habits and practices played havoc with all aspects of their lives. The rate of marriage breakdown and family disunity was alarmingly high, and ever-elusive happiness seemed to be always ahead of its pursuers. Sexual and sensual pursuits were high on the agenda of the well-to-do citizens of the world. Severe anxieties about AIDS, high cholesterol, heart attack and cancer, obesity, loss of youthfulness and beauty, and other similar concerns marred these pursuits.

In the year 1990 there were also the extremely poor who made up a very large majority of humanity. They lived in shacks, makeshift rooms, vermin- and insect-infested slums, and unkempt, ugly urban dwellings. They lived a life of hunger, disease, and misery. Their life expectancy was about 2/3 of that of those living under better circumstances. Their children died from illnesses that could easily have been prevented. Many died because of malnutrition. They were the victims of injustice and inequity, and their lives were spent primarily in attempts at survival with little or no opportunity to educate themselves or to actualize their intellectual and creative potentialities. The magnitude of the suffering of the masses and the waste of their enormous potential were staggering. And the wealthy not only were indifferent to the suffering of the poor but also displayed contempt towards them.

The third group comprised the direct victims of injustice and tyranny in all parts of the world. In the year 1990, according to the United Nations statistics, there were more than 11 million refugees, 1.3 million asylum seekers, almost 2 million returned refugees, 5 million internally displaced persons (IDP), 0.5 million returned IDPs, and 1.4 million other individuals with various concerns of this type, for a total of about 22 million displaced individuals.

In that year alone, millions of lives were greatly and directly affected by war. Thirteen million children were displaced by war, 2 million were killed, 6 million were wounded, and 10 million were traumatized, violated, and raped.

There were also masses of humanity subjected to racial, religious, and ideological persecution and violence of considerable magnitude. The catastrophe of rearing generations of children in the midst of war and violence gradually began to be felt in year 1990. There were indications that the children of war might arise in the not too distant future, in pursuit of their rights and justice, and commit equal, if not more severe, acts of violence. Already, evidence of this process was observable in the Middle East, Northern Ireland, the Indian subcontinent, various parts of Africa, the Far East, Central and South America, and the Balkans.

The wealthy people of the world (who were also the possessors of power) did very little for the poor and the victims of injustice and tyranny. Except for limited and much advertised acts of charity and empty promises, they primarily ignored, rejected, and despised the poor, blaming them for their own problems.

Finally, we can identify a fourth group of people in the year 1990. These people had their own unique characteristics. There were millions of people who lived under Marxist-Communist forms of government. The expressed objectives of their governments were to bring about a certain degree of equality, social and economic justice, and freedom of their people from the shackles of religion and capitalism, which they viewed with both scorn and disapproval. However, after decades of experimentation with this method of governing human lives, the results were low standards of living for most,

* Statistics on IDP's in 2004 is:

Today's humanitarian crises—caused by conflict or by natural disaster—have resulted in unprecedented waves of human displacement, both within and across borders. Those displaced within borders, known as "internally displaced persons" (IDPs) are today estimated to number over 50 million worldwide (of which 25-30 million have lost their homes due to conflict), far exceeding the global refugee population (11-12 million). More than 10 million IDPs are in Africa. Another five million are in Asia, five more million in Europe and two million are in the Americas.

Internal displacement is a truly global crisis that prevails in more than 40 countries. The number of persons internally displaced due to conflict jumped nearly 25 percent during 1999. The world's internally displaced population is larger now than at any time in the past five years. Over half of the world's internally displaced are children.

http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/civilians/forced_displacement/index.html

except for those in positions of power. The majority of these people felt, to a greater or lesser degree, the loss of their freedom and tended to have lives that were materially of marginal satisfaction, intellectually and artistically restricted, and spiritually deprived. Although there were significant attempts in the year 1990 at changing this situation, still a keen observer of the scene could but conclude that the process of change was going to be very difficult.

To begin with, it was very hard for the leaders of some of these societies to admit to their people and to the world at large that their experiment had not been successful and that radical changes were required. Even for those leaders who had the courage and the resolve to admit the need for change, both the process and direction of the change were proving to be fraught with problems. This was the case for Russia and most of the former USSR block of countries. The main reason for this difficulty was the absence of a truly effective alternative. Neither the materialistic capitalism of the West, nor the materialistic Marxism of the East had succeeded in creating a world characterized by prosperity combined with justice, peace, enlightenment, and beauty.

