

Ethics and Spiritual Values Promoting Environmentally Sustainable Development

**Ismail Serageldin
Richard Barrett**
Editors



*An Associated Event
of the Third Annual World Bank Conference
on Environmentally Sustainable Development*

*co-sponsored by the Center for Respect of Life and Environment,
the World Bank Spiritual Unfoldment Society,
and the World Bank
Washington, D.C.
October 2-3, 1995*



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(Continued on the inside back cover)

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Preface

Development practitioners and people in developing countries have sensed for some time that many prevalent beliefs and values that are reflected in current development paradigms may not advance environmentally sustainable development. Pollution of the global commons, the destruction of major ecosystems, increasing health hazards in urban areas, and inadequate global progress of poverty alleviation now impel analysts to question the pattern of material growth and consumption that, without a concomitant growth of social solidarity and ecological awareness, tends to contribute to the growing gulf between the rich and the poor, the increase in environmental degradation, and the exploitation of animals and the Earth without regard for future generations.

This conference began in the steering committee of the World Bank's Spiritual Unfoldment Society. Formed in March 1993 by Richard Barrett to promote personal development and spiritual renewal among the Bank's staff, many of the society's discussions related to the interaction between humanity and the environment. Although this connection was not being formally explored in the Bank, the society's steering committee recognized the importance of the relationship between values and sustainable development. They felt it essential and timely to organize an international conference to explore this link. Readily accepted by Ismail Serageldin, vice president for environmentally sustainable development, this idea became one of the Associated Events of the Third Annual Conference on Environmentally Sustainable Development.

This Associated Event addressed these issues from the perspectives of ethics and spiritual values. For the World Bank this was a new departure. The speakers came from diverse development backgrounds from both industrial and developing countries and from indigenous and modern traditions. They all agreed that the design of future development projects must engage the beliefs and values of the intended beneficiaries. The symbiotic relationship between humanity and the planet should be fully recognized at both the global and the local levels.

Attracting considerable attention at the conference, this topic also proved to be very rich. The contents of this volume capture many of the important themes of the proceedings.

Two realizations quickly became clear: that values lie at the very heart of our behavior and that sustainable development will occur only when we have belief systems that respect all life, assign priority to the common good, engender responsibility for the whole, promote equality, and support unconditional caring. There was agreement that the values that drive our industrialized and rapidly developing societies are not working in these directions. The pollution of air, water, and land increases, and the gap between the rich and the poor grows wider. The issue of consumption by the rich proves just as important to sustainable development as the issue of environmental degradation by the poor. In the end we all must accept personal responsibility for our planet.

This Associated Event of the Third Annual Conference on Environmentally Sustainable Development concluded with the consensus that true development takes place only when it engages the hearts and minds of the local community and advances every individual's economic, social, environmental, and spiritual well-being. Sustainability will be more easily attained when we commit individually and collectively to alleviating poverty, enhancing our environment, and supporting the common good.

Sustainability begins with each of us—our personal values, behaviors, and actions. Modern society almost totally misses the spiritual connection with Mother Earth and the nonhuman dimension of life so often found in indigenous cultures. Our institutions, technologies, and economic principles place insufficient value on preserving or honoring those environments or actions that sustain life on the planet and bring beauty to our lives. We need to redefine what we understand as progress. We need to move from improving living standards to improving the quality of life. This will happen when development becomes fully participatory and people-centered, driven by ethical values that embrace caring and nurturing at their core.

Ismail Serageldin
Vice President
Environmentally Sustainable Development

Richard Barrett
Founder
World Bank Spiritual Unfoldment Society

principal objectives within the context of ethical and spiritual values.

There are widely differing views as to what environmentally sustainable development means, especially in terms of objectives and goals. One of the most instructive papers I have read is Ismail Serageldin's article, "Making Development Sustainable," in which he examines the differing and sometimes overlapping viewpoints of three distinct disciplines: those of the economist, the ecologist, and the sociologist.¹

My first reaction to the paper was to ask, "Why not a fourth discipline—that of the theologian or the ethicist?" Since humans first became thinking beings, the ordering of the universe and creation has had a religious and spiritual perspective at its center. So why not now? Why are ethical and spiritual values not accorded a more significant role in assessing the manner in which we are now exploiting and reshaping the created order?

