# Chapter 2
# Transforming a Limited Social Function into a Viable Global Action Agenda

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> *While statesmen are considering a new order of things, the new order may well be at hand. I believe it is even now being built, silently but inevitably, in the hearts of masses whose voices are not heard but whose common faith will write the final history of our time. They know that unless there is belief in some guiding principle and some trust in a divine plan, nations are without light, and people perish…*
>
> President F.D. Roosevelt (1939), Letter to Pope Pius XII.

In Chap. 1 we expressed the vision of this volume—that a psychology for a global era would include as a central aspiration to apply its vast expertise to serve the goal of achieving a sustainable future for humanity and to realize the collective vision of the UDHR and the Earth Charter. We also recognized that the contemporary situation on our planet is still radically different from the vision of these historic documents; and that underlying this gap between vision and current reality are

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long-standing implicit values and assumptions, which need to be closely examined and re-considered.

We begin this chapter with a careful examination of the assumptions, which have often operated as foundations for psychology as a science and profession, and which accounts for its limited current function, as discussed in Chap. 1. We then examine the systemic social forces, which maintain in psychology a level of 'social irresponsibility' and "moral inertia" (Prilleltensky 1997, p. 517). Finally, we turn our attention to discussing the necessary changes in values, assumptions, and overall orientation that would allow psychology to develop a viable global action agenda.

We recognize the significant contributions to knowledge that psychology has made through its focus primarily on the psychosocial level of conceptual analysis. We also recognize that those contributions stand in contrast with psychology's relatively much more limited contributions to higher conceptual levels of analysis, such as the microsocial, the macrosocial, the spiritual, and the transdisciplinary (Marsella 2012). With the advent of globalization—the central challenge of human development in the twenty-first century—psychology is now faced with the challenge to broaden significantly its conceptual analysis.

We recognize that Western and North American psychologists and mental health professionals experience intense ideological and material pressures that shape the ways in which we practice our profession. While an exhaustive treatment of these pressures is beyond the scope of this chapter, we have selected what we consider to be central assumptions—of individualism, of crude materialism, of scarcity of resources, of meritocracy and contingent worth, of liberalism and conservatism, of neoliberalism, of objectivity and value neutrality, and of the normalization of uncritical alignment with dominant economic and political elites.

We offer the following discussion because we recognize that assumptions regarding which aspects of our human condition are considered given, and which aspects are considered changeable, shape in fundamental ways the nature of research, teaching, and practice in psychology. The extent to which psychology can contribute to a world that offers future generations more coherence, equilibrium and possibilities for progressive transformation—also depends on what we assume is changeable and unchangeable. One end of this continuum between what we expect to remain constant, and what possibilities for change we explore, is marked by *fatalism,* which assumes we can do *no more than* describe or explain the way things are. The other end is marked by *value-based progressivism* in which we (1) *actively identify* violations of human dignity and welfare, (2) ask what we must do to prevent them, and (3) name the obstacles to change.

The two global documents that provide the framework of this volume represent the most unanimous agreement among the peoples of the world that, to develop a peaceful and sustainable global civilization for future generations, it is essential that we address phenomena of injustice and relationships of domination. Domination includes not just the domination that exists over people alive today, but also the domination of the planet's resources that have critical implications for the wellbeing of future generations.

Immediately, we are faced with an assumptive choice regarding interpreting the world as it is versus trying to change it. *Shall we assume that it is possible to have much more just societies with organizations of personal activity, political and economic relationships that recognize as their highest priorities* (1) *the wellbeing of all human beings and the planet we share and* (2) *the replacement of relationships of domination with relationships of voluntary cooperation, in which the needs of individuals and collectives are in balance?*

If we answer "yes", the current suffering and impending danger are powerful incentives to engage in all levels of conceptual analysis involved in developing a just global system. If we answer "no, it is not possible, domination and exploitation are unchangeable constants within human nature", then we are left only to interpret and ameliorate those phenomena rather than invest our personal and collective resources in trying to change them.

The following discussion is offered in the interest of freeing ourselves, especially as psychologists, to make this choice with recognition of the potential for the choice to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is a discussion aimed at beginning *to recognize the pressures exerted on us by powerful forces, both material and ideological, to answer 'no' to this question*. To succumb to these pressures is to become part of the forces of maintenance of the status quo, as critical psychologists Tod Sloan and Isaac Prilleltensky have suggested psychology has too often done (see Chap. 1). To resist, we must recognize these forces as among the biggest obstacles to social progress, and experiments aimed at overcoming them as among the most important explorations in which psychologists can join. This latter choice also draws on the fundamental human capacity to envision and pursue ideals, which, as the history of human civilization shows, has the power to mobilize the deepest human resources.