Jacob:

I know we want to see the rest of the talk, but I want to say that this speaker was right on about the impact of work on families in the West. I come from a rich, well-educated, and broken family. My parents are separated, and we children have gone through hell, even though we live in the finest neighbourhood, attend the best schools, and have all material things we need. But something important is missing. A special kind of love that can only come from time, attention, and sharing from your parents. But when the parents are both working 10–12 hours a day and are at their computers or on their mobile phones, or in their social and business meetings, then there is little time for either themselves or their children. Oh, it is so not right!

Linda:

In my neighbourhood at least 50% of children live only with one parent, usually with their moms. And they are suffering. Jacob, I do not know how I would feel if my parents were separated.

Jacob:

Let us continue.

Politics in the Year 1990

Central to the politics of the year 1990 was the issue of power. It is a known fact that power has always been the central element of practically all forms of government throughout history. In the year 1990, power was distributed variably in different parts of the world. In many countries, following a period of intense power struggle, usually one individual or group of individuals had emerged victorious. The victors had assumed their power with promises to bring justice, affluence, peace, and pride to their peoples. In reality, the initial phase of government by these leaders was quite frequently spent in solidifying their positions of power. They soon realized that despite their best intentions, the challenges of governing human societies was well beyond their abilities, and consequently their promises were left unfulfilled. The realization of this impotence—never acknowledged but frequently recognized by the leaders and their subjects alike—became respectively a major cause of dissatisfaction of the subjects and defensiveness of the

leaders. As a consequence, the populace in these countries experienced much disappointment mixed with feelings of hopelessness and at times considerable anger.

Aside from power, the second characteristic of political life in the year 1990 was mistrust between leaders and their peoples because of the high degree of corruption. In reviewing the political annals of the year 1990, one has a distinct impression that instead of being allies, people and their governments were usually at odds with one another and rarely trusted each other. Even when there were instances in which the majority of people were satisfied with the government leadership, they, nevertheless, were frequently disappointed by the appalling revelations of secret, unlawful, and heinous immoral and self-serving activities by a number of leaders in power, which reflected badly on all leaders.

The third major characteristic of the politics of 1990 was the confused objectives of the leaders of human society. One main reason for this confusion was the alarming condition of these societies. In the year 1990 there were still stored in various parts of the globe enough nuclear and conventional warheads, ready for instant use, to destroy the earth several times over. These dangers were compounded by the fact that control over the use of these warheads was not strictly in the hands of responsible, balanced, and thoughtful elected leaders. Practically any discontented, angry individual or group seeking self-aggrandizement, power, or revenge, as well as those who were emotionally and mentally deranged, had the possibility of taking over these instruments of destruction for the purpose of blackmail or extinction of their enemies.

On a more specific level, the political panorama of the year 1990 included three relatively distinct forms of government: authoritarian/dictatorial, Marxist/socialist, and Western democratic. In the chaotic and struggling regions of the world, which were usually governed by military or pseudodemocratic leaders, the use of force and the abuse of power were most prevalent. However, these dictatorial and pseudodemocratic governments were not easily accepted by their people, and consequently rebellious groups opposed to these governments brought much chaos to their respective societies through subversive activities. There was much violence in these societies. The violence and warfare of these chaotic regions, their struggle with guerrilla forces, and the violation of human rights, combined with the extremes of poverty and deprivation, made these regions examples of hell on earth. There was much suffering, pain, and misery. There was unimaginable horror. How could human beings commit such barbaric acts? Minds boggle even at imagining such horrors, let alone the fact that we are talking about the present.

Peoples and leaders of struggling countries fared only somewhat better. Once again, the enormous economic and social problems and challenges facing these countries were such that most of these societies' leaders and almost all of their people felt helpless and hopeless to deal with the situation. Problems such as poverty, illiteracy, disease, malnutrition and starvation, and erosion and destruction of the environment were combined with appalling conditions of prejudice, superstition, inequality, disunity, and suspicion. Together, these forces created fertile grounds for the ascendancy of power struggle, violence, destruction, and death. The heroic acts of self-sacrifice and love by some citizens and some leaders here and there were the only reminders to the bewildered masses on how far humanity had strayed from its fundamental nobility. These meritorious acts were also reminders that the human spirit will ultimately be victorious, the same spirit that most people recognize in themselves no matter how desperate the situation.

By the year 1990 a good number of governments based on Marxist ideology had been put into practice in a significant way in many parts of the world. Two of the largest countries in the world, the USSR and China, have been governed by doctrines derived from Marxist ideology. The USSR was on the verge of total collapse, and the experiment with Marxist ideology and communism had proven a failure. The other major Communist country, China, was trying to gradually improve the conditions of its huge society through a process of combining political communism with economic capitalism. Because of

China's considerable importance, the outcome of this experiment was being anticipated by most of humanity with a mixture of considerable apprehension and expectation.

