

# **"THE CULTURE OF NON-VIOLENCE"**

## **An ethical and cultural proposal of Universalist Humanism**

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The aim of this speech is to describe the most relevant aspects of the present socio-cultural moment and the principal characteristics of the cultural landscape promoted by the Universalist Humanism as an evolutive stage of civilization which will be addressed hereafter as the **"culture of non-violence"**.

### **1. THE CURRENT CULTURE**

On September 18, 1992, in a seminar organized by the Academy of Sciences of Moscow about "Humanism and the crisis of civilization" <sup>1</sup>, it was stated:

*"...we are talking about the vital situation of crisis in which we are immersed today and, consequently, about a moment of rupture in the beliefs and cultural assumptions that formed us. To characterize the crisis from that point of view, we might attend to four phenomena that directly impact us:*

- 1. Driven by the technological revolution, the world is changing rapidly, causing changes that clash with the established structures and habits of life of both societies and individuals.*
- 2. The mismatch between the speed of technological acceleration and the relative slowness of social adaptation to change is generating progressive crises in every field, and there is no reason to suppose that this process will stop—indeed, quite the contrary, it will tend to increase.*
- 3. The unexpectedness of events prevents us from foreseeing what direction those events, the people around us, and in particular our own lives will take; it is not, however, change itself that concerns us so much as the increasing unpredictability of that change.*
- 4. Many of the things we once thought and believed are no longer useful. But neither are there solutions in sight from society, institutions, or individuals—all of whom are suffering these same difficulties."*

*In the same seminar, it was also mentioned:*

*"Our present situation of crisis does not involve separate civilizations, as was the case in earlier times when those entities could interact, while ignoring or adopting elements from one another. In the process of increasing planetarization that we are experiencing today, we must interpret events as occurring in a dynamic that is both structural and global.*

*Yet everything we see is being destructured, fragmented: the nation state is reeling from the blows it receives from below—separatism and parochialism—and from above—regionalization and planetarization; individuals, cultural codes, languages, and goods are all mixed up together in a fantastic tower of Babel;*

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<sup>1</sup> Silo, Complete Works Vol. I, Humanism and crisis of civilization, Plaza y Valdez, Mexico, 2006.

*centralized corporations are suffering the crisis of having to become more flexible in ways that they can't manage to implement; an ever-widening gap is opening between the generations, as though in the same moment there exist subcultures separated from one another not only by their pasts but also by their future projects; family members, coworkers, political, labor, and social organizations are all experiencing the action of disintegrative centrifugal forces; ideologies, tossed about in this whirlwind, are no longer able to offer answers or inspire coherent action in human groups; traditional solidarity is disappearing from a social fabric that is continuing to unravel; and finally, individuals, while today they have—especially with the mass media—ever greater numbers of people in their daily landscapes, at the same time feel increasingly isolated and cut off from others. All of this demonstrates that even these destructuring and paradoxical events respond to the same process, which is worldwide and structural. And if the old ideologies cannot give answers to these phenomena, it is because they, too, are part of the world that is vanishing.”*

Everyone is aware that this World crisis deepens, making it difficult to set limits to this profoundly violent and inhuman process which unfortunately brings along absurd and unjustified suffering to wide layers of the world's population.

Furthermore, the main characteristics of this accelerated process of disintegration of a “materialist culture” are:

- **A violent destructuring in permanent acceleration.** This process includes not just international institutions, organizations and structures, but it is also reflected in the national states and interpersonal and personal relationships.
- **The adoption of violence as a methodology to solve personal and social conflicts.** When we refer to the use of violence we not only consider the physical violence, but also the diverse forms of economic, racial, sexual, religious, moral and psychological violence.
- **Disorientation and unforeseen situations which generate complete uncertainty about the future,** even more, and quoting a recent comment made in this very Center of Studies ... “ People start experiencing the frustration of the future” , a generalized feeling where a no-meaning in life produces a closure of the human times. This frustration and negative perception of what “has-still-not happened” takes over the human soul and influences all its expressions.
- This accelerated violent destructuring not only carries the germs of bigger dangers as the increase of wars and the international nuclear threat, the growth of military confrontation among nations and cultures, but also influences the personal intimacy through the progressive inner dilution of human consciousness, reflected in significant personal psychological and psycho-social dysfunction.

However, despite the cruelty and the acute current crisis, the Universalist Humanism perspective is not pessimistic about the future, on the contrary, it understands this critical moment as proper of the decadence and fall of an obscure period characterized by a materialistic culture. This reinforces the need to “create the awareness” that this period can also be a transition towards a new historical

moment and a new culture. This transition is possible and depends on the human intention and action.

## 2. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TRANSITION

The Universalist Humanism considers that we are living a period of transition where the current violent culture coexists with new a sensitiveness and trends that begin to originate and express in the social landscape.

This transition, as others in the history of Humanity, is not a linear or mechanical process. This process is characterized by a "struggle of human interests and intentions", of social and generational forces that coexist in the same social landscape but with different intentions.

Once again, as in important historical moments, the human being faces two possible options: to deepen the current direction with the corresponding increase of an even more violent scenario, or to change the direction to one that will lead to the development of more advanced socio-cultural models signed by evolution.

