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HUMAN VALUES: ECONOMIC PREFERENCES AND ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

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"What the modern world needs far more than improved production methods or even a more equitable distribution of their results is a series of mutually consistent ideas and values in which all its members can participate. Perhaps something of the sort can be developed in time to prevent the collapse which otherwise seems inevitable. If not, another 'dark age' is in order, but we can console ourselves with the knowledge that the darkness is never of very long duration...There is no way of knowing which of the present alternative values will survive the present turmoil, or what new values may be developed to serve as crystallization points for the new culture patterns." [3]

Thus wrote Ralph Linton almost forty years ago and to date it would appear that the world society has not yet found a "series of mutually consistent ideas and values in which all its members can participate." On the other hand, we have not yet seen the inevitable collapse of society, although many are proclaiming that the eleventh hour is history and that the end is nigh at hand. However, most knowledgeable people would seem to agree that the socio-economic and environmental situation in the world is far from being a utopian dream, yet there is apparently still some hope. Thus, assuming that Linton's perceptions and predictions are correct, is there a remote possibility that all of the varied cultures of the world could come up with a common strand of values wherein all members of society could be uninhibited and unencumbered participants; and thereby forestall or prevent the "inevitable collapse"? Are the values we seek historical concepts, current philosophies, or a new set of values about to evolve from man's cultural institutions? What is and where is the illusive common strand?

Apparently Linton could not supply the answer, and being an anthropologist, perhaps he would have concurred with the late Dr. Allen Holmberg (anthropologist at Cornell) who once stated in a graduate class that he could not envision the American Indian tribes of the United States ever effectively uniting because of their cultural extremes. Such a unity of American Indians has yet to be accomplished, though some interesting pulsations are underway. Even if the American Indians were able to coalesce around some common strand, how could the communist world and the Christian world, for example, ever come together on common ground, unless the Christians were to Christianize

the entire world, which admittedly is the goal of many. But if the entire world was to become "Christianized", how pray would one neutralize the ethnocentrism of the Catholics, the Anglican Church, the Methodists, the Baptists, the Assembly of God, the Seventh Day Adventists or the Mormons sufficiently to unite them in some common goals as pertaining, for example, to the population explosion and its influence on the socio-economic and environmental well-being of society? Or perhaps the communists will prevail, and ultimately by the use of various means, convince us that Karl Marx is afterall our "God".

It is a personal contention that there are two rather strong and persuasive forces that basically propel society and determine its destiny, and these are economics and religion. Man's incessant drive to satisfy his insatiable wants is without question one of the paramount problems in today's present dilemma, for: "The history of man is the record of a hungry creature in search of food. Wherever food is plentiful hither man has traveled to make his home." [4] Yet the actions of the creature homo sapien, his mode of "acquiring food", hence his pragmatic economics, and even the rule of who must die if there is not enough food to go around (culturally sanctioned infanticide and genocide), is often the role of religions — thus, "Religion: the Control of the Universe" is an apt chapter heading of the book, *Man and His Works* by Melville J. Herskovits [2].

Power, whether past or present, whether good, bad or indifferent, has frequently been derived from religion and/or economics. Therefore, to what extent are religious-ethical values in conflict with our economic values, and to what extent are they, or can they be compatible? To what extent have we deified the basic premise of our economic "laws" and principles while proclaiming that economic "laws" and principles, like gravity, are amoral?

Most people assume that their economic values, principles and practices are consistent and in perfect harmony with their idealistic ethical values — that they are all part of the 'Holy Trinity' of God, patriotism and free enterprise. However, by subjecting people to my test on values, they are able to differentiate between what they feel to be the dominant economic values of today and what they would consider to be the prevailing theological idealistic ethical-economic

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values. For example, don't we tend to compartmentalize the latter for an occasional Sunday discussion. The value test has come to be known (by students and myself) as the "How Would You Like to Farm?" test, which evolved from some questions that were prepared for a survey questionnaire used during the summer of 1961 in a sincere attempt to ascertain from the indigenous inhabitants of an Arizona Indian community their desires in the utilization of their allotted land.

As a part of the survey questionnaire, these Indian people were given five basic options in the use of their land, and were asked to select the option that would be most appealing to them. Growing out of this survey of Indian people came the idea of setting up a modification of these options as a value test for other people, both Indian and non-Indian. As a consequence, the "value test" of "How Would You Like to Farm?" has been given to a few thousand people over the past 13 years.