Is it because ethics and spiritual values are no longer important or necessary to matters so secular in their orientation? Or is it that current spiritual and ethical values are themselves vacuous, no longer operative in a world focused on materialism and empiricism? Or is it that, instead of being regarded as a separate and distinct point of view, as are the other three disciplines, ethics and spiritual values permeate each of them and become the link that ties them together?

Who will ensure that ethical and spiritual values get a fair hearing in the context of the economist's, the ecologist's, and the sociologist's points of view? How can we, as individuals and as a society, realistically live in today's world in a creative, sustainable, and humane manner? How can we help

institutions and governments take seriously the enormous threat to the biosphere that supports us and all living things, a threat some believe has the potential to imperil the continuation of civilization as we know it?

I suggest that we begin with each of us individually. Most changes that altered the course of history began with individuals who, by their example and actions, did what many thought impossible. In small but important ways each made a beginning, and underlying each one was a moral conviction and certainty that refused to be deterred. Perhaps in a similar, small way what we do here may also mark a beginning, a beginning that will have consequences far beyond our imaginations.

It matters that we care, that we are concerned enough about the inequity and the injustice, the exploitation and the degradation so prevalent about us that we resolve personally and individually to become involved, to make a difference. For if we do, and hundreds, thousands, or perhaps millions of others do likewise, we can change the course of history for the benefit not only of humankind, but of all living creatures, and perhaps even of the Earth itself.

Developing a Common Vision

Ismail Serageldin, World Bank

At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro the world came together to acknowledge that the incredible challenges facing this generation and the next require a different kind of development. Since the Earth Summit the World Bank has dramatically increased its environmental assistance to client countries.

Greening the portfolio means much more than just funding environmentally

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become involved, to
make a difference*

— John A. Hoyt

There are at least four kinds of capital: man-made, natural, human, and social. This concept enables us to construct balance sheets for nations and to develop a new system of environmentally adjusted national accounts

— Ismail Serageldin

targeted interventions. The Bank today lends about \$20 billion each year, only a small part of which is directly focused on the environment. We need to ensure that the entire \$20 billion to \$25 billion goes to environmentally friendly and socially responsible investments. Projected over the next ten or fifteen years, we will be committing \$200 billion to projects that support the environment and social development. With government contributions and cofinancing, this represents half a trillion dollars of environmentally friendly and socially responsible investments.

In addition to engaging in dialogue, developing technical standards, and carrying out studies, the Bank can influence projects that it does not finance directly. To do so, however, we need effective operating partnerships with others. This is why we have reached out to you: to learn from your experiences, to be challenged by your example, and to try, together, to forge a better future.

In this way we can become a major force for environmentally sustainable development. When defining environmentally sustainable development, nearly everyone starts with the Brundtland Commission definition: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Although this definition is philosophically acceptable, it is not always operationally useful. The "needs" of the billion people who live on less than a dollar a day or the billion people who have no access to clean water are clearer than those of families that already have two cars, three televisions, and two VCRs. Yet it is the second group that

consumes about 80 percent of the world's products every year.

The Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD) Vice Presidency has a two-step approach to developing an operational definition of sustainability. First, we have set up a systematic way of testing every proposal for economic, environmental, and social sustainability. Our ESD logo triangle represents these three criteria. Now we are developing a concept of sustainability that views it as opportunity, so that sustainability means leaving future generations at least as many opportunities as we ourselves have had.

We can measure opportunity in terms of capital. There are at least four kinds of capital: man-made, natural, human, and social. Sustainability can be defined in terms of the combined total of these four kinds of capital per capita that we leave to future generations. This concept enables us to construct balance sheets for nations and to develop a new system of environmentally adjusted national accounts.

To test this concept, the Bank calculated wealth—man-made, natural, human, and social capital—for 192 countries.² We discovered that man-made capital represents less than 20 percent of the total wealth. But it is on this small fraction of total wealth that most economic policymakers focus their attention.

This research led us to the conclusion that most wealth is in human and social capital. Therefore, investing in people is a primary goal of development. We have known this intuitively, and it is now supported by evidence. We need to put people first.

We have to recognize the need to empower the poor, especially women.

This empowerment means working to promote increased legal tenure to land; access to credit, education, and extension services; and accountable governments that feel responsible for protecting the weak and marginalized of society. We need to create a framework in which governance means transparency, accountability, pluralism, participation, and the rule of law. And all these actions must be based on shared moral values and a shared perspective of the future.

