

Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World

World Citizens Assembly

Lille - December 2 to 10, 2001

Thematic Group

An Ethics of Responsibility for the Twenty-first Century

WORK ON THE CHARTER OF RESPONSIBILITIES

1. DIFFICULTIES IN THE APPROACH

EVERYONE WOULD LIKE A PRECISE AND CONCRETE CHARTER, WHICH SHOULD BE IN AGREEMENT WITH THEIR CULTURE, THEIR CONTEXT, THEIR SOCIAL SPHERE, THEIR CHALLENGES ...

THE FIRST QUESTION RAISED HAD TO DO WITH THE ARTICULATION BETWEEN:

ETHICS AND CULTURE

The Charter needs to be pluricultural in its content, and also in its procedures. It is difficult to draw up ethical principles that can apply to the complexity of the world, as well as to the specificity of every situation, in particular when dealing with scientific, political, economic, religious, etc. issues requiring cross-cutting approaches as much as local ones. We noted that our approach on ethics and values diverged on fundamental issues.

ETHICS AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

The Charter needs to be very general so that it can be applied to all situations. This has the advantage of freedom in its application, but could also open the way to a Charter that is too general and abstract ...

Each of the 7 principles of the Charter tackles presents challenges. This is very well, but it seems that some challenges have been privileged, as important with regard to others, which has produced a few gaps in the Charter.

Among these:

- the peace issue, which only considers the question of justice; shouldn't peace also be considered in relationship to the issues of arms sales, armed conflicts, terrorism, wars, and nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons?
- human-rights issues (new forms of slavery)
- The Charter is fine, but it is drawn up through a rational and technical process. If we wish to transform the world, we need to begin with love of people, love of nature, and love of oneself.

2. TWO COMMON POINTS OF DEPARTURE

Through the divergences of our sensitivities, cultures, and approaches, we found two common points:

A. THE WORLD CANNOT GO ON THIS WAY.

- We are moving in the direction of a revolt against evil, when the victims are the powerful ...
- and of a trivialization of evil when the victims are those who cannot defend themselves, beginning with the environment.

B. WE ARE CALLED TO ASSUME OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

WE NEED TO ASSUME AN ETHICS OF RESPONSIBILITY BECAUSE IT IS UP TO US TO MEET THE GREAT CHALLENGE, WHICH IS TO REFORM THE PRESENT WORLD

THE "TABLE" PARABLE

We attempted to find an agreement on common principles for the Charter. We attempted to consider the 7 principles that were proposed, but a "summary" proved to be, if not impossible, at least inadequate.

We consider that the Charter must be the fruit of our common elements but also of our specificities and our divergences, that it must show our unity but also our diversity and our wealth. Our task is to make up the Charter as one makes up a table. We put in the colors of our backgrounds, cultures, contexts, and dreams ... the point was not to merge into a single color, but to know how to mix them and articulate them so as to express the beauty of diversity. Indeed, we saw the CHARTER as an expression of our convergences and also of our diversities.

In order to articulate the essential principles for an ethics of responsibility with concrete realities, local challenges, and different approaches to ethics, or even "different ethics," we decided:

1. to define four major strategic lines in the form of COMMON ETHICAL PRINCIPLES. These principles are intended to constitute the fundamental principles of THE CHARTER OF RESPONSIBILITIES

2. to provide the Charter with an OPERATIONAL PROGRAM OF ACTION. We wished to specify some concrete actions that should be undertaken with regard to the present and urgent challenges.

The ethical principles would be a project for in-depth and long-lasting transformation of the world, the actions would be the achievement of these principles at the core of the dramatic situations that are presently begging for an urgent response.

1. THE MAJOR LINES: FOUR ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

HUMANKIND AND THE BIOSPHERE

The relations between humankind and the biosphere must be relations of love. Humankind will not be able to establish mutually enhancing relations with its environment until it has learned to love it.

Natural resources belong to humankind. All people, institutions, organizations, states, etc. have the responsibility of protecting them. We need to develop an ecological ethics to inspire and regulate the actions of humankind.

GOVERNANCE

Power is only legitimized by its action at the service of the common good in respect of every person's dignity.

ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Economic globalization and the diversity of cultures must feed each other mutually. We need to attach as much importance to the innovative elements as to the traditional elements of all cultures in order to exploit the entire potentiality of the immense wealth of the present world. An articulation between the economy and ethics proves to be necessary. We need to give to the economy an ethical core in order to put economic trade at the service of every person's dignity.

REPRESENTATIONS

We need to draw up some ethical principles common to humankind in order to establish more balanced and more harmonious relations among individuals. Humankind must accept that it has an urgent need of ethics. Every person is responsible for being fair to themselves and for being fair to others. This attitude of responsibility must come from one's very foundation.