Finally, in the year 1990 there were ominous signs that the Western democracies were also flawed and were unable to respond adequately to the needs of the time. The most obvious of these signs was the manner in which the political leadership of these societies was chosen. Although hailed as the ultimate form of government, conducive to justice, freedom, and prosperity, in reality the situation was quite different. The leadership of these societies was chosen in several similar, yet somewhat different ways, all focusing on an individual as a leader. This leader had to be strong, forceful, competitive, charismatic, attractive (particularly on television), and capable of destroying political opponents by exposing their weaknesses, faults, and shortcomings. These governments were organized in such a way that there were continuous power struggles and checks and balances among two or more segments of the government or opposing political parties. The government and the opposition, the administrative and the legislative, the right and the left, and the liberal and the conservative—these were some of the main points of demarcation and distinction.

As we reflect on the political rhetoric of the year 1990, we cannot but conclude that if the electorate were to elect any of the opposing candidates of the participating political parties, they would bring about untold destruction, incompetence, misery, and violence to their countries. These Western democratic governments focused much attention on their economic and military growth, creating highly affluent and materially well-to-do countries, capable of waging wars and selling weapons of awesome destructive power to the less developed and critically burdened regions of the world described earlier.

The overall methods of government in Western democratic countries, the lifestyle of their peoples, and the value systems they held were highly competitive, prone to adulation of individuals with power, consumed with the forces of aggression and pleasure, easily influenced by the doctrines of immediate gratification, and an unconstrained pursuit of self-centered objectives. Immediate relief from the painful process of growth and maturity was constantly sought, and opportunities for enlightenment and insight were often lost.

These "democratic societies," functioning according to a collective adolescent mindset, combined the glories of power and joys of pleasure in their systems of government and ways of life. Because of this combination of power and pleasure, these types of society and forms of government were perceived as the best that humanity could produce. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the year 1990 and the years before and after it, "Westernization" and more specifically "Americanization" fever was afflicting the whole of humanity. Every aspect of the life of humanity in every corner of the world was being influenced by the "American" lifestyle, which was an adolescent lifestyle par excellence.

However, by the year 1990, there were already danger signals on the horizon that unless a great leap forward was made and the approach of these societies changed, they would find themselves facing unsolvable challenges. The most dangerous characteristic of the politics of the year 1990 was the fact that nothing was conducive to unity and wholeness. Most leaders and ideologies focused on the welfare of their own communities and followers, and in the process, either intentionally or unintentionally, encouraged separation, competition, and disunity. These conditions were to bring about, as the history of the succeeding decade shows, considerable pain and suffering for humanity.

David:

I think this speaker is too hard on the leaders, particularly the leaders from democratic countries. In these countries we choose our leaders openly and let everyone say what they want to say, and we have the best leaders in the world.

Ravi:

I am not so sure about what you say. We have many examples of problematic leaders everywhere. I cannot think of a country without problems with their leaders. I think what this means is that a new type of leadership is needed, and I hope that we will talk about this at one of our upcoming sessions.

Ashura:

This speaker knows her stuff. She was right on in her description of the awful conditions of the poor people in the world. Most of us are removed from those suffering masses and only see them on the news and in the statistics. Their suffering does not touch our conscience, our humanity. I have lived under these circumstances. I know what it is like to be poor and hungry, and humiliated. Only because I was able to get a scholarship, was I able to escape that miserable situation. However, I have to say that my situation still was better than the condition in which many other poor people find themselves in other parts of the world.

Mina:

When I lived in Africa, I became so deeply aware of the evils of not only poverty but also colonialism and racial prejudice. I hope this speaker will also talk about these issues.

Jacob:

As a matter of fact, the speaker touches upon many of these issues. Let us listen to her again.

Major World Problems in the Year 1990

In the year 1990, several major world problems were apparent. Among these were continued threat of regional war;ⁱ serious epidemics of AIDS;ⁱⁱ ongoing violation of human rights;ⁱⁱⁱ worsening conditions of pollution and destruction of the environment;^{iv} regional long-term violent conflicts; malnutrition, starvation, and death among a large proportion of the world's population;^v breakdown of marriage and family; widespread alcohol and drug addiction, and corruption in all segments of society, including the workplace.^{vi} A decade later, on 11 September 2001, the catastrophic terrorist attacks in New York and Washington opened a new chapter in history of intergroup conflict.^{vii} This list, however incomplete, clearly demonstrates the fact that if people and their leaders were to devote all the resources of humanity to the resolution of these problems, they would have certainly failed in their efforts to create a relatively problem-free world. Problems are usually symptoms of underlying disorders or else indicative of a state of immaturity. In either case, the best solution is to search for the causes of the problems and to create favourable conditions for maturation and growth. In this context, the problems outlined above could be attributed to two factors: a moral and spiritual bankruptcy and an adolescent type of mindset and worldview.

