

Special Series:

The Challenge of Global Transformation—
Humanity and the Environment (2)

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Following the last issue, The Journal of Oriental Studies presents the final installment of the dialogue between German environmentalist Dr. Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker and Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) and founder of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy.

Since they first met in Tokyo in March 2010, the two have continued their discourse by correspondence. Consisting of eight conversations, the series was published in Japanese in October 2014 under the title Chikyukakumei eno chosen: ningen to kankyo o kataru (The Challenge of Global Transformation—Humanity and the Environment).

Dr. Weizsäcker is currently a co-president of the Club of Rome and Mr. Ikeda is the global think tank's honorary member. Mr. Ikeda has also engaged in and published dialogues with Club of Rome cofounder Aurelio Peccei (Before It Is Too Late) and honorary president Ricardo Díez-Hochleitner (A Dialogue Between East and West: Looking to a Human Revolution).

With extensive references to Dr. Weizsäcker's work, Factor Five, this issue discusses such subjects as the concept of resilience in disaster prevention and relief, the Transition Towns movement aimed to achieve a sustainable society, and the importance of market efficiency and liberation from market fundamentalism.

FORTIFYING DISASTER RESILIENCE

Ikeda: We have exchanged meaningful thoughts throughout our dialogue on the challenges we face in such realms as the environment and energy, two of the most pressing issues of our century. In the course of this discussion, I have learned much from you, Dr. Weizsäcker, as to the path Japan must choose going forward to overcome these challenges.

By way of concluding our dialogue, in this final installment, I would

like to focus on what we can do to establish a way of life and society oriented to building a sustainable global society.

In recent years, a series of abnormal weather events have caused serious damage worldwide. In a study it released in July 2013, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) reported, “The world experienced unprecedented high-impact climate extremes during the 2001–2010 decade.”¹

The report cited such meteorological extremes as Hurricane Katrina, which hit the United States in 2005, the 2010 floods in Pakistan, and long-term droughts in the Amazon Basin, noting that during the ten years from 2001 to 2010, more than 370,000 people died as a result of abnormal climate conditions, a figure 20% higher than in the decade from 1991 to 2000.²

In 2013, typhoons of record ferocity devastated large areas of the Philippines and Vietnam, while heavy rains produced flooding in India and Canada, and many regions of the northern hemisphere experienced record heat waves. In Europe, torrential rains caused major rivers and their tributaries to overflow. The flooding in Germany, the Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, and Slovakia received extensive media coverage in Japan. I quickly sent messages of condolences to the stricken countries and the SGI members who live there. Japan was struck by torrential rains as well, and preparing for not only earthquakes and tsunamis but also such extreme weather events became an urgent issue for countries around the world. Have the 2013 floods raised awareness of extreme weather in Germany?

Weizsäcker: First, please allow me to express my sincere thanks for your concern about the flooding in Germany. The extreme weather events taking place around the world are also a source of great concern to me. The heavy rains and flooding in India and Canada were indeed disastrous, and one cannot help but be astonished at the horrific damage inflicted by the typhoons that struck the Philippines and Vietnam.

Though by comparison the flooding in Germany claimed far fewer lives and caused much less damage, the Danube River overflowed its banks, flooding hundreds of square kilometers. The worst affected were the Elbe River and its tributaries. For example, the railway bridge between Hanover and Berlin was destabilized, and it took a half-year to reopen it. Since the nineteenth century, we in Germany have built right up to our rivers’ banks, but it is now becoming clear that that was a mistake.

During the last ten years, opinion has gradually come to prevail that it is better to leave open space around our rivers to reduce the damage even when large areas adjacent to rivers are flooded. The German government has taken safety measures at the local level for dealing with floods and water damage, but as weather changes create more extreme conditions, the government is increasingly aware of the threat, and public perception of imminent dangers is also growing.