The recipients of the test have been my students in agricultural economics and geography classes, Peace Corps and VISTA trainees (the latter slated to serve on Indian reservations), some sampling of Indian leaders from across the country, Indian O.E.O. workers, Indians in their local communities, members of my church, foreign students, the audiences where I have spoken (both civic and educational in nature), students of other professors where I have been invited as a guest lecturer, inmates (both Indian and non-

Indian) of a federal prison in Arizona and recently, the test as it is currently used, was given to many of the same Indian people who participated in the survey questionnaire in 1961. Over the past thirteen years, there have been changes and refinements made in the test, but essentially the content has remained unchanged. For example, much reservation Indian land across the nation is leased out to non-Indian farmers, so with the initial survey and in testing other Indian people, an attempt was made to find out how many Indian people wanted to lease out their lands to "white" people. Recently this option has been dropped from the "value test" because in all situations a rather small percentage ever indicated that they were interested in leasing out their land, and because one of the assumptions of the "value test" now specifies that the respondent will be a farmer.

Unfortunately only a small fraction of the results of those tested have been recorded and preserved, for the test has been mainly used as a teaching device to stimulate thinking. But the test has been given to a sufficient number of people, and frequently enough, to almost predict the outcome of the test before administering the same. However, over the past thirteen years, it has been interesting to note some changes taking place in people's values.

The ethical economic value test requires that a simulated environmental situation be created where the following assumptions are made:

ASSUMPTIONS OF THE SIMULATED ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION

1. Would you assume that you have just inherited 1,000 to 5,000 acres of very productive agricultural land (500,000 acres of range land, if, for example, Nevada is your utopia) sufficient, if managed properly, to provide a very good living.
2. The land is located in an area where you would most prefer to live.
3. That your neighbors are all congenial friends and/or relatives.
4. That you are young, vigorous and healthy.
5. That you are a good farmer and that you would not want to do anything else.

With these assumptions in mind, those taking the test are given four different options in how the newly acquired land might be utilized:

LAND USE OPTIONS

1. Farm your land as a private entrepreneur.
2. Consolidate your land holdings with other farms in the area, and create a large corporate farm where you would be the largest stockholder and where you could be manager if you so desired. Also, being the largest stockholder, you would of course receive the largest share of the profits.
3. Consolidate your land holdings with other farms in the area and create a large democratic cooperative corporate farm where each stockholder would have but one vote and where the stockholders (on a one man-one vote basis) would elect or other-

wise select their manager. The profits or earnings of the cooperative corporation would be distributed as patronage refunds on the basis of participation or contribution to the organization.

4. Consolidate your land holdings with other farms in the area and create a large democratic collective corporate farm, where each stockholder would have one vote and where the stockholders (on a one man-one vote basis) would elect or otherwise select their manager. The profits would be distributed on the basis of wants and needs.

With this background information, the questions of the value test are as follows:

THE ETHICAL ECONOMIC VALUE TEST

1. Which of the four options listed above would be your first personal preference in farming and utilizing your land?
(Results of Past Tests)

	<u>Options</u>				Total of Options	Total of Options	Total Percentage
White Replies	1 59%	2 13%	1 & 2 (72%)	3 13%	4 10%	3 & 4 (23%)	5* 5%
Indian Replies	24%	9%	(33%)	22%	43%	(65%)	100%

2. Which option do you think your great grandfathers or ancestors would have selected?

White Replies	86%	5%	(91%)	5%	3%	(8%)	1%	100%
Indian Replies	17%	5%	(22%)	8%	67%	(75%)	3%	100%

3. Which of the four options would you choose if you were to believe implicitly in what you considered to be the concepts of free-enterprise, capitalism and the "American Way of Life"?

White Replies	63%	23%	(86%)	6%	2%	(8%)	6%	100%
(Not given to Indian people)								

4. If you were to farm individually, would you want to be the most successful and most wealthy farmer in your community, or would you like to see the other farmers in the community equally successful?

White Replies	38% - Most Successful			62% - Equally Successful			
Indian Replies	14% - Most Successful			86% - Equally Successful			

5. Based on your knowledge of religion and the basic scriptures, how do you think God or your Creator would want you to farm?

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1 & 2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3 & 4</u>	<u>5</u>	Total
White Replies	35%	4%	(39%)	14%	46%	(60%)	1%	100%
Indian Replies	16%	0%	(16%)	2%	82%	(84%)		100%

6. Which of the four options do you think would best implement the humanistic concept of "love your neighbor as yourself"?