Problems such as war, injustice, extremes of wealth and poverty, prevalence of prejudice, and violation of human rights are symptoms of misguided minds and loveless hearts. These conditions are indicative of selfishness, arrogance, and delusions of power and force. They are also indications of loss of contact by people with the essential aspects of their own humanness: love for enlightenment, attraction to beauty and

creativity, and the natural tendency toward unity and harmony. These human qualities were missing to a very large degree in the overall discourse and conduct of life in the year 1990. Then, the world of humanity was spiritually dark and desolate. There was, of course, technological progress and much glitter, pomp, and hype. There was, of course much religious fanaticism and zealotry, but the lives of people everywhere were empty and filled with misery.

Other problems and challenges of the year 1990 could be readily understood within the framework of a collective and troubled adolescent mindset. These issues included the prevalence of violence; high levels of competition between nations, races, and various groups; demand for instant sexual and sensual gratification; the ongoing and almost universal focus on individual or group self-identity; disregard for the environment; and the enormous difficulties in interpersonal relationships between men and women, in marriages, families, in the workplace, and in arenas of social and political activity.^{viii}

During the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, humanity was in the final stages of its collective adolescence. Consequently, during these years, humankind experienced some of the most specific challenges of this period of growth in a very forceful and dramatic manner. It was not an easy adolescence; it was a troubled age. Humanity had many difficulties, primarily because adolescent humanity chose to disregard established standards of morality and ethics and decided to solve its problems with the help of reason and science, without the benefit of spiritual insight and guidance. To benefit from such guidance, we need to make ourselves receptive to it, and we must actively search for it. Adolescent humanity in the 19th and 20th centuries did neither. On the contrary, it was suspicious of all spiritual matters.

Spirituality gives meaning and purpose to life and provides the necessary moral and ethical framework for human relationships. That which renders humankind distinct is the nature and quality of our consciousness: our ability to know and to know that we know, our capacity to love and to know that we love, and our freedom to choose and to know that we have a choice. These three cardinal human capacities—to know, love, and will—make it possible for human beings to transcend the limits imposed by nature on all other living beings. Thus we humans become creative and free agents in the arena of life. We create arts and sciences; we design various forms of government; we choose different approaches to express our individuality and uniqueness; and we innovate particular ways to love, worship, and relate. In short, we create civilizations. At the core of all civilizations lie particular perspectives on the nature of reality, including that of human reality; the purpose of life, including human life; and the dynamics of our relationships with each other, with nature, and with the ultimate Reality. As such, civilization is a spiritual process expressed in a material and social context.

Spirituality is the essential dimension of humanness and historically has received its sustenance from religion in its purest and most sublime form. When there is spiritual deprivation, the foundations of civilized societies begin to crumble as the population loses its focus and purpose. Chaos sets in and relationships rupture. In search of a new framework, people begin to seek solutions from sources that are not in a position to offer a new and higher level of consciousness required for the continuing progress of civilization. This was the situation during the 19th and 20th centuries. Many so-called spiritual movements were nothing but mirage, giving an illusion of reality and adding to the spiritual hunger of humanity. Superstitious, illogical, and even absurd philosophies and practices began to find their way into people's lives.^{ix}

On the positive side, some significant degree of awakening on the part of certain segments of society also began to take place. In fact, a review of some of the less well-known but significant literature available during this period indicates that the essence of what was needed to solve humanity's problems effectively had already been outlined in the fields of science, philosophy, and religion. However, the motivation, insight, and humility for considering a new perspective on the nature and dynamics of humanness were missing. Thus it was not surprising that after the collapse of the former USSR, in the

latter years of the 20th century, there was a discussion among certain circles that the “End of History” was at hand.

In retrospect, we realize that the year 1990, with all its problems and difficulties was, nevertheless, more positive and creative than negative and destructive. In the year 1990, the peoples of the world were becoming aware of their fundamental unity. This was the most important development. Indeed, these positive movements toward unity became ultimately victorious over the forces of disunity and destruction, and helped us to herald the era of peace now in 2020.

Although the year 1990 is relatively close to us, it was nevertheless very difficult for people of that age to envision a truly peaceful and just world. We, in 2020, realize that the true foundation of a lasting peace lies in the willingness of the nation-states to accept subordination of some of their authority and power to an internationally elected and universally supported world body strong enough to prevent or stop any acts of violence from one or more nations against others. In the year 1990, nationalistic passions were strong, and the true hallmark of patriotism often was nationalism along with the exclusion of world-mindedness. In many schools children were indoctrinated with principles of national, racial, religious, or ethnic supremacy. At the same time, the European Union was on its way to becoming an increasingly united entity, and the United Nations was becoming increasingly, but grudgingly, viewed as a major effective force to resolve and eventually prevent conflicts both within and among nations.