We dare to dream of a world in which people recognize that the wealth of nations comes primarily from society and from people, that treating people with respect and strengthening the bonds among them is the way to build a better society and a better future. We dare to dream—but we cannot wait for centuries. We need to dare to dream not just for ourselves but also for the poor, for the marginalized, and for future generations. ■

Human beings are not just creatures on the face of the Earth but rather integral parts of it. We are neither above it nor below it but within its very core

— John A. Hoyt

1969, we had completed the centuries-long transition from a species in awe of nature to a species that believed in the conquest of nature—even space....

It turns out that we were better conquerors than stewards. We tried to take the awe out of nature, to make the world we lived in safe and settled. But we ended up endangering species, including our own....By sheer numbers, we've tilled, built, and devastated what was wild. ...In great and small ways, we are struggling to understand our tenuous place within the world, not just over it.⁶

That understanding, I suggest, is probably the key to our participation in the world's sustainability. Human beings are not just creatures on the face of the Earth but rather integral parts of it. We are neither above it nor below it but within its very core, at the intersection of every pathway that encounters other life, coincident with the very spirit of life that gives meaning and purpose to conscious existence.

What we have attempted to achieve in this conference is the essence of this kind of philosophical and spiritual awakening. Although we may yet be a long way from achieving an ideological breakthrough, our success depends on our believing in the possibility of not only sustaining but enhancing the world order on which so much rests.

As we struggle to find solutions to problems, as we have in the last two days, let us not lose sight of the personal and the interpersonal. In our bonding with one another across gender and generations, across creeds and cultures, across races and religions, and even across species, we can learn and share in each other's hopes, dreams, wants, and needs.

Wisdom and Dignity

Ismail Serageldin

The presentations we have heard have been insightful, constructive, and thought-provoking. They engage our imaginations and our dreams, and they are truly built on values and concepts of universal appeal that transcend the specificities of any single tradition.

These testimonies should draw and retain our attention and our thoughts not just today, but in the days ahead. I have heard more than once that we need to challenge conventional wisdom. I believe there is no wisdom in the conventional, just as common sense is the least common of all the virtues.

I would like to reflect on the meaning of wisdom. When data are organized, they become information, and if one finds links, then information becomes knowledge. When you add insight, perhaps it can become wisdom. There is nothing conventional in that. Mortimer Adler, one of the foremost philosophers living today, asked why we find wisdom so rarely and why we link it with age rather than with youth. He concluded that it was because wisdom includes not only insight and brilliance but also the ability to listen, to learn, to enrich oneself from diverse experiences, and to have the true respect for contrary views that is essential to listening.

Adler also asked a separate question that had troubled him in his youth. "Why do all the moral values and traditions seem to be variants on the phrase that fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom?" He said that in the arrogance of youth he had thought that fear of the Lord could not be the beginning of any kind of wisdom, but with advancing age

he concluded that there is indeed profound wisdom in it.

What this boils down to is relevant to the discussions we have had, precisely because the idea of fear of the Lord is one of focusing people on the nonimmediate consequences of their actions. It is the idea of disengaging from the immediate and looking beyond. Indeed, when one thinks in terms not of one's immediate gratification or of the short term but of what is beyond oneself and of the long term, this is the beginning of wisdom.

In this spirit these two days have done much to carry us forward in thinking about the long term. I would characterize the ethics group as having had a greater focus on moral purpose and the Earth Council group as having had a greater focus on outreach. But there was much overlap and connection between the two groups. We were talking about sustainable development as a process that is inclusive and participatory, that is human centered and gender conscious, and that sees progress as the empowerment of the poor, the weak, and the marginalized to become the producers of their own bounty and welfare, not the beneficiaries of aid or the recipients of charity.

This concept is based on perceptions of human dignity. The poor are those to whom we should look and say, "There, but for the grace of God, go I." The rights of future generations have to be recognized. We have to look with moral outrage on the inequity that exists in this world, on the misery that continues to plague a large part of humanity.

It is morally abhorrent that in today's world seven hundred million people go hungry every day. In the last century the abolitionists looked at the institution of

slavery and said it was morally repugnant and degraded the free who tolerated it. It was not a matter of incremental change; it was a practice that had to be abolished.

Around the world in developing countries and in some segments of rich countries we find that the most basic of human rights—access to food—is absent. This is also morally repugnant, and all of us must become the new abolitionists.