We begin with a brief examination of prevalent assumptions in the context of the evolution of global capitalism in a world once dominated by totalitarian monarchies and empires, and now struggling to move beyond limits imposed by corporate global capitalism.

## 2.1 A Historical Perspective

Contemporary ideas about the autonomous individual and the exultation of individual rights—identified in Chap. 1 as the main bias of Western and North American psychology—can be traced to the emergence of a bourgeoisie or trading class during the waning stages of European feudalism. Mercantilism developed with the rise of city republics, which were able to maintain political independence from both empire and church. Eventually, the founding of state chartered trading companies and European colonization of foreign lands gave birth to modern capitalism.

Traders, merchants, money lenders/bankers, and others involved with early forms of commerce eventually developed sufficient collective strength to put forth their *own* ideas about the role and significance of the individual in society (Lerner 1986). This 'bourgeoisie' began to insist that *private* or personal needs had greater

importance than communal needs, and that individuals should be free to determine for themselves what was best for them. Although these ideas were initially regarded as antagonistic to the established feudal/imperial religious, political and economic elites, eventually the bourgeoisie *became* the new elite.

Over time, in the course of individuals pursuing their own happiness, wealth and power, a new class structure emerged. It differentiated those who had been successful in accumulating wealth and power from the 'rest of the people', who could in theory compete with the elite for wealth and power, but who were on the whole without the means to compete on any equal grounds. Thus a modern, capitalist form of domination replaced the feudal, imperial form. Hegemony was achieved by the new dominating class.

The gradual separation of church and state created room for the new elite's proclamation of pursuit of individual wants as the very *highest goal of life*, as well as for the liberal values of tolerance, diversity, equality, science, reason, and secularism that characterized the Age of Enlightenment. With the ever more dominant emphasis on individual self-interest, reason and secularism became increasingly interpreted as focusing on 'reality', which was understood as that which could be perceived by the senses. Crude materialism gradually became the dominant worldview in the practice of capitalism. The realms of values and of 'pure reason' (Kant 1781/1922), were for the most part either *reduced* to individualism and materialism as in the traditions of utilitarianism (Mill 1863/2001) and empiricism (Hume 1748/1985), or else *treated as a completely separate domain*—the province of priests and idealist philosophers, as in the tradition of dualism (Descartes 1637/2006). The priests and philosophers themselves may have argued that human practice *should* be guided by their ideas, but over time the separation of church and state came to ensure that their domain would be marginalized if it conflicted with free individual choice or with the accumulation of wealth.

As democracy developed, mechanisms were created by which the majority of people could exercise some influence over the actions of those with personal wealth and political power. However, over the same period, an intellectual and moral foundation was provided by theorists from varying disciplines (e.g., Hobbes 1651; Smith 1906; Freud and Strachey 2005) assuming that the primary pursuit of self-interest was the natural inclination of human beings (Lerner 1986). Most relevant here, the discipline of Western psychology emerged as part of this foundation, assuming *individuals' private experience and personal* needs and motives to be the primary unit of analysis. Further, as scientists, psychologists claimed to be *value free* when investigating *individuals' experience and behavior, including the ways they seek fulfillment of their personal wants and needs.*

From a historical perspective, recognizing the uniqueness, worth, and opportunity that each individual human life represents, was a critical step in the evolution of potentially more socially just societies. We see this recognition and the social transformation of which it was a part as an antithesis to a previous form of domination associated with monarchy, empire, and feudalism. It is important to recognize, however, that the emergence and growth of capitalism and the

assumptions and values that accompanied it, themselves represent a new form of domination. In the following section, we examine central assumptions that have come to pervade conceptual climates in various parts of the world to the extent modernism has shaped culture in these places. These fundamental assumptions impact in significant ways the psychological climate in which we study, teach, and practice. Therefore, in our view, it is essential that psychologists be aware of the economic foundations present in normalized American values, because these values have become a source of the deepening gap between wealth and poverty in the world, of great human suffering, and of the unsustainability of modern life.

## 2.2 Guiding Prevalent Assumptions and Contemporary Psychology

### *2.2.1 Individualism*

Individualism refers to the understanding of humanity as composed of fundamentally separate selves—autonomous, independent seats of experience, action, and motivation. The corresponding societal vision is one in which the greatest good is realized through all citizens being free to focus on attempting to maximize their self-interests and individual fulfillment. Capitalist ideologues, like Adam Smith (1906), and capitalist-related ideologies, including classical liberalism and conservatism—as well as neoliberalism—posit that the greatest good for all can be, and perhaps can *only* be, achieved by individuals, freed up from onerous governmental constraint to pursue their economic self-interest. In Smith's well-known words, *It's not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we can expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest* (1906 vol. 1, Chap. 2, p. 19).