Now, in 2020, through the painful dynamics of tests and growth, we are beginning to realize how shortsighted we were. In the span of 30 years, we have moved away from a suspicious and disunited world to a world at the brink of peace. A major contributor to the cause of peace over the past 30 years, as I stated before, was the role played by the United Nations with respect to the growing awareness among the nations about the need for a much stronger international body. Although the United Nations in the year 1990 had considerable success in creating a forum for international cooperation, it was nevertheless subject to the supremacy of its nation members. Gradually, it became clear that we needed a powerful international agency capable of simultaneously unifying humanity, maintaining peace among nations, and upholding the sovereignty of its members. There were several models already proposed for such an organization.^x Since 1990, we have seen the gradual creation of a powerful, peace-creating, and effective international union.

This is a brief and general review of the conditions of the world in the year 1990. My objective here was to invite you to project yourself into the future and imagine the kind of the world you wish to have in the year 2020. I am too old to be alive by then, however, the majority of you in this hall are much younger than I, and the future belongs to you. And, if you wish to have a peaceful world in the year 2020, you must begin now and must have a plan for achieving peace. And the first step in this process is to have a vision of a peaceful humanity. Acquisition of this vision is the most crucial step in establishing a peaceful world. It requires a fundamental change in your worldview, your understanding of the nature and purpose of human life, of the universe, and of your relationships within and with this universe. I leave you with this challenge, and I urge you to look to the end at the beginning of this endeavour.

Thank you.

Zhang:

Thank you, Jacob for bringing this tape to us. It was very interesting. I paid particular attention to what she was saying about the impact of Marxist ideology and Communist types of government. I am not fully in agreement with her. However, I think she is correct that China is going through an important process of change and that we

hope this transition will be different from what was experienced in the former USSR. I think at the present time there are no really clear alternatives for governance of human societies. It seems to me that we need a type of government that will put equal emphasis on both the welfare and the rights and the responsibilities of the individual and the collective. While Western democratic systems emphasize individual rights, usually with little reference to individual responsibilities, the Communist regimes put greater emphasis on the right of the collective and far less on the individual. Neither, in my opinion, adequately addresses the issue of welfare of the society as a whole.

Mina:

That was a really inspiring speech. She talks from the perspective of living in the year 2020, looking back at history. It's a good way to look at things, because it lets us stand back and be objective—to see ourselves the way we really are and want to be. The speaker's diagnosis of the problems of humanity in the year 1990 is that we were in the final stages of our collective adolescent mindset, which had, in turn, contributed to our rejection of those moral, ethical, and spiritual principles that form the foundations of a true civilization. In essence, the speaker gave us a psychosocial and spiritual framework, inviting us to reevaluate the conditions of the world through this unique paradigm. The concept of the collective adolescence of humanity I can understand, and I think it's very powerful and enlightening. But I have more difficulty understanding the role of moral, ethical, and spiritual principles in such issues as politics and business. We are constantly told that politics and business have their own principles, which are not necessarily moral or ethical. Do you know what she meant by ethical and spiritual principles?

Jacob:

I'm glad you asked that question. Many people attending the futurist conference had difficulty with the issue of human spiritual nature. All kinds of bizarre ideas were expressed, but the speaker's answer was really unusual. She said that we human beings are different from animals *not* because our bodies are different. In this respect, we're very similar to the higher animals. We see, hear, taste, touch, and smell just as the animals do. We experience pain, hunger, cold, heat, excitement, and even grief as some animals do. We also know that some animals have a certain degree of intelligence. And we know that both humans and animals have survival instincts and a tendency to follow the law of the jungle: survival of the fittest. What makes us distinct from animals, she said, is that we have the capacity to choose, and our choice can be made either within an enlightened and universal framework, or else, according to shortsighted and selfish considerations. It is this element of choice that makes us truly human. This is when we choose between right and wrong, justice and injustice, and good and evil. Spirituality, therefore, is a way of living that involves physical, psychological, social, economic, political, and moral aspects of our lives. Spirituality involves every aspect of life, she said.