## 3. THE CULTURE OF NON-VIOLENCE

What does the Universalist Humanism mean when it refers to a resolute promotion of a new "culture of non-violence", as an evolutionary leap to the current moment?

Which are the foundations of this new culture?

Several of these aspects have been already mentioned in this round table. For example, those related to our concept of human being, the approach to science and inter-cultural relations.

There is an important starting point to the development of this culture which lays in an ethics based on "principles" of valid action and inner unity set at the core of the human existence conception. By this, we refer to the personal register of inner growth and evolution experienced in the practice of these Principles. They are not external rules, but inner ethical principles that are then transferred to the interpersonal sphere.

We are not going to enumerate all the "Principles" that can be found in numerous documents of the Universalist Humanism bibliography. We will just mention that they are twelve Principles and that one of them, known as **the "rule of gold", clearly states the kind of interpersonal relationship promoted by saying "When you treat others as you want them to treat you, you liberate yourself"**.

Taking these Principles as the foundations of a new moral, the Universalist Humanism raise in this historical moment a scale of values, which 6 fundamental points are:

- **First, it advocates placing the human being as the central value and concern**, in such a way that nothing is above the human being (whether the state, religion, money, power and ethnics)

- **Second, it affirms the equality of all people**, and therefore works so that the simple formality of "equal rights before the law" gives way to a world of equal opportunities for all.
- **Third, it recognizes personal and cultural diversity**, affirming the characteristics proper to each human group and condemning discrimination, whether of an individual or a group.
- **Fourth, it encourages every tendency to develop knowledge** beyond the limitations imposed by prejudices accepted as absolute and immutable truths.
- **Fifth, it affirms the freedom of ideas and beliefs**, and finally
- **Sixth, it repudiates the violence rooted in daily life** in all regions of the world, not only the various forms of physical violence but all other forms of violence: economic, racial, sexual, religious, moral, and psychological.

These Principles of valid action together with this scale of values, are ethical and moral pillars of the "non-violence culture" that if it gathers momentum and develops it will be able to generate a psycho-social and personal atmosphere that will leave the present cruelty as something of the past.

I think it is timely to remember one of the paragraphs of the book *Psychology Notes*, a fundamental work of the Universalist Humanism Psychology.

In one of its final paragraphs, in the chapter "Psychology IV" , it states:

*"...it is possible to consider advanced consciousness configurations in which every form of violence will produce repulsiveness with the corresponding somatic reactions. Such nonviolent consciousness configuration might get installed in societies as a profound cultural conquest. This would go beyond the ideas and emotions that are weakly manifested in societies at present to begin to be part of the psychosomatic and psychosocial human setting."*

We mean that this evolutionary leap will be possible once the "repulsiveness to violence" will be elaborated by human consciousness not just as an "idea" of what is right or wrong, but as a profound inner response that involves the intellect, the emotions, and a deep visceral register.

Finally, we should mention another fundamental aspect of this "culture of non-violence": its relation with the "human spirituality".

### **The "culture of non-violence" has a profound spiritual content,**

understanding it as the connection of the social and personal action with the most profound and valuable human intentions and aspirations. "Spirituality and non violence are inseparable concepts and when they are set apart or one of them is neglected, they lose their profound transformative meaning.

The exemplar works and actions of historical leaders and guides as Tolstoy, Gandhi and Luther King as it is Silo at present, are models of what it is being said.

## **4. THE CULTURE OF NON-VIOLENCE IN ACTION**

We have mentioned that this process is not mechanical. It is intentional and depends on the human action. In this context, the resolute action of people,

institutions and peoples play a fundamental role in the direction that the current world process may take.

That is why, inspired in this cultural paradigm, the Humanism proposes and promotes "exemplar" personal, interpersonal and social actions, to "raise awareness" on the issues we have mentioned.

Exemplar actions that can be immediately done in the personal, interpersonal, national, regional and worldwide spheres, as the following ones:

- To denounce the present situations that affect the majority and the discriminated minorities (whether of ethnical, racial, cultural or genre form)
- To claim the respect of the rights clearly stated in the present legislation which are neither respected nor in force as social practice (for example, those related to the universal access to the different levels of education, health and dwelling , necessary for and adequate human development).
- To promote a worldwide calling for an immediate nuclear disarmament to stop the danger implied in the new nuclear armament run.
- To strengthen regional proposals of progressive disarmament in the region and the replacement of armies prepared for war for regional peace forces to cooperate in disasters and the solution of health and education basic problems.
- Finally, to promote all around the planet, and with the highest intensity possible the participation of people and institutions in the next "**World March for Peace and Non Violence**" to be held around the world between October 2nd and January 2nd 2010, so as to make of this initiative an important world calling for peace and non violence to help to change the direction of history.

We have tried, as it was mentioned at the beginning, to describe the foundations of the cultural scenario promoted by the Universalist Humanism that have also started awakening within the peoples and in a civilization that is becoming planetarian.

It is a culture based in the ideals of peace, non-violence and in a profound and transcendent meaning of human existence. It is a new culture that promotes a profound and simultaneous transformation of human beings and their surroundings, with the aim of constructing a human being and a new non-violent and solidary society.

It is the culture that will open the door of the future Universal Human Nation.

Thank you very much.