

The background of the slide is a warm-toned, sepia-colored image. In the upper left corner, there is a circular compass rose with directional markers for North (N), South (S), East (E), and West (W), along with intermediate directions like NE, SE, SW, and NW. Below the compass, a portion of a map is visible, showing a coastline and the label "CAPE VERDE". The overall aesthetic is that of an old, weathered document or map.

The Role of Religious Education in the Development of "Universal Responsibility"

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Background

- *The Clash of Civilizations (Samuel Huntington 1996)*
- civilizations will clash because:
 1. “... (The) differences among civilizations are not only real; they are basic.”
 2. “... (The) world is becoming a smaller place.”.
 3. “... (The) processes of economic modernization and social change throughout the world are separating people from longstanding local identities.” This is what George Weigel has remarked: “Unsecularization of the world is one of the dominant social factors of life in the late twentieth century.”

Background

4. “... (The) growth of civilization-consciousness is enhanced by the dual role of the West.”elites in the East opt “to shape their world in non-Western ways.”
5. “... (Cultural) characteristics and differences are less mutable and hence less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones.”
6. “... (Economic) regionalism is increasing.

Background

- Conflicts will appear as “fault line wars”
 - These are “communal conflicts between states or groups from different civilizations... (They) are conflicts that have become violent. Such wars may occur between state, between nongovernmental groups, and between states and nongovernmental groups.”

Background

- **Known fault-line wars:**
 - Wars broke out in the early 1990s and have caused death of 50,000 in the Philippines, 50,000 – 100,000 in Sri Lanka, 50,000 – 200,000 in Bosnia, 200,000 in Timor, ..., etc
 - The 9/11 incident, the war in Afghanistan, the 2002 Bali bombings, the war in Iraq in 2003, the 2005 London bombings, and the continuing Israel-Palestine conflict.

Background

- Clash of civilizations is an issue concerning pluralism in the eyes of many researchers.
- Dieter Senghaas (1998) proposed to see whether “it is now still seriously possible to take up classical Chinese philosophy... as a source of inspiration or even as a practical guide (to resolve these global issues)?”

Background

- He sees *ren* (仁, benevolence) could be something in common to all Chinese traditions that has helped weaving the diverse cultures of ancient China together.
- Would this an inspiration about the way to uphold pluralism and maintain peace of the world?

Background

- The movement of desecularization can be another prime cause among all.
- Peter Berger said (1999): “uncertainty is a condition that many people find very hard to bear; therefore, any movement (not only a religious one) that promises to provide or to renew certainty has a ready market.”

The Movement of Desecularization

- We are wrong with the assumption that “we live in a secularized world,” (Berger 1993)
- Modernization will NOT necessarily lead to the decline of religion.
- Religions have taken new institutional forms to adapt to modern changes.

The Movement of Desecularization

- The forming of religious subcultures is the answer of those (surviving) religious communities to secularization.
- Secularization theory, according to Berger, thus has failed or falsified.
- The (new) religious communities are often tagged as conservatives by the West, and are forced to become their “enemy.”

The Movement of Desecularization

- Vigorous upsurges are not restricted to Islam, or Judaism. There are revival movements in Hinduism, Buddhism, and in smaller communities such as Shinto and Sikhism.
- These upsurges are often termed as “fundamentalism.”
- Desecularization can be as important as secularization in the modern world

The Movement of Desecularization

- These movements are not all the same. The differences can be big even within the movement:
 - Sunni and Shiite are two contending groups in Islam.
 - Indonesia is the most populous Muslim country but she is pro-democracy and pro-pluralism.
 - Evangelical upsurge has converted huge numbers of people in East Asia, including communist China, and in Latin America.

The Movement of Desecularization

- These movements shall have a great impact on (i) international politics; (ii) war and peace; (iii) economic development; and (iv) human rights and social justice.

The Validity of Huntington's Theory

- Two interesting papers:
 - Giacomo Chiozza (2002), and Johnathan Fox (2002) tried to invalidate the theory of Huntington.
 - But their works were not properly formulated and the world is still split into two concerning the validity of Huntington's theory.

Reaction to Clash of Civilizations

- **Graham E. Fuller 2008 tried to show that a world without Muslim is still a world troubled with terrorist attacks.**
- **No matter what, the fact remaining is that we have no other option but to live with Muslims, whose number is expected to reach 1.66 billion in 2009 versus the world population of 6.77 billion. A one in four ratio!**

Reaction to Clash of Civilizations

- William J. Dobson 2006 tried to show that the world is not disrupted with these conflicts.
- But is there any hidden risk that we do not aware of so far? In the form of over-spending in homeland security and military services?

Reaction to Clash of Civilizations

- Mikhail Epstein (2009) proposed a concept of transculture “as a model of cultural development that differs from both leveling globalism and isolating pluralism...”
- The transcultural perspective opens a possibility for globalization not as homogenization but, rather, as further differentiation of cultures and their ‘dissemination’ into transcultural individuals, liberating themselves from their dependence from their native cultures.”

Reaction to Clash of Civilizations

- The only chance that Epstein's proposal would succeed is through a cooperative global agenda to continually educate people since they are young to remove this natural dependence of native cultures.

Reaction to Clash of Civilizations

- Demerath III (2002) explained why many sociologists chose to ignore religion and the potential problems thus have induced.
- He believed that “both societies and intellectual disciplines may be better reflected in their sinners than in their saints. While a good number of my sins may represent purely personal depravities, others mirror the development of sociology as a whole.”