Keiko:

I'm sitting here, finding myself confused. I grew up in the Orient. In my family the most important thing is to be perfect in everything you do, but particularly in your studies. I have been brought up to think that my ability to learn and to become successful was the most important thing. I'd rather kill myself than fail. Now this speaker spoke about the life of people in the year 1990. I tried to find my country and myself in her description, and it was difficult. On the one hand, my country belongs to the rich, industrial, and modern group of nations, and on the other hand, to the more conservative and ancient group. In our home we were required to be very polite, to obey our parents, and to be respectful of our traditional value systems. This resulted in my having a strong inner discipline, sense of order, and a respectful attitude toward cultural norms and those in authority, but also a certain degree of conservatism. For example, I've had difficulty adopting the Western way of thinking about life, which is not any more satisfactory than the way of life in my country. It seems that we need, as somebody else said before, a new way of thinking, but I'm afraid of it. What is this new way of thinking, this new worldview, this new mindset?

Linda:

I'm also frightened, but my fear is not about new ideas. I'm afraid that there aren't any new ideas to help us change our world. In our home we didn't talk about ideas—we didn't talk about anything serious. Both my parents worked very hard and came home tired; we ate something and watched TV, or talked on the phone for hours, or listened to music, or went out to visit with friends, or play some sports, or have a drink. Thinking wasn't a part of my life. Then one day I came home and nobody was home. A note said my father was sick in the hospital and that I should go there. I was sixteen. This was the first time I'd had to face such a thing. I was so scared. I froze. I couldn't do anything and went into a state of shock. My life had been so easy, and I'd never had problems like that. If it weren't for my father's illness, I wouldn't have believed this speaker. I'd thought she was exaggerating and that there wasn't so much misery. But when I saw my father sick, especially when we heard he had cancer, then for the first time I started to think about life. I was totally unprepared.

Ravi:

How's your father now?

Linda:

He is much better, thanks. I think he's going to make it. The doctors are very optimistic. But I'm not the same person anymore. I'm both optimistic and pessimistic.

Ravi:

I come from one of those poor countries where people die of hunger and disease. Where there's endemic violence. Where people spend most of their lives trying to find food, shelter, and clothing, and trying to deal with disease and daily problems. In our family we're now five brothers and sisters. We lost two, a brother one year old and a

sister five years old. One of our neighbours lost six members of his family—his mother, wife, and four children—all because of carbon monoxide poisoning. One night, when he was on the night shift and the weather was cool, members of his family burned some coal in a brazier in a small room where they all slept. The burning coal created carbon monoxide that killed all of them.

So, I don't think this speaker exaggerates, but I feel she's missing something. It's true that we lived in poverty and lost our relatives and loved ones in tragic ways, but we were also happy, we were together, we laughed, played, sang, danced, and cried together. The sense of togetherness and the sense of God were so strong that everything else became tolerable. I say these things not because I approve of poverty, ignorance, or injustice, but rather to show how powerful the human spirit is.

Yuri:

Let me say that his word *spirit* is really foreign to me. I was not brought up with such notions, and if it weren't for Jacob's clarification I think I'd have been totally turned off by this discussion. But now I see what all of you, particularly Ravi, are talking about.

When the speaker was talking about the failure of the Marxist-Communist experiment, I was really mad, because it hit very hard. I felt that I'd been criticized. But to be fair, she had a point. It seems that she's really saying that none of the existing models of governing human societies is really satisfactory. She says we need a new approach to governing our world, an approach centered on the issue of the unity of all of us. Now I agree with that. I'm really angry with the members of the media, politicians, and others who constantly brainwash and pit us against each other. Here we are from all over the world, and we love and enjoy each other and can work with one another. I bet all the peoples of the world, if given a chance, will be able to work with each other and enjoy it.

Mina:

Yuri, you've touched my heart. I loved what you said. I feel exactly the same way. I think I'm lucky that my parents always emphasized this issue of unity of all people. We traveled a lot and lived in Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America. Now I want to go to South America and other places where I've never been. Everywhere people are the same, with the same joys, the same sorrows, the same hopes, and the same aspirations. David, your family also moved a lot. What was your experience?

David:

I'm mad. I'm so angry I could kill. This whole talk and discussion is wrong. There are surely countries in this world that we could not trust and that we should defend ourselves against. My father works for the military, and my grandfather fought against Hitler. Now I feel that everybody's saying they were wrong. What was wrong about it? There's always going to be bad, dangerous people, and we need police and armies to protect us, and if we have to fight, by golly, we'll fight.

Jacob:

I feel there are some legitimate wars, and the war against Hitler was one of them. I'd gladly fight against a Hitler.^{xi}

Linda:

Yes, I agree, but wouldn't it be better if we ended all wars, so that there was no need even for a legitimate war? I feel this is our objective, and I tell you, give women a chance, and we'll do it.