Ikeda: The growing awareness of the need to reserve open space around rivers to prevent water damage is a noteworthy development. Interest in the concept of resilience in disaster prevention and relief has been growing, which I believe is a significant step forward. As you know, the idea of resilience in this context is based on the recognition that natural disasters and extreme weather can occur at any time or place, and that steps must be taken to reinforce society's ability to resist such conditions, thereby limiting or containing the resulting damage. Resilience further underscores the need to strengthen the capacity of society to recover after such disasters or extreme conditions strike.

As the floods that beset Europe in 2013 and the super typhoons that hit the Philippines and Vietnam all show, extreme weather conditions are not problems limited to a single nation but affect entire regions. With this in mind, in the peace proposal that I issued in January 2014, I called for the establishment of cooperative mechanisms at the regional level—for example, in Africa and Asia—to reduce the damage wrought by extreme weather.

I also urged that this resilience be reinforced in parallel with the measures being developed on a global scale by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). At the 19th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in November 2013, an agreement called the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage—the two major themes, loss and damage associated with climate change, were discussed—was adopted.

But such response strategies remain insufficient, and I believe we must continue to devise numerous additional mechanisms. The same can be said regarding steps to counter global warming, an area in which negotiations appear to be stalled. At the conference in Poland, the WMO—while admitting that it was difficult to establish a direct link between climate change and individual tropical cyclones—warned that continued emissions of greenhouse gases would inevitably contribute to rising temperatures and a growing number of extreme weather events.

Germany announced at the beginning of 2014 that it had achieved the target for greenhouse gas reduction that it agreed upon in the Kyoto Protocol. We cannot but hope that other nations will follow Germany's example and be as engaged in doing the same.

RIISING WATER LEVELS THREATEN COASTAL CITIES

Weizsäcker: In the Kyoto Protocol, Germany committed itself to an average greenhouse gas emission reduction of 21 percent for the period from 2008 to 2012, compared to the base level of the year 1990. In fact, the country achieved a reduction of 23.6 percent, exceeding its target.³ On the other hand, numerous individuals persist in spreading the fairytale that global warming has stopped over the past fifteen years.

In some sense that is correct. Certain areas have not experienced additional warming during the last fifteen years. But many others have. In particular, the water of the oceans has warmed very, very significantly, especially around and under the Greenland ice, creating an increasingly dangerous situation. In several places, the ice has broken off in a catastrophic fashion or, at the very least, is starting to do so.

Newspapers are reporting that the melting of the permafrost has also led to major coastal changes, particularly in east Siberia. With these changes, travel by ships is now possible along the northern coast of Eurasia and North America, thereby opening new avenues for excavating more coal, oil, and gas—making things worse, of course.

Ikeda: As of July 2012, as you say, 97 percent of the Greenland ice sheet revealed surface melting,⁴ and its underside melting is also accelerating. The thawing of the sheet is an ongoing threat, and additional international monitoring of the process is needed.

In the lectures you gave throughout Japan, you frequently discussed the melting of the Greenland ice sheet and the accompanying rise of sea levels. Noting that many of the leading cities of Japan and Asia are at or near sea level and situated along coastlines, you stressed the dangers that rising sea levels present to the Japanese.

Weizsäcker: Many years ago, I was reading an article by Michael Tooley, a British paleogeologist, in the British science magazine *Nature* (November 1989) about the significance of changes in sea levels. According to that article, sea level changes can be traced over the last 20,000 years or so, and in a period from about 7,800 years to 7,700

years ago, an enormous change occurred in a nonlinear fashion—a stunning and alarming message indeed.

In that hundred-year period, sea levels rose seven meters. Though we can date the sea level rise to that particular century, the actual change could have occurred in a decade or even a single year within that larger time frame. The author attributed this nonlinear event to the catastrophic breaking off of the two- to three-thousand meters thick ice cap that stretched from the Hudson Bay over the Labrador Sea to Greenland.

