

Editorial Submitted to the Gazette in Northampton, MA – not printed.

Welcome to the Relationship Age

Terry Mollner

What is the phoenix that this generation must raise from these ashes?

The days of lists of important things to only us are behind us. The days of priorities where nothing is left out are before us.

An integrated world where any one person can turn our technology into a missile of mass destruction necessitates a response at a level we have until now not thought possible. Now it is necessary.

It is time for us to order our priorities for the planet and to achieve unity on implementing them. And we need to do it rapidly.

If we have our priorities in order, the time of allowing a single child to be born into poverty is over. And denying that there are stages of maturity of mind is over. And the time of gambling with sustaining our environment is over. And the time of giving priority to the polarization caused by majoritarian democracy is over. And the time of allowing the sovereignty of nation states to stand in the way of these things is over...if we have our priorities in order.

As a person matures, one comes to know that the universe is an integrated whole. The way one thinks about one's body becomes the correct way to think about the universe: all the parts are assumed to be cooperating for the good of the one whole. Cooperation, not competition, is seen as fundamental in nature.

Competition is a lower form of cooperation. Compromise is a higher form. Agreement is a still higher, more mature form of cooperation. "Survival of the fittest through competition" is fundamentally a cooperative act. Human beings, unlike animals, have the ability to very consciously operate at the higher forms of cooperation of compromise and agreement. Thinking in this way is a stage of maturity of being a human being. This more mature way of thinking is the phoenix of our generation.

When we are at this stage or higher, we mainly think in priorities rather than in the pattern of "this or that." This is because, like our body, we know that everything is going on at the same time and nothing is so unimportant that it can be fully ignored. "Thinking in priorities" is the pattern of mind that allows us to not lose the awareness of the right relationship between and among all things while focusing on one particular thing...the activity our mind is especially good at doing. When we make choices, we are not really choosing between this or that. We are choosing what we will give priority.

We are moving into this stage of maturity of mind as a species. I refer to this as the evolution into the Relationship Age.

The following is a recommendation for a five-point platform of priorities for the Relationship Age:

The Five Point Platform of Priorities for the Relationship Age

1. Survival: without people we can't do anything. This means appropriate systems of defense against immature, unhealthy, and evil behavior and the protection of the environment.
2. Eldership: without wisdom we cannot do anything well. Discussing stages of maturity, agreeing on them, and eldering our children to the higher stages of maturity as early in their lives as possible is the only ultimate defense against serious harm of one by another.
3. End of Poverty: without sustenance, one person is being used by another. There is ample for all human beings; but, because of poor prioritizing, well over half of the world is starving or close to it. These people are part of "our body." We can create a trust fund for every child the way wealthy people do for their children sufficient to meet minimum needs.
4. Consensus Democracy: without consensus agreements, one person has power over another person. We need to build a local and global consensus democratic governance system where the priority is on seeing how many agreements we can reach as the context for our disagreements. Currently, in our majoritarian democracy, the focus is on differentiating ourselves from others so one person will get elected and not another. This polarization of the conversation is a less mature form of discussion. A consensus democratic governance system can be created con-currently as a parallel system alongside the majoritarian democratic system, or any other system, without being granted any legal power. The consensus itself is a greater power. Mahatma Gandhi began to pilot this system in India in the last years of his life.
5. Global Government: without global agreements, the existence of people on the planet is threatened. We need to become a planet of agreements just as in a marriage, a family, a community, an organization, or a nation. National boundaries, and the abandonment of some inside and outside those boundaries, will not suffice.

A global movement to create this Relationship Age society can begin now from any point. However, thinking at the level of maturity of the Relationship Age is the essential first step to be effective. Only unity around this pattern of thought will ultimately end war and terrorism such that survival is assured. Then there can be a safe place for eldering. Poverty can be eliminated.

And all this naturally occurs by giving the highest priority in the process to truth, love, and evolution. Such a process will result in the focus being on the ever-expanding context of a global consensus rather than on the differences. The latter will appear smaller and smaller in comparison, and rest more and more comfortably, inside this growing consensus.

Welcome to the Relationship Age.

Terry Mollner is the Executive Director of Trusteeship Institute, a founding

board member of the Calvert Social Investment Fund, and a member of the board of Ben & Jerry's Homemade, Inc.