Ashura:

I fully agree. Give women a chance. In my culture women have had very little opportunity to say or do anything. They're supposed to be separated from society, put behind walls and doors, like prisoners. In our homes, we had to cover ourselves, even our faces, in front of everyone except for the members of our immediate family. You don't know how humiliating it is not to be able to communicate freely with men and to exchange ideas with them. Many times, I've listened to my father, uncles, and brother talking about things that were obviously wrong, but when corrected, they would get mad and even at times become physically abusive. It was after one of these episodes that I decided to leave. I'd never been on my own. The first year was really hard, very lonely and frightening. As I think back, I want to cry, but things are different now.

I want to talk about another lecture that I heard at the same futurist conference that Jacob attended. This speaker also talked as though he was living in the year 2020, and briefly described what had happened between the years 1990 and 2020. He then described the proceedings of a conference that supposedly had taken place in the year 2018. I don't know whether I agree with him or not, but it did make me think. He was very persuasive:

An international gathering of all the heads of states and governments of the world was held in the spring of 2018. The main objective of the gathering was to create the necessary international treaties and administrative structures for the post-war era. Ever since 1986 (the United Nations Year of Peace), there has been a significant movement toward eradication of war and the creation of a peaceful world. The first positive step toward this goal was taken in the latter part of 1987 when the leaders of the then two most powerful governments of the world, the Soviet Union and the United States of America, signed a treaty to destroy all the short-range missiles in their arsenals. This initial agreement was followed a few years later by another agreement between the same two governments to eliminate 50% of the total nuclear armaments of these two nations. However, despite these remarkable developments, the world in the 1980s and the following two decades had very serious problems, which have already been described by the previous speaker. These difficult problems, however, had one very significant outcome: they awakened the conscience of humanity.

Gradually, governments began to respond to the call of a reawakened humanity and put into action the processes necessary for the establishment of a lasting, effective peace in the world. Toward this end an international task force composed of well-known defenders and advocates of peace was appointed. On the task force were equal numbers

of men and women, representatives of various races, scientists, representatives of major religions, as well as artists, writers, and philosophers. The task force, which had 361 members, began its work from UN headquarters and had at its disposal all the services of this international body. It was given a two-year mandate to draft a proposal for establishment of a lasting peace.

In December of 2016, the task force released its report to the leaders and the peoples of the world simultaneously. It included a call for a gathering of all heads of states and governments of the world in the year 2018. The main purpose of this gathering was to review and ratify a comprehensive, binding, and enforceable international treaty for the establishment of peace in the world. Under this treaty, all the nations of the world would maintain their sovereignty within a system of a federated world government. Each nation would have autonomy and receive the necessary assistance for its protection and for enabling it to nurture its culture, language, and other unique positive characteristics. Simultaneously, each nation would collaborate, in a spirit of unity with all other nations, to ensure that the highest standards of justice, equality, and regard for human rights are maintained and that the necessary provisions for the optimal development of all people in all parts of the world are provided.

The new international agreement called for rejection of all forms of authoritarianism, fascism, fanaticism, and dictatorial approach to the administration of human affairs. The watchwords of this New World Order were to be unity in diversity, the use of consultation for the resolution of conflicts, and a total rejection of the use of violence as the vehicle for achieving our varied objectives.

The treaty further called for gradual but total disarmament. Each country would have a police force to ensure its internal security and proper administration of its judicial system. However, the practice of creating armies for defense was totally banned. Instead, the treaty called for the creation of an international force, which would ensure the external security of every nation. Finally, the treaty provided ample provisions for the harmony of science and religion and for their use in a coordinated manner for the establishment of world peace.

Linda:

That is a pipedream. Things wouldn't evolve this way. Aggression and war are parts of human nature. It is very difficult for me to accept that the power-hungry leaders in every department of human life would be willing so easily to give up their favourable positions. I think even if we had a nuclear conflict, by design or accident, there will be little willingness for all these niceties. *But*, I agree with the speaker's conclusion. The way he recommends the world could organize itself is interesting. There's something in it that I like. It could be the idea of leaders of the world coming together and agreeing first to end war and then to establish peace. There's no reason they couldn't do such a thing. If we were the leaders, we would do it. Let me change that: *When we are* the leaders, we *will* do it.

Zhang:

I was talking with a professor of philosophy from Beijing, and he said that he thinks the world's political leaders are going to change their minds because of three main reasons: the demand for peace on the part of their populations, the increasing interdependence of world economies, and greater familiarity of peoples of the world with each other. These are all positive developments. He also said that negative developments such as barbaric wars, terrorist activities, environmental degradation, and unequal distribution of wealth would also play a major role in this process. But he said that there

is every indication that ultimately humanity will choose peace over war. We have sacrificed too much for our silly power-struggles and stupid wars. He is a very old philosopher, and I respect him and think he is right.