Reaction to Clash of Civilizations

- He wrote that “many social scientists tend to... regard religion itself... as irrelevant, anachronistic, and incomprehensible.”
- This attitude has prevented sociologists from considering religion as a cause of violence, or an issue in ethnicity.

Reaction to Clash of Civilizations

- From above, we may see the need of proper religious education in place to prevent or, at least, to reduce any future clash of civilizations.
- An immediate question follows: “What will be the theme of the religious education?”

What is Universal Responsibility?

- “Universal Responsibility” is a proposition raised by Dalai Lama the XIV in late 90s of the twentieth century.
- It is described in his book, *Ethics for the New Millennium* (Dalai Lama, 2001), as such:
 - “I am convinced that it is essential that we cultivate a sense of what I call **Universal Responsibility**. This may not be an exact translation of the Tibetan term I have in mind, *chi sem*, which means, literally, universal (chi) consciousness (sem). Although the notion of responsibility is implied rather than explicit in the Tibetan, it is definitely there...

What is Universal Responsibility?

- To develop a sense of universal responsibility of the universal dimension of our every act and of the equal right of all others to happiness and not to suffer is to develop an attitude of mind whereby, when we see an opportunity to benefit others, we will take it in preference to merely looking after our own narrow interests. Of course we care about what is beyond our scope – we accept it as part of nature and concern ourselves with doing what we can.”

What is Universal Responsibility?

- Dalai Lama now eyes not only on the Land of Snow Mountains, and he becomes more ambitious to provide the world a global perspective to resolve contemporary social issues.
- In this context, he is at least trying to help the world to find a viable solution to stop the increasing cultural confrontation around the globe, if he is not trying to find the solution himself.

What is Universal Responsibility?

- Universal responsibility is a must for every individual because (1) human beings are social animals. “If the community suffers, then each member of the community suffers.” (Dalia Lama, 2006b) and (2) globalization has practically removed national boundaries, thus making the very concept of “We” and “They” out of date.

What is Universal Responsibility?

- Dalai Lama tried to convince his readers that this universal responsibility has a scientific basis that it is a biological instinct of every human being.

What is Universal Responsibility?

- “The premise behind universal responsibility is the simple fact that we all want the same thing. Every being wants happiness and does not want suffering.
- If we do not respect this fact, there will be more and more suffering on this planet. If we adopt a self-centered approach to life and constantly try to use others for our own self-interest, we may gain temporary benefits, but in the long run both personal happiness and world peace will be completely out of question...

What is Universal Responsibility?

- A spiritual approach may not provide an overnight solution to all the political problems caused by our present self-centered approach, but in the long run it will address the very basis of the problems that we face today, removing them at the root.”

The Role of Religious Education

- Both education systems in Hong Kong and Macau have an implicit but common objective: to prepare our youths to enter universities.
- The current education system simply has no room to allow our youths to learn about the basis of human values.
- The knowing and appreciation of fundamental human values are critical to the construction of a world without sorrow.

The Role of Religious Education

- Some of my colleagues often complained that the current education system discourages students to develop a critical mind.
- They believe that with a critical mind, our students will spontaneously cultivate a proper ethical view.
- Nevertheless, judging from recent collapse of financial system and happening concerning the clashes of civilizations, this belief is questionable.

The Role of Religious Education

- All of the current studying profile do not involve anything that concerns the contemporary issues, not to mention anything that will help the development of a critical mind.
- Will the proposed new liberal studies curriculum a remedy? I think NOT.

The Role of Religious Education

- As pointed out by other authors, like Dermarath III, the inclusion of liberal studies does not necessarily help the students to develop a primary concern of human values.
- The discipline that can obviously help is religious education.
- Religious education should never be regarded as something restricted to schools with religious background only.

The Role of Religious Education

- It may focus on a single religion to coincide with the educational ideology of corresponding school, or can have a more general discussion on world religions to broaden the mind of the students.
- When students are granted a chance to learn about the diversity of ethical values of different cultures, they will at least know the root causes of clash of civilizations.
- Some may even be able to develop eventually their ways to accommodate these differences.

The Role of Religious Education

- Religious education thus plays a primary and important role to prepare the world to enter into a “Century of Dialogues” to prevent, or at least to reduce, any future clash of civilizations.

The Role of Religious Education

- Most of the people in a “civilized” society are brought up to live in a world without faith or religion.
- More importantly, they are brought up intentionally to ignore the contribution of religion that has been made in history.

The Role of Religious Education

- It is not exaggerating to tell that ancient religions were in fact mothers of all civilizations.
- Nowhere on earth can one find a civilization that does not have a connection with a religion in history.

The Role of Religious Education

- A proper religious education plan will be of great help to allow people to learn about and appreciate the essence of each and every tradition.
- In such a way, people will learn why they should respect each other, based on the common foundation of love and compassion.

The Role of Religious Education

- Religious education will help in the promotion of Universal Responsibility.
- It will help reminding us that irrespective of our colors, faith, background, and history, we, the human beings on earth, are nothing but same life forms that share a common desire to be happy and to be free from suffering.
- This is the basis of human values.

Conclusion

- This paper is a preliminary work aiming to arouse a general concern of humanity, and its foundation in education.
- Desecularization to one extreme will result in fundamentalism, which is something that we should reject.
- On the other hand, desecularization does help us to move back onto a right track that is promising to remove all known causes of bloodsheds and wars.

Conclusion

- Religious education is the beginning of this long journey.

Conclusion

- Thank you!