This indicates that if ocean temperatures around and below the Greenland ice are getting warmer, the danger is indeed increasing for the ice to break off—not to melt, but to break off—causing a sea level rise of perhaps another six to seven meters. And if the same happens with the west Antarctic ice plate, sea levels could rise 14 meters, meaning that much of Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Alexandria, Bangkok, Calcutta, and Mumbai would be under water. The same would happen to all the major Chinese seaports, as well as Manila, Jakarta, and coastal cities in the United States—New Orleans, Los Angeles, New York, and Boston.

These cities could be submerged much too quickly to build any sort of protective dams. Even if there were time, it is quite a challenge to build dams 14 meters high. That's why I believe that the real danger, probably after the end of this century, could be a nonlinear rise of sea levels. In the face of this very real possibility, we cannot afford to relax our vigilance.

Ikeda: You are reminding us that we must not forget the sudden rise in sea levels that followed the sundering of a massive chunk of glacial ice in northeastern Canada.⁵ A rise in sea levels of just a few centimeters can have dire effects. As a UN report put it, “A half-meter sea level rise by 2050 would flood almost a million square kilometers—an area the size of France and Italy combined—and affect some 170 million people.” The report goes on to note, “The impact will be largest in East Asia and the Pacific, where more than 63 million people are likely to be affected.”⁶

Though it will be difficult to avoid such natural causes of rising sea levels as sundered ice caps, it is vital for nations to cooperate to the maximum extent possible in addressing man-made causes. Earlier, you noted that the melting of the permafrost would open “new avenues for excavating more coal, oil, and gas—making things worse.” This has serious ramifications that we cannot afford to overlook.

LIFESTYLES OF PRIDE AND FULFILLMENT

Ikeda: In our dialogue, we have agreed upon the need to abandon the present model of a society bent on the voracious consumption of resources and establish in its place a sustainable society. In this context, I strongly agree with your advocacy in *Factor Five*, in which you cite the importance of every individual deriving a sense of spiritual fulfillment, and scientific and technological initiatives as the keys to successfully freeing ourselves from a resource-wasting society. You state that we are now entering a time in which people are rediscovering the virtues of frugality, a culture and mindset of being content with what we possess that our forebears had recognized and appreciated. Furthermore, you suggest that “frugality” may be understood in our day as “sufficiency based on efficiency.” The real challenge for those in public office, in your view, is to convince their fellow citizens of the value of frugality and incorporate it into the economy and government.

You also advocate that rather than viewing this path as a “poor lifestyle,” we should take pride in embracing such a sustainable way of life. I find this belief, which expresses a new vision for a sustainable society, indicative of the depths of insight that you and your *Factor Five* co-authors offer. We could thus say that a lifestyle of living in appreciation of what one already has not only helps to expand the ethos of frugality in society, it also encourages people to ennoble their lives spiritually and inspires a deep sense of personal fulfillment.

Weizsäcker: In answering the question how we can respond to the threats we face on a global scale, I have offered the ideas of efficiency and, as you have just said, sufficiency. To restate, by *efficiency*, I mean the fivefold increase of productivity, and by *sufficiency*, I mean agreeing not to use more energy, water, and minerals, and feeling satisfied and happy about that.

I freely acknowledge that frugality and sufficiency are closely connected to the wisdom of religion. A vast majority of religions of the world naturally have, as a central value, simplicity and frugality. In a certain sense, one could say that the movement away from a religious to a secular ethos has led to the abandonment of the values of frugality and sufficiency.

Ikeda: I believe that we are entering an age when religion will be called upon to play a greater role in establishing such values as frugality and sufficiency in society. However, in the promotion of these values, if

people come to regard frugality, for example, as something negative, as a lifestyle that is forced upon them, as has often been the case, it will be difficult to win public endorsement of such values and expand this wave of social transformation. For the majority of people to feel personally motivated in making this lifestyle change and adhering to it, I think that it is imperative, as you note, for our notion of sufficiency to be underpinned by the sense of pride we can feel in doing what is right.