Ravi:

I often daydream about the future. I started doing this when one of the guys in my literature class began talking about his fear of death. He said that he often couldn't sleep, or if he did, he had nightmares about dying. I'm not so afraid of the future as I am concerned that I won't be able to do my share to bring about peace. I believe we've all got a responsibility to work for peace, but it's so easy to forget about it.

David:

What I am afraid of is the military way of thinking. I'm familiar with the military. Those people are always looking for an enemy. The worst thing that has happened, as far as the military is concerned, is that they have lost their number one enemy. They are now looking for another enemy so that they can go ahead legitimizing their existence and way of life.

Isn't it strange! As I listen to myself, I realize that I come across as being really angry at the military. I'm so glad there's no "shrink" here. A psychiatrist would have immediately said that I was angry with my dad. No way. I admire him so much. He's so strong, so brave. He'd give his life for his country.

Ashura:

My father's also the same way, but wouldn't it be better if our fathers lived for peace rather than die in war? I really feel this whole business of war is totally crazy.

After his talk, this futurist said that his main purpose in forecasting the future was to show his deep confidence in the ability of masses of ordinary people of our time to demand peaceful action from their leaders. He feels that as humanity matures, people will have much greater power over their leadership, and the leaders of the world will have no choice but to respect humanity's cry for peace.

Keiko:

I think economic issues are very important and may very well cause a major crisis followed by peace. History shows that many revolutions, uprisings, guerrilla movements, and wars have been due to economic inequalities and hardships. In my research on the current economic conditions of the world for our economics class, I reached the conclusion that one of the most serious economic problems in our world is the enormous gap between the rich and the poor. The world seems to be divided along economic lines: rich and poor people, and North and South. So, I think that one of the main prerequisites for peace is economic justice.

Yuri:

I agree that economic conditions contribute a lot to the issue of war and peace. Also, I think the media in our world has enormous power and usually abuse that power. If we want to use the power of ordinary people to help establish peace, I think we must do something about the media: newspapers, radio, television, and even movies and books. These are all now instruments of brainwashing and manipulating people. Most of the contents of these various ways of spreading information are either inaccurate or slanted toward a particular ideology. People aren't given accurate and straightforward information. I don't know how this can be corrected.

Mina:

I think you people have put your finger on the problem. You are all talking about the same issue: moral bankruptcy of our leaders in all walks of life. What's missing in our world is a set of universally acceptable and applicable ethical and moral laws—laws such as trustworthiness, truthfulness, honesty, and fairness. I hope when we come back to talk about “How to Create Peace” we'll address this and other related issues.^{xii, xiii}

ⁱ For detailed information on all wars of the 20th century, see:

<http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstats.htm>.

ⁱⁱ AIDS statistics: <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/aidsstat.htm>, and <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/aids-hiv.htm>.

ⁱⁱⁱ For information on human rights at UN, see: <http://www.undp.org/info21/hr/hr-un.html>.

^{iv} Statistics on Environment: <http://www.amstat-online.org/sections/envr/>.

^v Statistics on Population: <http://www.xist.org/>, and <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbnew.html>.

^{vi} See: <http://www.oecd.org/advancedSearch/>.

^{vii} See: <http://www.newscientist.com/hottopics/usterror/> and

<http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/September%2011,%202001%20Terrorist%20Attack>

^{viii} The teacher is encouraged to review the identity-based worldview as presented in the EFP Curriculum and to engage students in identifying positive features as well as the challenges of this type of worldview, thus encouraging them to identify the positive qualities in themselves and find constructive ways in which challenges of adolescence can be met.

^{ix} The teacher may wish to encourage students to do library and Internet research and gather 10–15 quotations about the concept of spirituality from significant thinkers. Also, a few examples from quasi-religious movements will be helpful as comparison for higher-grade students.

^x The teacher may direct students to visit the United Nations website <http://www.un.org/> for further research about UN activities and its future.

^{xi} Statistics and facts about the Second World War may be accessed from

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwtwo/> and <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/wwii/wwii.htm>

^{xii} H.B. Danesh, Science, “Religion, and Ethics: An Integrative and Developmental Formulation,” presented as the keynote address of the Science of Morality Conference held at the Royal College of Physicians, London, U.K., 8–9 February 2002.

^{xiii} H.B. Danesh, “The Science of Morality and the Morality of Science,” presented as the keynote address of the Science of Morality Conference held at the Royal College of Physicians, London, U.K., 8–9 February 2002.