This perspective reflects the concept of trickle-down economics in capitalist worldviews, in which the pursuit of self-interests is expected to benefit all consumers through the operation of market competition. The emphasis is on the production of goods, wealth, and infrastructures, viewed as more important than how these benefits are distributed. The assumptions of individualism affect psychology in how it conceptualizes its subject matter. However, theories about the production and distribution of wealth also indirectly influence psychology, as they go hand in hand with assumptions regarding the personal, as well as social, value of private property. Some have extended this value to the advocacy of private *ownership* of virtually everything, as well as to privatization—the movement to place as many publicly held commodities and entities as possible in private hands. The assumptions and the operation of private property in turn give rise to another central assumption—that of scarcity.

### 2.2.2 Assumptions of Scarcity

This assumption posits that life necessarily involves a competition for survival over fundamentally scarce resources, which is essentially a zero-sum global equation, with necessary winners and losers. This leads to the view that competition is an inevitable basis for making decisions as well as procuring, producing, and distributing societal resources. This assumption has continued despite research in social psychology, which shows that the hedonistic tendency to compete over perceived scarce resources tends to strengthen in-group and out-group attitudes, resulting in prejudice against out-groups, and can be overcome through identifying superordinate goals promoting united and cooperative action (Ratner 2013).[1] This continued assumption tends to lead psychologists and other scientists to normalize competitiveness, rather than question its basis.

### 2.2.3 Crude Materialism

We stated in Sect. 2.1 that crude materialism gradually became the dominant worldview in the practice of capitalism. Here we refer to an explicit philosophical assumption rather than an implicit basis of practice. This assumption entails the attribution of primary ontological status (or primary reality) to material events, which can be apprehended through our sense organs.

The term 'crude materialism' distinguishes this view from dualism and idealism (Descartes 1637/2006), which grant an equal primary status to a realm of ideas, mind, spirit, or deity, understood to exist completely separately from the material realm. 'Crude materialism' is also distinguished from dialectical materialism (Marx and Engels 1947; Dewey 1922; Piaget 1968), which understands the material world as knowable only to the extent that human beings intelligently impose onto it various forms of organization of activity and meaning. These forms of organization are understood to develop in response to challenges that emerge in human beings' interaction with their material environment and with each other.

The assumption of crude materialism has denied the 'reality' of that, which cannot be directly apprehended but can be envisioned and/or intuited by human minds. (Whitehead 1929). All ideas are seen as reducible to sets of associations among experienced events—associations, which could theoretically be traced to their roots in particular sense experiences. The role of human intelligence is thereby severely limited to the recording of relationships among sense-experiences. This reductionist approach to ideas has inadvertently locked much of human functioning in primarily past experience based constructions, which have been identified by mindfulness research as the source of fear-based and anxiety-ridden perceptions of life (Hanson 2009). Such fear-based constructions are not only the source of many

[1] See realistic conflict theory at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Realistic_conflict_theory

forms of pervasive human suffering, but also lead to "the intergenerational transfer of wounds", recognized as "the greatest threat to peace" and "the greatest cause of war" (O'Dea 2012, p. 62).

Related to the assumptions of crude materialism are beliefs about what and how we can know (i.e., epistemological assumptions). These beliefs, known as empiricism and logical positivism, assume that the mind emerges from a 'tabula rasa' (i.e., a blank slate), and accumulates knowledge through experience. They also assume that we can apprehend external reality objectively, independent of our organizing cognitive structures, including our values. Further, it is assumed that knowledge consists of establishing linear relationships among separate variables that can be separately defined; and that only that which can be measured through the human sense organs or their extension, can be shown to exist.

Scientism, as an outgrowth of ontological crude materialism, refers to the untestable belief that following the assumptions above is both necessary and sufficient for the establishment of any valid knowledge; and that which *cannot* be measured using the human sense organs and their extensions essentially is not worthy of consideration. Related to the value placed on material objects are the valuing and prioritizing of material acquisition, accumulation, and consumption.

### *2.2.4 Contingent Worth and Meritocracy*

The assumptions of contingent worth and meritocracy reflect the idea that it is appropriate to assess the worth of an individual based upon his or her ability to compete successfully in the competitive marketplace. On the surface, the idea of contingent worth might seem to conflict with the emphasis on equality and fundamental human worth which imbued both the French and American revolutions in which the political foundations for modernism were established. After all, the United States of America Declaration of Independence begins with the statement "We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal, and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights".