The reason that energy conservation efforts have received such wide, positive acceptance in Japan is that people believe their actions do not disadvantage anyone and are the right thing to do. Can you think of any other examples of successful social movements or changes that have been motivated by such pride and this sense of sufficiency?

Weizsäcker: I think the Transition Towns movement founded by Rob Hopkins, an environmental activist in Ireland, is an example.

To the best of my knowledge, there are numerous transition towns in existence in the world, mostly in English-speaking countries but also in Germany. The residents in such towns do not depend on goods received from outside sources and, while they lead relatively simple lives, they have chosen to focus on social interaction within the community.

The number of towns in Germany engaging in this social experiment is on the increase. The city of Freiburg is a good example. After the end of the Cold War, when French troops left the Vauban Barracks outside the city, Freiburg decided to transform a large area occupied by the former barracks into a new town section, which they named Vauban. Four out of five families in Vauban, I am told, don't own a car—not because they can't afford one, but because they find car ownership the wrong answer to the need for personal mobility. Their point of view is that they have a convenient tram running every three to five minutes, they have bicycles, and they have access to car sharing in cases where they really need a car. In this way, a new quality of life has emerged in Vauban, a lifestyle with few cars.

Vauban is recognized as a German urban area with a high level of personal happiness and a relatively large number of children, because families with children find it particularly agreeable to live in the Vauban. The fact that there are no car accidents is important in their quality of life. Vauban stands as an example of the possibility of living without energy imports, eating locally grown foods, wearing locally produced clothing, and residing in locally constructed buildings.

I believe that the residents of such communities are leading active social lives based on the principle of mutual assistance. Aware of their

personal responsibilities, considerate of the community's children and their neighbors, they are striving to build sound human relations.

TRANSITION TO A RESOURCE-RECYCLING SOCIETY

Ikeda: It is an excellent example of a sustainable lifestyle in which one can take pride and a wonderful case study of one of the world's first eco-towns or eco-cities. My understanding is that the Transition Towns movement aims to move away from dependence on oil in order to achieve a new, sustainable society. In practical terms, it calls for community residents to work together to reduce energy consumption and to promote usage of local resources.

I'm told that a SGI member in the United Kingdom has been involved in this movement, working to enhance greater environmental awareness among children and citizens. The point that I find particularly wonderful regarding this movement is that individuals are sharing a worthy cause with their neighbors where they live now and are voluntarily engaged in such activities.

The SGI, which shares the same awareness of the problem, has developed exhibitions such as "Seeds of Change: Earth Charter and Human Potential" and "Seeds of Hope: Visions of Sustainability, Steps toward Change," which have been shown around the world. The exhibitions encourage each individual to embrace environmental issues as a personal challenge and to take action in which each can take pride for the future's sake.

In addition, from 2011, we have sponsored "The Earth and I," an environmental exhibition held throughout Japan to raise consciousness at the grassroots level. One section of this exhibition features environmentally friendly cities of the world that have achieved positive results through the cooperative efforts of government, business, and residents. Freiburg is introduced as a remarkable city that rid itself of privately owned automobiles through a municipal Environmental Card program (replaced with the RegioCard in 1991).⁷

To reexamine our behavior and culture as consumers and rediscover the true value of happiness in the process of this reexamination; to find fulfillment in working with our neighbors to tackle environmental issues and drawing upon it to better our lives; and for this sense of fulfillment to serve as a foundation for the continuity of our civic action—these are the driving forces that will enable us to make the transition from a resource-wasting society to a resource-recycling society.

Weizsäcker: In our society today, people are submerged in the ideology of the market and are living amid an overflowing mass of goods. In that lifestyle, one is easily fooled into thinking that sitting in front of your computer online is a substitute for actually interacting with and caring for other people.

But that is clearly wrong. What we need to create is a civilization in which a self-centered life is recognized as unacceptable and unethical, and in which instead caring for one's neighbors and family members is recognized as good and right.