The tragedy of the commons, participation, and peace—all these have moral underpinnings. They are not value neutral. No technical solution is value neutral. We are all motivated by moral values, and in this sense the outreach to create partnerships among us is a matter of shared values and common purpose, of building trust. We need to have faith in one another, in our motivations, and in our willingness to learn not just to get the prices right, but to get the roles right—the roles of national governments and the private sector.

While it is true that the private sector is the engine of growth, we also need to temper the market's ruthless efficiency of allocation with a nurturing and caring state. We need to find a balance between national and local government. We need to balance the role of nongovernmental organizations, community-based organizations, and international organizations so that the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

The kind of dialogue that we have launched here has opened windows onto different worlds for each of us. In this process we have also held up mirrors in which we can look at ourselves. This combination of mirrors and windows defines the boundaries in the mind where "us" ends and "them" begins. To the extent that this dialogue

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that in today's world
seven hundred million
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every day*

—Ismail Serageldin

has expanded these boundaries, we have made a step forward in asserting the common humanity that is necessary to be part of the universal ideal.

I thank you for having come to share your wisdom with us. I assure

you that we have opened our hearts and stretched out our hands, and we will be with you not just in the days ahead, but in the weeks, the months, and the years as we move toward a better world. ■

APPENDIX A

Program

Ethics and Spiritual Values: Promoting Environmentally Sustainable Development

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October 2–3, 1995

OPENING JOINT PLENARY Engaging the Vision

Evocation

Cha-das-ska-dum Which-ta-lum, Cultural Affairs Specialist, Lummi Nation,
United States

Introductions

Joan Martin-Brown, Adviser to the Vice President, Environmentally
Sustainable Development, World Bank

Ismail Serageldin, Vice President, Environmentally Sustainable
Development, World Bank

Maurice F. Strong, Chair, Earth Council, Costa Rica

James D. Wolfensohn, President, World Bank

Keynote Speakers

John A. Hoyt, President, Center for Respect of Life and Environment,
and Chief Executive Officer, The Humane Society of the United States

Ismail Serageldin

PLENARY SESSION Ethical Economics

Moderator

Willis Harmon, President, Institute of Noetic Sciences, United States

Speaker

Partha Dasgupta, Frank Ramsey Professor of Economics, University
of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Panelists

Kamla Chowdhry, President, Centre for Science and the Environment, India

Denis Goulet, O'Neil Chair, Department of Economics, University of Notre Dame, United States

PARALLEL SESSIONS Ethics and Spiritual Values in Practice

Values in Agriculture and Energy

Moderator

Alexander McCalla, Director, Agriculture and Natural Resources Department, World Bank

Speaker

R. J. Berry, Professor, Department of Biology, University of London, United Kingdom

Panelists

Christina Liamzon, Senior Programme Officer, Society for International Development, Italy

Ranil Senanayake, Co-Executive Director, Environmental Liaison Centre International, Kenya

Richard Austin, Environmental Theologian, Appalachian Ministries Educational Resource Center, United States

Values in Urban Infrastructure and Development

Moderator

Michael A. Cohen, Senior Adviser to the Vice President, Environmentally Sustainable Development, World Bank

Speaker

Norman Rice, Mayor of Seattle, and President, United States Conference of Mayors

Panelists

Gorel Thurdin, Deputy Speaker, Parliament of Sweden

Richard M. Clugston, Executive Director, Center for Respect of Life and Environment, United States

Paul Bierman-Lytle, President and Chief Executive Officer, RPP International, United States

Values in Business and Finance

Moderator

Elkyn Chaparro, Senior Adviser to the Vice President, Finance and Private Sector Development, World Bank

Speaker

Muhammad Yunus, Managing Director, Grameen Bank, Bangladesh

Panelists

Terry Mollner, Chair and Co-President, Trusteeship Industries, Inc., United States

Mamadou Dia, Chief, Capacity Building and Implementation Support
Division, Africa Technical Department, World Bank

Joan Bavaria, President, Franklin Research and Development Corporation,
United States

PLENARY SESSION Converging Perspectives

Moderator

Richard Barrett, Founder, World Bank Spiritual Unfoldment Society and Adviser
to the Vice President, Environmentally Sustainable Development, World Bank

Panelists

Yolanda Kakabadse, Executive President, Fundación Futura Latino
Americana, Ecuador

Ashok Khosla, President, Development Alternatives, India

Keith A. Bezanson, President, International Development Research Centre, Canada

Bisi Ogunleye, National Coordinator and Executive Director, Country Women's
Association of Nigeria, and President, Network of African Rural Women's
Association, Nigeria