But when the rights are named, we see that "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" are what each individual is entitled to, by law and tradition. Despite the broader vision of the Founding Fathers,[2] liberty has come to be increasingly understood as the liberty to compete freely for wealth and power. So it is not a contradiction to emphasize equality in this sense, and contingent worth as defined above. Each is free to pursue, but it is the degree of success in this pursuit that gives differential value to different individual lives. If some people acquire exponentially more wealth than do others, they deserve it. Furthermore, they should be entitled to keep virtually all of it for themselves because, meritocracy assumes, they must have worked that much harder, or smartly, than did others.

[2] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life,_liberty_and_the_pursuit_of_happiness

Wealth becomes conflated with value and significance (consider, "Donald Trump is *worth* xxx million dollars").

The assumption of 'equality of opportunity' or 'fairness in competition' plays a core role in the logic of meritocracy.[3] However, as evidence accrues that the assumption is a myth, rather than a reality, the assumption's role in maintaining the dominance of those with wealth and power becomes more evident. Power corrupts, in the sense of instilling a motivation to maintain a dominant position. In the context of 'democratic capitalism', the guiding values of contingent worth both reflect and provide a context and justification for the re-creation of core aspects of the socioeconomic system that the French and American revolutions were fought to overcome. These recreated socioeconomic aspects include: (1) an increasingly inherited, fixed, and small aristocracy of wealth, which wields the vast majority of political power in society; (2) an increasingly vast gap in wealth and income between this small group and everyone else; and (3) rapidly diminishing mechanisms and structures for achieving economic upward mobility.

We invite our readers to *question whether the resources are necessarily scarce, whether individuals' value is truly contingent on accumulated wealth, and whether there is any basis to assume the competition to be fair.* Or rather, *is it possible that these guiding assumptions are sustained by the wealth and power of the dominant class to saturate the popular media* (*thus shaping the thinking of the entire society, including psychologists*)*, with assumptions that minimize any threat to its hegemony?* Research on social axioms has shown how general beliefs become people's cognitive map of their social world (Leung et al. 2002).

### *2.2.5 The Labels 'Liberal' and 'Conservative'*

Where the struggle between capitalism and totalitarianism is alive and well, the term 'liberal' may refer to advocates for more opportunities for competition, while the term 'conservative' may refer to advocates for the hegemony of powerful totalitarian dictators and their elite associates. However, in the many countries, like the USA, in which corporate capitalism has clearly won the day and shapes the domination and power relationships that exist across the land, the terms liberal and conservative are central to the political discourse in a different way.

One way of understanding the liberal-conservative political spectrum is to understand liberals as using their personal and government power to bring about changes that make more justifiable the guiding assumptions described above, by reducing the conflict between these assumptions and the experience of empathy with suffering others. Liberals advocate the *regulation* of the accumulation of capital, to minimize its most outrageous consequences, while maximizing the

[3] See here the just world hypothesis research in social psychology, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just-world_hypothesis

material achievements it makes possible. Conservatives, on the other hand, may be understood as using their personal and government power to remove limitations imposed by government on the accumulators of wealth, and to focus the use of government on the creation and maintenance of global political conditions, in which the work of accumulating capital can continue to thrive.

Clearly, neither the liberal nor the conservative political cause address the realities of life of the majority of the global population, which struggles to survive and hold onto any remaining bits of wealth, power, and status they have left in the context of global capitalism. As Marsella pointed out in his Invited Address to the European Congress of Psychology in Oslo, Norway,

> The World Bank admits that in 2005 three billion one hundred and forty million people (3,140,000,000) live on less than $2.50 a day and about 44 % of these people survive on less than $1.25. Complete and total wretchedness can be the only description for the circumstances faced by so many, especially those in urban areas (Marsella 2009).

### 2.2.6 *Neoliberalism, Objectivity and Value Neutrality: The Normalization of Hierarchy and Uncritical Alignment with Dominant Values*

Compounding the difficulties of the poor and marginalized in the global economy is the increasingly dominant ideology of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism, in its most basic form, asserts that markets far exceed governments in their capacity to allocate and distribute resources. Some advocates of neoliberalism make the even more extreme claim that markets are such efficient and reliable engines of progress and prosperity that they are potentially better servants of the popular will than democratically elected political representatives (Chomsky 1999).

Such claims have not been borne out by actual global data. As Marsella points out, drawing on Peter Philipps' November 12, 2008 "Information Clearinghouse",

> Grain.org describes the core reasons for continuing hunger in a recent article "Making a Killing from Hunger." It turns out that while farmers grow enough food to feed the world, commodity speculators and huge grain traders like Cargill control the global food prices and distribution. *Starvation is profitable for corporations when demands for food push the prices up. Cargill announced that profits for commodity trading for the first quarter of 2008 were 86 % above 2007.*
>
> World food prices grew 22 % from June 2007 to June 2008 and a significant portion of the increase was propelled by the $175 billion invested in commodity futures that speculate on price instead of seeking to feed the hungry. The result is wild food price spirals, both up and down, with food insecurity remaining widespread (Marsella 2009).