In my home, three generations are living together, enjoying pleasant and satisfying human relations. One of our daughters and her husband, as well as their three children, are all living together under the same roof with my wife and me. We are delighted to have our grandchildren close by, and they also seem very happy to have their grandparents around. Of course, the same is true of the middle generation, my daughter and her husband. I hope that my grandchildren will experience the same good fortune that I have had in my life. What I mean to say is that from my personal experience, family relationships are an important source of happiness and satisfaction.

Ikeda: I also regard family ties as a foundation for building a lifestyle filled with satisfaction. What you've just said reminds me of a point you make in *Factor Five* that, in striving to put the principle of sustainability into action in our lives, the question we should ask ourselves is whether we can justify our behavior as consumers to our children and grandchildren. This, I believe, is an extremely important guideline for us all.

I say this because, while our concern for future generations may be genuine, it is only by relying on such tangible, specific motivational measures as our heartfelt concern for our families that we can reinforce and regulate our every action and behavior on a daily basis.

Are there any other areas that you want to emphasize from the perspective of family?

IMPROVING SOCIAL CONDITIONS FOR WOMEN

Weizsäcker: One of my best friends is from India, former president of the Club of Rome Ashok Khosla. Through his company, Development Alternatives, he has created roughly three million jobs in rural India, which is a huge achievement. At one point, he looked at the happiness

and the attitudes of the people who were affected by the programs of Development Alternatives.

One of the most striking things he learned is that women who found a modest job through Development Alternatives—for instance in paper manufacturing at the village level—were actually happier. Another interesting fact he discovered was that, compared to women who lived in impoverished communities with high birthrates, women with jobs were very, very happy with only one or two children. In other words, the social security that women obtain through their jobs can make them feel happier and lead to stabilizing the population.

In the developed nations, however, happiness can be increased by *reducing* the amount of time that parents work, allowing them more time for their children. Social security systems could also be restructured so that parents agreeing on a reduction of work time in exchange for more time with their children will not suffer any losses in their social security pension.

Ikeda: Improving working conditions and ensuring social security for women and mothers is a significant issue for many nations. I exchanged opinions on this subject with Mankombu S. Swaminathan, the Indian agricultural scientist known for his contributions to the “ever-green revolution,” which saved Asia from famine. We spoke of alternative development methods to cope with poverty, carried out not by governments but by local communities, methods that are becoming widely accepted around the world.

Speaking of the need for popular reform movements, Dr. Swaminathan urged:

The challenge today is to carry the benefits of individual experiments or individual development models to more and more people—to women, the poor and the socially and economically underprivileged. There are many affirmative sparks—the task at hand is to unite them into a great flame to illumine the whole world.⁸

If women are allowed to fully demonstrate their strengths, their contributions to social change will be immeasurable. When women are truly content with the quality of their lives and cast the light of joy upon their families, communities, and all of society, the seeds of happiness are sure to flower majestically everywhere.

REASSESSING ECONOMIC PRIORITIES

Ikeda: While stressing the need to develop technologies that will make our use of resources more efficient, you also point out the importance of avoiding the “rebound effect”—having all efficiency gains outstripped by a rise in consumption, as has always happened in the past. You make a pointed observation, and I heartily concur with it.

To avoid the rebound effect, it is vital for people to be aware of the proper justification for enhancing resource efficiency. To win social acceptance for this effort, I believe we need to promote the underlying thinking behind it, rooting in each individual such perspectives that enrich the overall quality of our lives.

This is crucial because human greed tends to expand without limit. The Buddhist philosophy of life refers to this limitless desire on numerous occasions. For example, “Even a shower of gold cannot quench the passions.”⁹ Another Buddhist text states: “And were the mountain all of shimmering gold, / Not e’en twice reckoned would it be enough / For one man’s wants.”¹⁰ Another Buddhist scripture warns against the way that the desires we assume we have controlled can intensify before we are aware, eventually consuming us: “He who desires different sense objects . . . , passions will overpower him, dangers will crush him and pain will follow him as water leaks into a wrecked ship.”¹¹

This may accurately describe the reality of the human condition today. And these insatiable human desires, enabled by the advances in modern science and technology, compel us to waste our natural resources and destroy the environment.