Every person has the responsibility of defending their own dignity and their own freedom. Every person has the responsibility of defending the dignity and the freedom of others.

It is on the basis of reconciliation with oneself, of love of oneself, that every person can make up with others and

with the world, like others, and like the world.

2. AN OPERATIONAL PROGRAM FORMULATED BY CONCRETE ACTIONS

A STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION NEEDS TO BE ADDED TO THE CHARTER

A. CONCRETE ACTIONS

We didn't have time to formulate statements, but we were able define them.

BIOSPHERE

- Set up an international committee in charge of evaluating environmental-destruction actions and circulate this information as well as supporting environmental-protection actions. Some precise actions could be:

- Protest against the destruction of the Amazon forest
- Protest against the privatization of natural resources
- Protest against the deprivation of water, of which some populations are victims
- Support the development of alternative sources and forms of energy

GOVERNANCE

To create a PARLIAMENT OF THE CITIZENS OF THE WORLD. This is about allowing civil society to participate in the governance of the world. Some concrete actions to undertake could be:

- Support important initiatives aiming to build peace in the world as well as to understand the present conflicts
- Democratization of the Security Council
- Strengthen the work of the International Penal Court created in Rome, in charge of punishing massive violations of human rights, international terrorism, traffic of human beings, gunrunning, and destruction of the environment
- Protest against terrorism, as well as be vigilant regarding military measures which, taken in the name of anti-terrorism, can endanger the human rights of civil populations.
- Protest against the negative drifts of the Israel-Palestine conflict
- Protest against the "collateral damage" of bombardments in Afghanistan: bombardments of civil populations, etc.
- Programs of legal aid to the present victims war, poverty, illness, etc.
- Draw up ethical codes with political leaders and with military leaders

ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

It is necessary set up an opposition force that will have as its task to generate the dynamics for a serious change in the economic model. Some concrete actions to consider could be:

- to tax speculative financial transactions;
- to democratize the World Bank and the IMF, in order to change the system that connects the power of their members to the capital that they can make available to these institutions;
- to draw up an ethics of consumption;
- to encourage experiences in economy of solidarity and alternative economy;
- to establish not only ethical products but also an ethical tax to the economy, to be applied to all financial transactions through to the purchase of any product, at the service of the environment, society, etc. This is about raising the ecological awareness and, in general, the ethical conscience of citizens.

REPRESENTATIONS

- Draw up a CHARTER OF RESPONSIBILITIES which, taking into account the cultural diversity of humankind, can be proposed on a global scale.
- Exercise in one's personal life an ethics of responsibility that could be made up of three elements: the Declaration of Human Rights, the Earth Charter (Rio 1992), and the Charter of Responsibilities.
- Draw up an ethics of the media.
- Encourage artistic creativeness while creating an ethical code with artists

CONCLUSION

Even though our concrete proposals are still not very elaborate, it seems important to us to associate to the Charter a strategy of action. The present challenges, it is true, are cross-cutting, profound, and require complex and long-term answers. However, these challenges appear in concrete situations, producing famine, disease, injustice, suffering, death, etc. We believe that the Alliance can also consider these urgent challenges.

B. STRATEGY FOR THE APPLICATION OF THE CHARTER

- SET UP THE PARLIAMENT OF THE CITIZENS OF THE WORLD, in charge of legitimizing, first, the CHARTER OF RESPONSIBILITIES, and then of drawing up the different ethical codes by context, by population, by region, etc. Between the principle and the law, the vocation of these ethical codes would be to become, in the medium term, INTERNATIONAL LAWS.

This CHARTER could be translated into ethical codes at different levels: cultural, socioprofessional, etc. This should be a charter that makes room for the cultural, political, economic, etc. complexity of humankind. It would be possible to start from the breakthroughs of the Alliance.

- CIRCULATE THE CHARTER THROUGH THE ALLIANCE. All Allies should become the actors, the carriers, and the witnesses of the Charter. CREATE A NETWORK ASSOCIATION OF ALL ALLIES AROUND THE CHARTER. THE ALLIANCE HAS BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL IN TERMS OF ITS CAPACITIES FOR ACTION. WE NEED TO KNOW HOW TO EXPLOIT THEM. THE CHARTER CAN BECOME THE PRIVILEGED PROJECT OF THE ALLIANCE. The idea would be to transmit it, to spread it throughout the world's civil society, from the smallness of our local context to the dimension of our Alliance. TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE FUTURE, WE, AS ALLIES, CAN SUBMIT OUR PROPOSAL TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS.

We should not get involved in complicated procedures, but present the world with a fait accompli. This is called "BREAKING THROUGH."