In the face of these global realities, implementing neoliberal policies on a global scale has entailed supporting dictators employing torture, war, and human rights violations in the service of creating supportive conditions for corporate extraction of resources (e.g., Pinochet in Chile) (Klein 2008). It has also entailed

undermining the scope of national decision making by democratic governments through supporting and increasing the power of private corporations and banks at the expense of democratically elected representatives who became subservient to these financial power holders.

Neoliberalism has brought to the service of political justification the scientific assumptions of value neutrality and objectivity, which in turn are associated with materialism, empiricism, and logical positivism. Advocates of neoliberalism claim that their policies offer an objectively verifiable way to increase worldwide *economic prosperity, peace,* and *political freedom*. Among the neoliberal 'evidence' is the observation that, since the end of the Cold War, neoliberal policy expansion and reduction in political oppression and political violence have historically co-occurred (Pinker 2011), and that countries liberalized enough to have a McDonalds are highly unlikely to go to war with each other–an assertion known as the "Golden Arches Theory" (Friedman 1999).

By claiming that embracing the power of markets is not an ideology, but rather an objective recognition of "the way things work best", neoliberalism suggests that we have arrived empirically at the optimal way to distribute goods and services. Because for neoliberalism, the maximization of profit and the accumulation of wealth are assumed to lead to long-term 'prosperity', any destructive consequences for human beings associated with these processes are deemed acceptable. Further, assuming the objective, nonideological value of corporate globalization entails acceptance of the deepening gap between wealth and poverty in the increasingly 'prosperous' neoliberal world.

A globally responsible psychology must critically review neoliberal science. Co-development over time is not evidence of cause, nor is static correlation. Further, research on concepts of *prosperity, peace,* and *freedom* can only be as strong as the way these concepts are operationalized. Thus, questions that must be asked include: *What is the nature of civilization and what constitutes real prosperity? May there be other driving forces, besides accumulation of wealth? How may the current neoliberal construction of 'prosperity' be grounded in prevalent materialistic psychological assumptions about human nature?*

Neoliberalism stands in a deeply conflicted relationship with the notions of hierarchy, obedience and disobedience. Obedience is required for the smooth functioning of global capitalism. Most people work under psychological and material conditions in which obedience to workplace authority is seen as appropriate and deserved, and consciously disobedient acts are engaged at great peril. To not comply is the road to personal failure, to a loss of worth under the assumptions of contingent worth and meritocracy, and under assumptions of scarcity, to poverty and destitution.

At the same time, the culture emergent with neoliberalism mocks obedience. 'Thinking outside the box', 'turning away from the herd', 'standing against the crowd', and so on, are glorified in neoliberal culture. The individualist entrepreneur, the CEO, and the celebrity are worshipped, as they appear to have 'transcended' the ordinariness of everyone else. Private and family life are viewed as the more appropriate preserve for the expression of individuality and cultural

diversity, as are aspects of behavior at the workplace (e.g., at some places choice of attire, office decoration, etc.) that are deemed by authorities to be irrelevant to the productivity of the organization. Identifying with celebrities allows for feeling in some way unique and special, in spite of one's limiting circumstances. Despite the glorification of individual nonconformity, collective disobedience, as in the disobedience of the labor strike, or the anti-war protest, is strongly discouraged in the context of neoliberalism.

Consumer culture also encourages identification with an entire class of successful individuals through appearance and behavior. In the realms of media, entertainment, and consumption, there is also a blending of the values on individuality and compliance. There are many choices available of what to consume, in terms of information, entertainment, and goods. Choosing from the menu is exercising a basic right that is glorified. But what is not encouraged is questioning of the menu itself. *How is its structure determined? What is unavailable or suppressed?*

Identifying with successful individuals or with successful classes as a whole is compatible with the acceptance and normalization of ubiquitous and humiliatingly uncritical alignment with dominant values in everyday life. The risk of uncritical acceptance of the assumptions described in this section, for everybody including psychologists, is that we end up in a pattern of participating in injustice by looking the other way and pretending everything's fine; justifying our behavior with the mythical belief that at least most people are thriving *individuals*, contributing to the efficiency and prosperity of the global market by pursuing their individual desires. This may mean keeping our heads down, avoiding offending the powerful, and seeking our own career advancement. Socially responsible psychologists may choose to ask *what is happening to human dignity through this process of neoliberal globalization?*

