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**In Search of a Value System
for Sustainable Civilization: Ethics and Quality**

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Plan:

- **Paradigm Shift**
- **Some problematics**
 - Conflicts and lack of peace
 - Corruption
 - Efficiency-based dehumanization
- **Sustainable civilization**
- Proposed values: **ethics and quality**

“The way we perceive reality
affects our behavior.”

Paradigm Shift

- Thomas Kuhn's "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" clarified the need for paradigm shifts in science (Kuhn, 1962).
- *For a shift of paradigm to be desirable and timely*, one has to have a perceived (at least by few) problematic situation which may be solved after adopting a different conception or approach.

It seems that humanity can benefit from a shift of paradigm

- to attack the problematic of:
 - conflicts and lack of peace,
 - corruption, as well as
 - efficiency-based dehumanization **and**
- to sustain the civilization.

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Some Problematics: Conflicts and Lack of Peace

It seems conflicts are everywhere:

- inter-family,
- inter-group,
- inter-religion,
- international relations.

To pursue their conflict, some people even would kill not only what they perceive their “opponents” or “enemies” but also themselves.

Some Problematics: Conflicts and Lack of Peace

- Several references exist for understanding the sources of conflict as well as how to prevent, manage, and resolve them.
- Several international institutes devote their activities to peace studies (GIPRI), (NPC), (OPI), (PSI), (SIPRI), (UP), and (USIP).

Some Problematics: Conflicts and Lack of Peace

Conflicts still prevail.

- Can we teach, through simulations, conflict management and peace support operations?
- War games are used to teach the opposite!

Some Problematics: Corruption

- ✓ Corruption is another problematic that humanity faces.
- ✓ A [global corruption report](#) and a World Bank's report on governance and anti-corruption are given at (GC) and (WB), respectively.
- ✓ In early 2002, a search on Internet provides nearly 2 million hits on “corruption” as opposed to nearly 1.8 million hits on “civilization!”

Some Problematic: Efficiency-based Dehumanization

Efficiency is the act of working or operating quickly and effectively in an organized way.

One of the fundamental characteristics of industrial age, as promoted by Taylor, was **productivity**; hence **efficiency**.

Some Problematic: Efficiency-based Dehumanization

Efficiency, though a very important metric, is often miscomprehended and pushed to extremes at the expense of the well-being of humans.

It is even argued that it became a cult by dehumanization of society.

Some Problematic: Efficiency-based Dehumanization

A type of dehumanization, or degrading of humans and human values, which can be labelled, *efficiency-based dehumanization* is one of the problematics of civilized countries.

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Sustainable Civilization

- Civilization is a relatively high level of cultural and technological development.
- Most of the previously industrial societies are now *knowledge societies*.
- *Every economic/technological era brings its own value system* and information age is no exception.

- Sustainable civilizations are desirable.
- Cultures are different and
- there are different value systems in different and even in the same region of the World.

- ✓ “Since in most countries of the region the masses of the people still live at or near subsistence level, **their goals focus** on the satisfaction of their most pressing and basic needs with little attention to social, political, economic and cultural goals and objectives not directly related to matters of survival.”

(Laszlo et al., 1977, p 164).

- ✓ “The futures of both peace and Civilization depend upon **understanding and cooperation** among the *political, spiritual, and intellectual leaders* of the world’s major civilizations. ...
- ✓ In the emerging era, **clashes of civilizations are the greatest threat to world peace**, and **an international order based on civilizations is the surest safeguard against world war.**” (Huntington, 1997, p. 321).
- ✓ It was also pointed out that “**World peace hinges also on respect for human rights.**” (Laszlo et al, 1977, p. 243).

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- Often complex problems consist of several intertwined problems.
- However, some types of problems, i.e., *root problems* may cause other problems to emerge.
- In attempting to solve complex problems *it is desirable to identify and solve root problems.*

- It appears that *ethics and quality are primordial for sustainability of civilizations.*
- Ethics and quality can also be influential in advocating, teaching, and practising conflict management, peace support and peace assurance, as well as activities against corruption, and efficiency-based dehumanization.
- However, both ethics and quality *should also be sustained.*

The two suggested values:

➤ **Ethics** and

➤ **Quality** (of life)