Weizsäcker: The rebound effect, or Jevons paradox, is an empirical phenomenon that has been observed during the last 150 years: Efficiency creates added demand—typically at lower prices, for goods and services and commodities. A part of my answer to the challenge of the rebound effect is to reverse this trend by making energy, mineral resources, and water more expensive.

In order to avoid social disruption, this should be done in a ping-pong fashion—following an increase in energy productivity by an increase in energy prices, following an increase in mineral or water productivity by an increase in resource costs—with the end result that the amount you pay on average for your energy, mineral, and water remains the same each year. That, I believe, would make this shift tolerable.

Overcoming greed, to prevent a reoccurrence of the rebound effect, requires us to explore deeply such anthropological questions as how we

live our lives, what we can do, what we can desire, and how we can overcome short-term, selfish attitudes. These, of course, are the questions asked by all religions of the world, questions that are perhaps more pronounced in Buddhism than in many other religions.

Ikeda: Regarding overcoming desire, Mahayana Buddhism teaches that kindling the fires of earthly desires draws forth the “wisdom fire” of enlightenment.¹² This represents a way of life in which our desires do not consume us, but rather we control, harness, and sublimate them for a greater, higher purpose. Instead of seeking to extirpate desires, it is a process of substantive transformation through which we employ the fundamental energy of life—the yearning to improve one’s circumstances, the fount of all desires—into a means to secure not simply personal gain but the happiness of self and others alike. It is from this perspective that we seek to contribute to the resolution of the problems facing modern civilization.

Again, Mahayana Buddhism teaches the bodhisattva ideal. Bodhisattvas are those who, rather than distancing themselves from the real world and its maelstrom of self-interest and earthly desires, leap right into the midst of it and—without allowing themselves to be swept away by ego or desire—embrace from the very depths of their lives the vow to act for the welfare of others and society. SGI members seek to stay true to such a way of life as we strive to uphold our Buddhist faith, and we have consistently engaged in the effort to resolve society’s manifold issues in the communities in which we live and work based on our belief in life’s inherent worth and dignity.

I am reminded of Aurelio Peccei’s (1908–84) life. As you know, Dr. Peccei spent half of his life as a successful businessman before establishing the Club of Rome. He reflected that he had lived a stimulating, rewarding life, not only managing a non-profit company supporting developing nations for twenty years but being called upon to apply his skills to revive an ailing enterprise under daunting circumstances. But in circumscribing the globe again and again—crossing the equator more than 300 times—he experienced a feeling quite separate from the fulfillment he found in his work.

As he once wrote:

I was convinced that to reclaim a piece of desert or to build a factory here and a dam there and to develop local and national plans are indispensable activities; but I also gradually realized that to concentrate practically all efforts on such individual projects or

programmes, while the larger context in which they are embedded—namely, the global world condition—is steadily deteriorating, would risk becoming an exercise in futility.¹³

These thoughts and feelings culminated in his establishment of the Club of Rome. Through *The Limits to Growth* and numerous other reports, he built the foundations for the activities of the renowned think tank, which brought to the foreground concerns over the future of humanity. This dramatic shift in Dr. Peccei's mind—a narrative that began as a fundamental question on the meaning and purpose of the pursuit of what *can* be done and ended instead in the pursuit of what *ought* to be done—shows us the way to build a sustainable society.

In other words, the goal must be to expand outward the bounds of self-benefit to encompass the welfare of other people and society as a whole. In so doing, the pursuit of what one can do for oneself undergoes a pivotal shift to what ought to be done for the benefit of both oneself and others. As I see it, this shift in the central thrust of our lives is crucial. This is something that can be seen, for example, in the pioneering approaches to environmental issues adopted by the German people. I believe that if this way of life and behavior becomes firmly rooted in society, we will have built a basis for preventing the rebound effect from ever happening.