## 2.3 Psychological Impact of Prevailing and Unexamined Guiding Assumptions

We now focus on *how* some of the guiding assumptions and values discussed above, whether considered or unconsidered, conscious or automatic, may impact the study and practice of contemporary psychology and the lives of psychologists. The content of this section should be understood as largely comprising observations of the authors rather than findings of systematic research studies. As all co-authors are long-time residents of the United States, the observations contributed can be expected to be most relevant to the study and practice of psychology in the US. However, there is reason to believe that the observations may also be of value for psychologists elsewhere to the extent that global capitalism plays a role in organizing social life, and to the extent that ideas and practices derived from US psychology are being actively exported from the US and imported by other countries.

### 2.3.1 The Role of Psychologists in the Promotion of Perspectives, Values and Priorities

The psychological climate in which we study, teach, and practice is profoundly influenced by the dominant assumptions of crude materialism and individualism, and by the associated assumptions of meritocracy, contingent worth, relative equality of opportunity, and economic upward mobility. These assumptions lead to the belief, implicit or explicit in much of psychological practice, as well as teaching and research, that individuals, especially in advanced technological societies, have the full capacity to create relationally and materially satisfying lives for themselves. Therefore, if a person feels dissatisfied and frustrated in his or her work, home, physical or community life in any ongoing way, he or she should look to the psychological sources of such dissatisfaction and frustration, which may, in their various forms, be categorized by 'abnormal psychology' into various 'psychological disorders'. Despite the efforts of community psychology to emphasize the role of social contexts, and the systemic problems behind individual difficulties with adjustment (Ryan 1976), the above assumptions continue to be prevalent.

We do not intend here to devalue all that psychology has learned about how intra-psychic challenges affect experiences of life. Rather, we wish to give more centrality to the fact that intra-psychic challenges represent only one side of the tension that people have to negotiate—the other side being challenges of interacting with the social and material worlds on which their physical and psychological survival and growth depends. Community psychology (Kelly 1986; Rappaport 1987) has done a lot to bring into focus the social roots of psychological problems, and the central role of empowerment in any healing process. In a way, both intra-psychic challenges and social suffering have roots in relationships of power and domination, past or present. Both forms of suffering perpetuate intergenerational wounds that become root causes for war and violence, as observed by James O'Dea (2012), who served for 10 years as Director of Amnesty International and witnessed the depths of human suffering, violence, and betrayal in every corner of our world. Relationships of power and domination entail confronting others' power to define what is real—a power that psychologists wittingly and unwittingly embrace, in most cases *without the training to address the systemic roots of power and domination*.

Any psychological position that accepts as unquestionable the intra-psychic and ignores the social is, in our perspective, reproducing an unjust and unsustainable neoliberal worldview. An example is when people are expected to take personal responsibility for having, and for individually remediating, any financial, vocational, emotional, health, and/or relational sources of pain or distress they experience, essentially privately and on their own. It is thus normalized, morally justified, and even seen as *psychologically responsible,* to essentially "look out for number one" above, before, and at times even in lieu of, everybody else.

This normalization of self-centeredness has been eroding respect and support for personal qualities that used to be associated with character, such as the willingness to sacrifice one's personal interests for the benefit of others or for the greater good. In contemporary society, highest status is conferred on those who are best at pursuing their individual self-interest, not on those most willing to sacrifice for others. Despite the rhetorical exaltation of the sacrifice of young people willing to fight and die for their country, such 'heroes' typically remain underpaid and often grossly under-supported when they return home, while the qualities of service and self-sacrifice are no longer even expected of our nation's most powerful leaders and corporate executives.

In addition, those in service roles—either in paid capacities, such as teachers and helping professionals, or unpaid ones, such as nurturers or care-takers in the family—are, for the most part, undervalued and frequently rendered invisible. This social phenomenon serves to produce and encourage a relatively self-focused and self-preoccupied populace, burdened with knowing that they have only themselves, or at best, some immediate family in a limited capacity, to depend upon. Psychologically, this 'autonomy' may generate significant levels of individual anxiety, stress and depression, and undoubtedly takes a substantial cumulative toll on a nation's physical, emotional, and familial health.

Yet, in psychological research, far fewer resources are devoted to studying these observations and the hypotheses to which they may lead, than to classifying and developing treatments for these symptoms. Is this phenomenon related to the vested interests of funders, whose funds are likely to result from the accumulation of wealth in private hands, or from governments that are, directly or indirectly, highly influenced by the general imperatives of global capitalism?