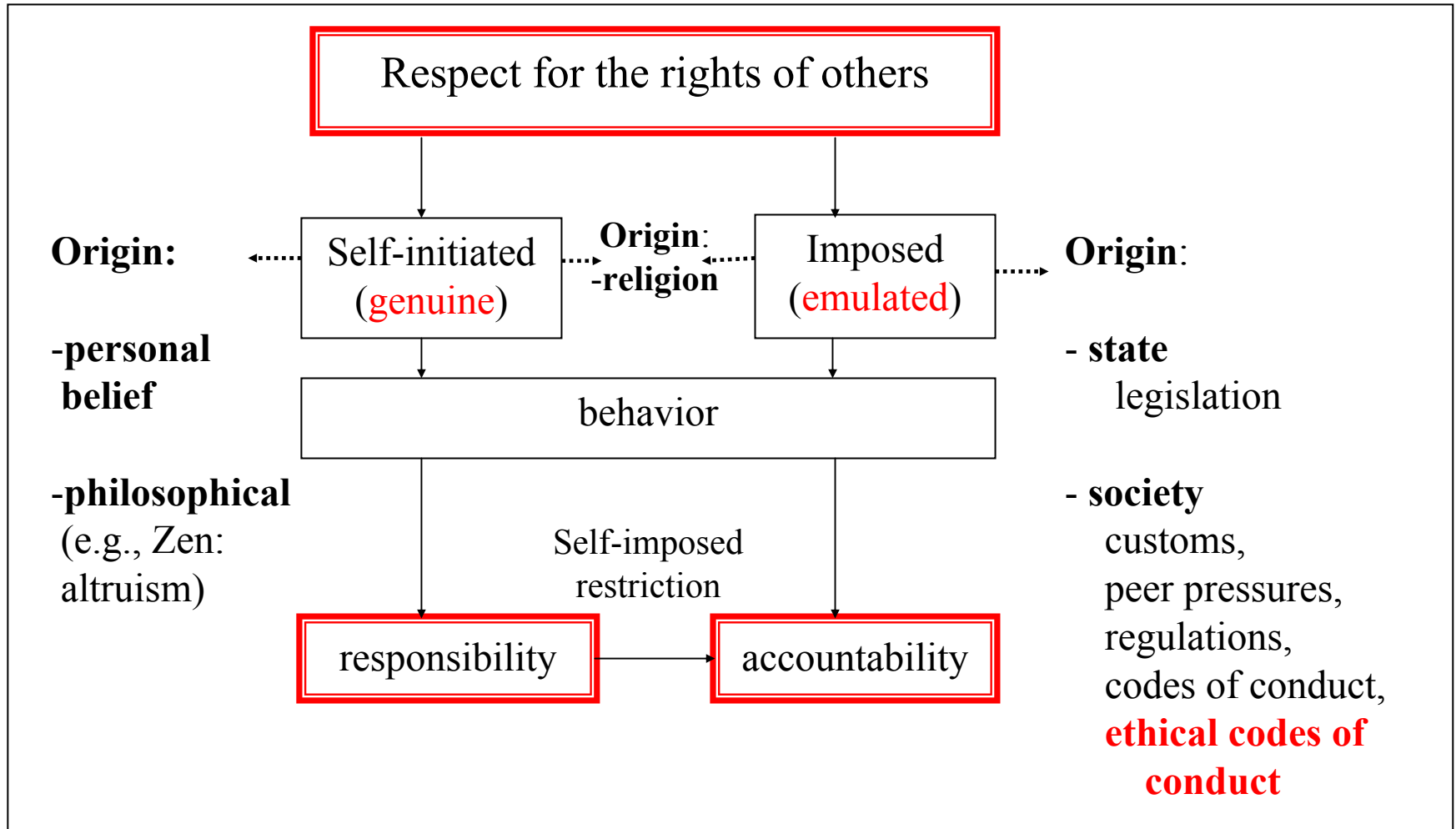
(not necessarily standards of living)

Hope they can be the rising values for humanity.

The respect for the rights of others:

- is the essence of right (ethical) conduct.
- It is also a fundamental concept in civilized societies, essential for the regulation of the social dynamics in order to sustain the civilization.
- *∴ we have to explore “all sources for the respect for the rights of others” to promote ethical behavior in order to sustain the civilization.*

The origins for the respect for the rights of others:



- In a corrupt society, ethical behavior is considered *naïve* and those who have ethical behavior are indirectly penalized.
- However, *a corrupt society cannot be a civilized society* either.
- A civilization is lost by the degree of its corruption.

- To maintain a civilization, there should be necessary conditions to protect, nourish -and not devalue- ethical behavior.
- *Sustainable ethics* refers to ethics within such conditions.
- Sustainable civilizations need sustainable ethics.
- Mechanisms should be explored and nourished for sustainability of ethics.

Sustainable Quality and Balanced Efficiency

Quality of *individuals* include:

- the quality of their physical, psychological, and spiritual health; education/training, acquired knowledge and value systems;
- the quality of their *activities*, the products/services they generate; and
- the quality of their *relationships* with themselves, their immediate surroundings such as their families and friends, and with society and humanity.

Sustainable Quality and Balanced Efficiency

Quality of organizations and government functions include the quality of:

- their members and
- charters,
- their activities,
- their products/services, and
- their relationships.

- Quality of individuals, organizations, and the quality of international relations are desirable; *but at a cost – sometimes money is the metric.*
- In real systems, there are limitations and the choice of the priorities and the allocation of resources become important.
- Most often, quality appears to lower efficiency and efficiency considerations prevail over quality.
- Hence, in the name of efficiency, *sacrifices are made from quality.*

- On the other hand, if quality is pushed to such a level that efficiency is lowered too much, then the system and hence the quality cannot be sustained.
- An *equilibrium has to be found* between **sustainable quality** and **tamed or balanced efficiency**.

- In balancing the priorities, *a value system which regards highly to “quality” would be helpful.*
- It might even be worth thinking of balancing standards of living with quality of life.

(**When the metric is wrong, the precision of the measurements is irrelevant**)
- Without sustainable ethics, quality of life cannot be achieved.

We have seen:

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