Nancy Barry, President, Women's World Banking, United States

Thomas Berry, President, Riverdale Center for Religious Research, United States

Oren Lyons, Chief, Onondaga Nation, United States

SPECIAL ADDRESSES Values and Political Will

Introduction

John W. McDonald, Chair, Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, United States

Keynote Speaker

Timothy E. Wirth, Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs, Department
of State, United States

Commentary

Gorel Thurdin

CLOSING JOINT PLENARY Perspectives for the Common Good

Moderator

Keith A. Bezanson

Three Forums' Findings (Innovative Financing)

Alicia Bárcena, Executive Director, Earth Council, Costa Rica

Values in Business and Finance (Ethics and Spiritual Values)

Muhammad Yunus

Reinventing Aid and Cooperation (Innovative Financing)

Richard Sandbrook, Executive Director, International Institute
for Environment and Development, United Kingdom

Values in Agriculture and Energy (Ethics and Spiritual Values)

R. J. Berry

Institutional Arrangements: Local and Global Requirements (Innovative Financing)

Kathryn Fuller, President, World Wildlife Fund, United States

Values in Urban Infrastructure and Development (Ethics and Spiritual Values)

Norman Rice

Participatory Decisionmaking (Innovative Financing)

Julia Carabias, Minister of Environment, Natural Resources, and Fisheries,
Mexico

Converging Perspectives (Ethics and Spiritual Values)

Willis Harmon

Response of Panel

Thomas Berry

Keith A. Bezanson

Bisi Ogunleye

Oren Lyons

Thomas Berry

Emile van Lennep, Minister of State, Ministry of Finance, The Netherlands

Henrique B. Cavalcanti, Chair, United Nations Commission on Sustainable
Development

Kamla Chowdhry

Servicing Core Values

John A. Hoyt

Wisdom and Dignity

Ismail Serageldin

APPENDIX B

List of Speakers

Appendix B updates speakers' contact information since October 1995.

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APPENDIX C

Abstracts of Background Papers

Three background papers were prepared for this event. The sponsoring organizations encourage readers to contact the authors for complete copies, including notes, sources, appendixes, bibliographies, references, and accompanying proclamations.

Core Values for Environmentally Sustainable Development

Arthur H. Westing

Discusses the intersection between social and environmental values as an increasingly prominent, and often contentious, policy concern nationally and internationally. The 1950s ushered in studies of the effects on the environment of increasing human numbers, technical triumphs, and material aspirations which exceed the carrying capacity of the global biosphere.

For historical context and background Westing outlines the separate strands of social and environmental values of the 1950s and the way social values now encompass environmental values. He identifies important ethical issues and their links to spiritual mores, reviews current positions taken by various disciplines and groups, and specifies areas of consensus and contention. After examining obstacles to instituting value-based changes in current development approaches, he concludes with suggestions for further avenues of exploration to overcome those obstacles.

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Security, and Education*
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International Documents and the Movement toward a Global Environmental Ethic

John H. Callewaert

Represents preliminary research on the existing literature for developing a global environmental ethic. This research comprises:

- A list of documents that may serve as potential sources for such an ethic
- A gallery of the documents (identified by name, sponsoring organization, and date of adoption or publication)
- An overview of each document, highlighting the principles that may pertain to the goal of sustainable living.

Callewaert organizes both the list and the gallery into the following five categories of statements:

1. Principles and objectives of international law
2. International environmental coalitions and organizations
3. Business groups and economic organizations
4. Religious faiths and ecumenical

and interfaith organizations

5. Miscellaneous statements by individual persons, organizations, and domestic coalitions.

After emphasizing that this list represents an incomplete study with a Western and English-language bias, Callewaert invites recommendations of additional documents to be added to both the list and the gallery.

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Ethics, Values, and Environmentally Sustainable Development

Richard M. Clugston

Defines ethics, values, and environmentally sustainable development based on

the work of the IUCN (World Conservation Union). After presenting four critical ethical issues, Clugston:

- Includes a detailed table describing alternative environmental paradigms (listing major assumptions for technocentrism, sustaincentrism, and ecocentrism)
- Explores a new bottom line for development
- Lists implications of a shift in values involving ethical imperatives.

Clugston closes with an investigation of legal and moral structures for enforcing the emerging *Earth* ethic.

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