Over the past few decades, North American psychology's growing interest in the phenomenon of character disorders has corresponded with the general decline in attitudes and behavior previously associated with character in society at large (Korten 2001). Further, as corporations have gained more and more power, core attributes associated with disorders of character seem to be more prevalent in society, particularly among corporate and political leaders (Bakan 2005). Related to our discussion of obedience to authority above, these attributes are often promoted by our media. Such attributes include: an overwhelming self-focus, valuing one's self-presentation over qualities of substance, inability to empathize with others, manipulative and utilitarian behavior toward others, grandiose self-importance, difficulty with intimacy, an inner sense of emptiness, constant craving for external affirmation, stimulation or adulation, splitting of the world into 'good' and 'bad', incapacity for remorse or guilt, and more.

By and large, in both psychological research and practice, there is much less emphasis on the collective, systemic, and ontological roots of the core personal and professional challenges individuals face, than there is on the role of individual history in bringing about these challenges. Similarly, there is much less emphasis on what individuals can do to advance collective solutions to these challenges, than on what they can do individually to cope with their individual challenges.

*What is psychology's role in the promotion of this self-centered perspective within modernist commercial culture?*

In the realm of assuming current conditions to represent unchangeable psychological realities, high levels of stress and overwhelm are taken to be inevitable in modern life. Therefore, individuals are expected to take personal responsibility to adapt to and cope with potentially destructive overwhelm, for instance, by enrolling in personal stress management training.

Much is made of the "American can do" spirit, vis-à-vis believing in one's ability to achieve "anything one puts one's mind to" on an individual level. However, when it comes to believing in the power to effect change on the larger societal level with respect to global issues of extreme injustice, or to envision and work to create a much more sustainable world, most in the United States assume, often with the support of US psychologists, that they have little impact on concerns of such magnitude. Thus, they have tended to accept such realities as simply 'the way things are'. Often, such injustices include issues as significant as financial crimes that crashed the world economy, committed by an excessively deregulated financial sector; the whittling away of American democracy in the context of dramatically enhanced influence of big money on the political process; environmentally reckless and devastating policies that perpetuate, and even governmentally subsidize, an ongoing fossil-fuel based economy; and more.

In summary, *we invite a consideration of the roles psychologists play in the exaggerated and one-sided promotion of values and priorities such as self-reliance; efficiency; productivity; pragmatism; individual agency; material prosperity and success; personal initiative, entrepreneurship, and ingenuity; the ability to sell one's self; winning; youthfulness; wealth; celebrity; appearance*. Related to them are priorities that also need to be more closely considered, such as material prosperity; consumption and material acquisition; individual freedom, especially from regulation in business, commerce, and the competitive marketplace; military power and prowess; the material bottom line; individual liberty and choice, especially in the realm of personal consumption; unfettered access to abundant, inexpensive sources of energy; global military and economic power; and the ability to dominate. In the ontological context of prevalent crude materialism as the philosophical understanding of human beings and life, *psychological assumptions of what constitutes 'health' and 'normalcy', merit serious re-examination*.

While the field of psychology has helped in countless ways to improve human self-understanding and human emotional wellbeing, it has also contributed to enabling perspectives which, paradoxically, are likely to generate pervasive experiences of self-blame, shame, personal inadequacy, and rage. The problem becomes further exacerbated when psychologists support the rampant medicating and *solely private expression* of wide scale, prevalent symptoms of distress, without equally supporting public critical expression of social and collective factors that may lie at the root of such symptoms. There is a risk of psychological and psychopathological perspectives themselves functioning as a modern day 'opiate of the people' as religion has been characterized in the past (Marx and Ruge 1844). These perspectives

may offer palliative comforts that take the edge off of discontent to make it manageable, while, at the same time, often preventing broad public demonstrations of that discontent, as well as widespread calls for social change.

In offering these observations, we take on a huge risk of over-generalizing. We are well aware of the tremendous diversity among psychologists and recognize that these observations are not founded in systematic surveys of samples representing the population of psychologists. Nevertheless, with the stakes being as high as described in Chap. 1, we live in a time where putting such personal observations into print, where they can be disputed, qualified, modified, and most important subject to critical reflection, is a risk we have deemed worth taking.

### 2.3.2 Psychologists and Neoliberalism

Most psychologists seem not inclined to use words like 'neo-liberal', especially not within a critical perspective. It is, perhaps, more likely for psychologists to understand the political machinations on behalf of an oligarchical, neoliberal political–economic system as a primarily psychological problem of compassion failure. There is a tendency to psychologize and pathologize individual acts of injustice, seeing them as rooted in particular individuals with particular world-views, rather than seeing injustice arising out of structural features of the global economic system and its crudely materialistic understanding of human beings and the nature of life.