White Replies	27%	1%	(28%)	16%	54%	(70%)	2%	100%
Indian Replies	14%	3%	(17%)	0%	83%	(83%)		100%

7. How do you think traditional American Indians would have preferred to farm:

White Replies	14%	2%	(16%)	19%	64%	(83%)	1%	100%
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7a. How do you think the whiteman would prefer to farm?

Indian Replies	73%	19%	(92%)	0%	1%	(1%)	7%	100%
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8. How do you think Karl Marx would want you to farm?

White Replies	0%	1%	(1%)	1%	98%	(99%)	0%	100%
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*Up until the current year, the leasing of one's land to another was used as a 5th option.

The results of the value test, as enumerated after each question above, are rather self-evident. And since a detailed presentation, analysis and interpretation would be too extensive for the scope of this paper, only a brief summary of some of the highlights is given:

1. The test results rather vividly indicate that Indians presently and historically were much less individualistically oriented than were the non-Indians tested.
2. Even though we live in a job-oriented economy where over 90 percent of those earning livelihoods work for someone else, most of the non-Indians tested indicated that they would prefer to farm individually.
3. Interestingly, the desire to be the biggest stockholder and manager of a large corporate farm did not have an appeal greater than the cooperative approach; nor was the corporate approach significantly preferred over the collective approach. The apparent interest in the cooperative or collective option is probably a bit on the high side due to the number of Peace Corps and VISTA trainees (having somewhat liberal values) being included in the test sample. However, in comparing (not shown in this paper) test results of students taking agricultural economics courses in the 1960s with those taking courses in the early 1970s, there seems to be a shifting interest towards the cooperative or collective alternatives. Again this shift may be due to the fact that more students coming from non-agricultural backgrounds were enrolling in agricultural economics courses.
4. The majority of people in all groups tested have indicated that they would rather see others equally successful, with the exception of one group tested within my own religious sub-culture where the majority opted to be the most successful, and another group was divided 50-50, which indicates a rather high success orientation for people of my own sub-culture.
5. The undemocratic corporate alternative as already indicated, is not held in high esteem as measured by the personal preference of the respondents; furthermore, very few of those taking the test see the corporation as being an institutional entity that God would enthusiastically recommend, or the recommended approach if one were to truly love his neighbor as himself.
6. The test results pretty well establish the fact that the non-Indian tested experiences a conflict of human values—that their personal economic preferences are not in harmony with their ethical principles and that our society may indeed be suffering from a dichotomy of values, which leads one to wonder about the Epistle of James, wherein it states that: "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." (1) If James is right, does our Nation suffer from schizophrenia? Recent and current events at

the Nation's highest levels would suggest some rather calloused Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde activity. Thus should we, as representatives of this Nation, encourage Native Americans or tribal people found throughout the world to emulate our apparent schizophrenic image?

May I encourage those who become acquainted with this paper to administer this value test to their students and other groups or individuals. If convenient, the results of such tests and the nature of the groups tested would be appreciated. In administering the test, care needs to be taken to prevent the respondents from knowing in advance what the questions are. Most people will not likely acknowledge that they subscribe to conflicting values, so if they review the entire test before responding to the questions they will likely attempt to avoid the appearance of inconsistency. For example, this test was given to a brother who has been a lay leader in his church at the local and now at the regional level, and everything went well, with his answers being "proper" and consistent until I asked him how he thought God would like him to farm. At this question he exclaimed, "You cotton-picker, you have tricked me!" At that point, he and most others, by the answers they give, unwittingly acknowledge that there is a paradox between their economic preferences and their ethical principles.

If we are to avoid the continued bludgeoning of our resources, it would appear that economic principles, values and philosophies that sanctify greed, selfishness and self interest must be supplanted by the ethical-economic values that are rather universally found in the traditional extended family values of tribal cultures, and as also found in the basic scriptures of the major religions. Unfortunately very few, if any, of the religious institutions of the present day subscribe to their own basic scriptural values on ethics and/or economics. It is therefore my hypothesis that within traditional tribalism and within the scriptures of the world's major religions can be found the common strand of values in which all members of society can participate, and thereby mitigate the threat of another dark age. Does mankind accept and have the will to live by such a common strand of values, that may indeed prevent some sort of inevitable collapse?

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