

Letter to World Citizens

Garry Davis

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I approach this subject with trepidation. Buried in it are numerous psychological, political and emotional mine fields.

Questions abound. Is there a dynamic or even theoretical connection between world peace and personal health? In other words, does everyone have to become healthy for world peace to prevail? Is world law dependent on humanity's health in toto? And, contrarily, is world war a consequence of sick humans? Put another way, can sick people even think about a peaceful world? Or do they fight because they are sick?

Maybe it doesn't matter whether most of us are sick or healthy. Perhaps a few really healthy people are enough to "cleanse" the world of war. There are precedents in human history supporting this view.

The Bible, in Genesis 18, refers to God being willing to spare Sodom if Abraham could find 10 honest (read, healthy) men in that city. Abraham failed. The city was subsequently destroyed for lack of the 10.

Henry Thoreau wrote that if "one honest man...ceasing to hold slaves were actually to withdraw from this co-partnership, and be locked up in the county jail thereby, it would be the abolition of slavery in America."

Emerson wrote, "To thine own self be true, and it shall follow as the day the night, thou can't not be false to any man."

The Preamble to Unesco's Charter begins: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that peace must be constructed." And the Bhagavad Gita claims metaphorically, "Thou art That!"

In brief, the healthy or reasonable human is revealed as the microcosm of the cosmic macrocosm.

Increasing numbers of healthy spirits, minds and bodies on the planet provide concrete evidence of the dynamic linkage.

In their first meeting in Okurayama (near Yokahama) in 1948, George Ohsawa, founder of the macrobiotic movement, asked Michio Kushi, a 22-year-old graduate student in political science at Tokyo University and already dedicated to world peace through world government, "Have you ever considered the dialectical application of dietary principles to the problem of world peace?"

It was an extraordinary question coming from an extraordinary mind. First, to relate dietary principles to dialectics requires an intellect trained in that branch of knowledge known in India as Advaita Vedanta, or Science of the Absolute, and applied to the yin/yang energies possessed in food itself. Second, making the connection between dietary principles based on dialectics and world peace itself implies a prodigious insight into the essential oneness of the world and the human family and, beyond that, into the order of the universe itself.

Kushi replied humbly, "I never thought of that."

“You have to study the relations between food and human destiny,” Ohsawa explained. “Someday you will find that it is the key to world peace.”

Ohsawa—a poet, businessman, philosopher, and author of several hundred books and articles whom I had the privilege to meet briefly in Belgium in 1949—claimed that health was vital to world peace, in that bad or inadequate nourishment led to disease and wrong thinking and abetted violence against one’s fellow humans. A healthy regimen led to reasonableness and peaceful relations. World peace would follow incidentally, Ohsawa concluded, only when and if people became healthy through a sane personal regimen.

We, who call ourselves world citizens and peacemakers, have been presented with a major challenge by the late George Ohsawa and now by Michio Kushi, who carries on the thoughts and work of the founder of the world macrobiotic movement. While many today prescribe a regimen based on grains, vegetables and fruit, only these two, to my knowledge, have boldly linked such a rational regime to the establishment of world peace.

Are they right? Just what does “health” imply when relating to world peace?

We must wonder how grown men can glory in death and destruction and still consider themselves “healthy.” How can otherwise rational leaders use nuclear arsenals as threats to invisible “enemies” when nuclear implies total destruction of society? Are they “healthy”?

How can otherwise good, caring fathers and mothers pay for bombs and warplanes to destroy fellow humans? Is “national security” the only justification? Or is there something lacking in us, i.e., health, which permits such irrational thinking?

I ask myself, for instance, how could I be trained at 21 to fly a B-17, then be ordered to bomb cities and not question what I was doing. Was I “healthy” as I dropped bombs on human targets? I shudder still at the question.

In Kushi’s major work, *One Peaceful World* (St. Martin’s Press, 1988), he writes that “human aggression and war have their origin largely in the biological, biochemical and psychological condition of the people involved.” War is a disease, he adds, “a social disorder, and cannot be understood apart from the physical, mental and spiritual health of individuals and society as a whole.”

The breadth of his thinking is not limited to mere diet. The jump to cosmic awareness is a natural and inevitable one for the healthy individual, he contends.

“The Order of the Universe is really very simple,” Kushi writes. “Most children readily understand it, and it is apprehended by the adult mind through more intuitive natural and aesthetic comprehension. This capacity is nothing but primary common sense, the birthright of everyone who is living in harmony with nature and their environment.”

The choice before humanity now, according to this modern jagat guru, is “government by artificial manipulation and control of basic life processes—envisioned by ‘Erewhon,’ ‘Brave New World,’ and ‘1984’—or government by natural education and self-reliance.” The human race, he concludes, “will either restore its health and consciousness by returning to a more natural way of life and put an end to disease and war, or follow an artificial way of life and be succeeded by an artificial species.”

Modern science, particularly neurobiology, has recently discovered some startling facts about how our brains work to acquire knowledge. According to Dr. Jane Healy in her trailblazing book, *Endangered Minds* (Simon & Shuster, 1990), lack of proper

nourishment—during pregnancy, for instance—can result in the destruction of millions of neurons, which bridge the gaps between precepts leading to learning itself.

A debate rages among social scientists and educators as to whether crime has a genetic or environmental cause. Without entering the debate ourselves, we note that prisons giving nutritionally balanced meals are reporting a low rate of recidivism among youthful offenders. In Michio Kushi's book *Crime and Diet* (Japan Publication), he cites, among other testimony, that of Barbara Reed of the Cuyahoga Falls Municipal Probation Department before the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs. Of 318 offenders," she told the senators, 252 required attention to their diet, and "we have not had one single person back in court for trouble who has maintained and stayed on the nutritional diet."

Healing Planet Earth, a masterful booklet written by Dr. Edward Esko and published by One Peaceful World Press of Becket, Massachusetts, contains this observation: "The modern diet is rapidly exhausting the earth's natural resources. In a survey of organizations and individuals in the fields of nutrition and ecology, [we can] summarize findings showing that a plant-based diet could contribute to a healthier planet:

- More than 50 percent of tropical rain forest destruction (216,000 acres per day) is linked with livestock production.
- The current rate of species destruction from loss of tropical rain forests and related habitats is 12,000 per year.
- One acre of trees is saved each year by each person who switches to a plant-based diet.
- The average amount of water required daily for a vegetarian who eats dairy food and eggs is about 1200 gallons, about 25 per cent the amount of someone eating the standard American diet. The amount of water required for a person on a dairy-free, plant-based diet is 300 gallons.
- A reduction in meat consumption by only 10 percent would free enough grain in the United States to feed an estimated 80 million people worldwide.
- More than 50 percent of the waste pollution in the United States is associated with animal food production and chemical farming.

"When someone approaches death," Esko concludes, "they lose the ability to breathe, to take in life-giving oxygen.... By destroying the tropical forests—the lungs of the earth—modern civilization, driven by a meat-centered diet, is pushing the planet toward a terminal condition."

Based on the evidence and sheer common sense, the correlation between healthy minds and bodies and world peace seems clear. Contrarily, those humans who artificially divide humanity into factions *are* sick—whether it be physically, emotionally, intellectually or spiritually.

We World Citizens can no longer assume that a global political stance is enough to create a peaceful world. If indeed we are the microcosm of the world macrocosm, we must consider our bodies with the same sovereign care as we regard the world itself.