SPIRITUAL SOLIDARITY COUNTERING GREED AND COMPETITION

Weizsäcker: As part of this effort to expand outward the realm of self-benefit to include the welfare of others and society as a whole, I think it is important to strive to live in a sustainable society and to work in a company—including profit-making enterprises—that does not operate on the premise of destroying nature. These can become pillars supporting sustainability.

Of course, people are individuals, and living in a good social environment does not automatically mean we will avoid destruction and ethical failings. While the individual has a very important role to play, I still think that working for an ethically responsible company or enterprise is of great assistance in avoiding destructive attitudes.

I want to bring our dialogue to a close with one final point concerning teamwork between Europe and Asia. The majority of the great religions of the world recognizes and preaches that greed is bad and teaches a lifestyle reflecting that truth, standing in opposition to the market fundamentalism exhorting us that “greed is good.” I have repeatedly

stressed the importance of an alliance between Europeans and Asians, and I also urge such an alliance in the realms of ethics and religion.

Through such a political, economic, moral, and religious alliance, we can find the will and strength to stand up against competition as the decisive criterion in all things, to stand up against unchecked and inhumane market forces destroying the power of the state to protect the welfare of its citizens. And we can stand up against the destruction of morals and the short-termism that many today seem to support and cherish, almost as a human right.

Ikeda: Your proposal carries much weight and worth. A maxim popular in the 1930s and often attributed to Mahatma Gandhi reads, “Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need but not every man’s greed.” The Earth does not have the capacity to sate limitless human greed. Continuing as we are now can only result in the present generation squandering the resources needed for future generations to survive.

It is a difficult problem, yet, as the saying goes, “The longest way round can be the shortest way home.” I believe that to avert and ultimately resolve the predicament humankind faces, we need to revise our perception of happiness, which now equates mass consumption—the endless pursuit of desire—with fulfillment.

As I have said, Mahayana Buddhism teaches that earthly desires are the springboard to enlightenment. We must not allow ourselves to become captives of our desires, but redirect the deep-seated energies of life underlying these base impulses toward the greater aims and values of harmonious coexistence and co-prosperity, toward building a better society, redirecting our way of life toward true fulfillment and happiness, or enlightenment.

I believe a core mission and responsibility of religion is to offer perspectives that will sustain us in the challenge of transforming the times. Such insights should enable us to reassess the plethora of materialistic values on which society places such a premium today and reorient every individual’s life in a more positive direction.

I am deeply grateful to have had this opportunity to engage in a frank exchange of opinions with you, Dr. Weizsäcker, one of Europe’s leading environmental scientists, and to have learned so much in the process. Thank you for all that you have contributed to our dialogue over the last several years. The SGI intends to continue to work together with you and the Club of Rome, forging stronger ties to advance together toward our shared goal of building a society in which people can experience true satisfaction and happiness. Our goal is to contribute to a truly global transformation. That is our heartfelt hope.

Notes

¹ World Meteorological Organization, “The Global Climate 2001–2010,” < http://www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/press_releases/pr_976_en.html > (accessed on September 19, 2013).

² Cf. Ibid.

³ Cf. German Federal Foreign Office, < http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Aussenpolitik/VereinteNationen/Schwerpunkte/VN-Klima-Kyoto_node.html > (February 25, 2015).

⁴ Cf. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, “Climate and global warming,” < <http://japan.um.dk/en/about-denmark/gl/climate-and-global-warming/> > (March 14, 2014).

⁵ Around August 18, 2010, NASA satellite imagery showed that a large parcel of ice, approximately the size of Bermuda, fractured from a massive ice shelf on Ellesmere Island in northeastern Canada < <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/huge-ice-chunk-breaks-off-ellesmere-island-1.973944> >.

⁶ United Nations Development Programme, “Human Development Report 2011,” < http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/271/hdr_2011_en_complete.pdf > (March 14, 2014).

⁷ In 1984, Freiburg’s Environmental Card was introduced for 38 DM (US\$13 at the time) for unlimited travel with the urban network. In 1991, it was replaced by the RegioCard, costing 47 euros (US\$61) a month.

⁸ M. S. Swaminathan and Daisaku Ikeda, *Revolutions: to green the environment, to grow the human heart* (New Delhi: EastWest Books (Madras) Pvt. Ltd., 2005), p. 69.

⁹ *The Dhammapada*, trans. Eknath Easwaran (London: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 133.

¹⁰ *The Book of the Kindred Sayings (Sanyutta-Nikāya)*, trans. Rhys Davids (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1996), p. 146.

¹¹ *The Sutta-Nipāta*, trans. H. Saddhatissa (London: Curzon Press, 1985), p. 91.

¹² Cf. *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings* (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2004), p. 11.

¹³ Aurelio Peccei, *The Human Quality* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1977), p. 13.

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Environmental scientist. Currently co-president of the Club of Rome and a member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts. Born in 1939 in Zurich, Switzerland. Weizsäcker has served as the founding president of the University of Kassel, the director of the UN Centre for Science and Technology for Development, the director of the Institute for European Environmental Policy, the founding president of the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment, and Energy, and co-chair of the UNEP-hosted International Panel on Sustainable Resource Use. He was a member of the Federal Diet of Germany and also chaired its Environment Committee. In addition, he is recognized for his co-written reports to the Club of Rome, *Factor Four: Doubling Wealth, Halving Resource Use* (1998) and *Factor Five: Transforming the Global Economy through 80% Improvements in Resource Productivity* (2009). He was awarded the German Environment Prize of the German Federal Environment Foundation, the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, and many others.

Daisaku Ikeda

President of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a lay Buddhist organization with more than twelve million members worldwide, Ikeda was born in Tokyo in 1928. He has founded the Soka (value-creating) school system, running from kindergarten through graduate school at universities in Tokyo and California, an educational philosophy now practiced in schools around the world. He also founded various cultural and academic institutions, from the Min-On Concert Association and the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum to the Institute of Oriental Philosophy and the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research. He has offered environmental proposals on various occasions, the latest of which is a proposal at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in June 2012. Based on an abiding faith in dialogue, Ikeda has met with world leaders and intellectuals in the fields of culture, education, and the arts, exchanging views on a diverse range of topics. Many of these meetings have led to the publication of dialogues, starting with *Choose Life* with the British historian Arnold Toynbee. He has received 361 academic honors (as of June 2015) from the world's universities and institutions of higher education. He is an honorary member of the Club of Rome.

Feature: Intercivilizational Dialogue—Toward the Mutual Understanding of Buddhism and Islam

From the Symposium in conjunction with the 30th Annual Conference of the IOP

On March 21, 2015, a symposium titled, “Intercivilizational Dialogue—Toward the Mutual Understanding of Buddhism and Islam” was held at Soka University, Japan in conjunction with the 30th Annual Conference of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy (IOP).

The symposium was also a part of the ongoing collaboration between the IOP and the Centre for Civilisational Dialogue, University of Malaya (UMCCD). In October 2012, the IOP and UMCCD co-organized a joint symposium titled, “Intercivilisational Dialogue towards Peace, Harmonious Coexistence and Sustainability” held at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In February 2014, the exhibition “The Lotus Sutra—A Message of Peace and Harmonious Coexistence” was held in Kuala Lumpur, along with a conference on the theme of “Peace and Harmonious Coexistence—an Islamic Buddhist Dialogue.” Through these exchanges, the IOP and UMCCD have been promoting mutual understanding between Buddhism and Islam.

This volume contains the five papers presented at the recent symposium.



From left: Dr. Faridah Noor Mohd Noor, Dr. Raihanah Abdullah, Dr. Christopher Boey, Dr. Kawada (IOP Director), Dr. Kurihara, and Dr. Yamazaki