Psychological treatments of prejudice are also predominantly of this kind, focused on stigmatizing and condemning prejudiced individuals and treating as models of moral heroism those who have enough stamina and self-control to suppress their prejudiced impulses. In actuality, stereotype suppression tends to result in a rebound effect and in a greater likelihood that those stereotypes will be expressed even more strongly at another opportunity (Macrae et al. 1994). Psychologists appear to be less attracted to theories of prejudice as arising out of systemic features of the political economy that relegate definable groups of people into underclasses, and then culturally motivate popular contempt for them. There also seems to be little psychological research on the dynamics of successful inter-racial healing and integration in some communities across the globe. This is an issue we revisit in the last part of this chapter.

While psychologists often explicitly reject the market fundamentalism of neoliberalism, the racism that arises out of the group hierarchies fostered by neoliberal capitalism, and the claim that materialist success is all there is to wellbeing, they nevertheless seem disinclined to *define an action agenda to address the structural roots of these phenomena*.

Unless psychologists hold the individual's challenge to transcend poverty of compassion *in dialectical tension* with our shared responsibility for the quality of environments that may support or discourage compassion, they may actually be reinforcing the pathologies of injustice, while believing that they are combating

them. This is not to invalidate the concept of personal responsibility for developing deeper capacities for compassion within us, particularly as we evolve a deeper understanding of the global world we now live in. Such deeper compassion, which has been recognized as the path to cultivating global peace (O'Dea 2012), is also at the core of those spiritual traditions which point the way to sustainable living and which inform the UDHR and the EC.

### *2.3.3 Psychologists, Value Neutrality, and Objectivity*

The epistemological issues related to the assumptions of value neutrality, and the discourse regarding them over the last century, are discussed in Chap. 3. Here, we wish to simply point out that throughout the twentieth century, the assumptions of empiricism and logical positivism have been thoroughly philosophically challenged. This has been especially true with respect to psychological science, and it is important to look at the extent to which these challenges have been systematically included or excluded from psychologists' training in various Ph.D., Ed.D., and PsyD., programs.

Unless these issues have been systematically excluded, which still happens in some Ph.D., programs, this means that psychologists typically understand the pretense involved in claiming both complete neutrality and complete objectivity for most psychological research and practice. In the context of this understanding, psychologists tend to make choices regarding the extent to which they will exploit this pretense for the authority and power it gives them in the eyes of the public, and the extent to which they will acknowledge and expose the values and more subjective or inter-subjective choices underlying their work.

Unfortunately, however, affection for the pretense to objectivity and value neutrality still leads mainstream professional psychological associations to consistently reinforce the stated or unstated political values of the status quo in psychology. Though reinforcing status quo political values without even acknowledging that one is doing so is a clear breach of the principle of scientific objectivity, it is typically only research pursuits and theoretical claims that challenge the status quo that draw charges of politicized violation of this principle. Even when there are no charges laid, there is nevertheless a stigma. A psychologist who does politically anodyne research is much more likely to advance in the field than one who does politically controversial research.

Reducing potential sources of unrecognized bias in one's empirical work is an important scientific responsibility. But if one's interpretation of one's otherwise appropriately gathered data offends the sensibilities of many psychologists, this should not disqualify the findings from publication, circulation, or collegial consideration. A full-scale scientific effort to reduce bias and increase the validity of knowledge by the method of systematically broadening the set of voices constructing knowledge has not yet been launched by psychology as a discipline.

### 2.3.4 Academic Psychology and Obedience to Authority

In the world of Western academic psychology, authority is relatively amorphous. For PhD students, one's research supervisor is often an authority figure with considerable power to influence one's career. But upon beginning employment as a professor, the authority tends to be a broader structural one—an authority that demands that academics churn out publications as rapidly as possible and in as prestigious places as possible. In this process, prestige becomes determined by an internal consensus of psychologists, in which guild interests and sociopolitical structures may well take precedence over the potential of research to contribute to global liberation and transformation of the social structural constraints on realizing the visions of the UDHR and the Earth Charter.[4]

We fear that any organic academic inclinations to challenge the existing relations of power, or crudely materialistic interpretations of human reality, can be systemically squelched, especially now that many academic psychologists are overworked, underpaid adjuncts, ready to do whatever they can to keep their jobs. Insofar, as the publish-or-perish system imbues anonymous reviewers with authority, might that not encourage academic psychologists to act like skilled gamblers, estimating the odds of encountering reviewers with a particular range of worldviews, and striving to flatter and cajole that likeliest range of worldviews?

In summary, concomitant with the separation of church and state, modernism has relied on the relegation of the domains of values, ethics, meaning, morality and spirituality, primarily, if not exclusively, to the private or personal sphere. Listening to the news in countries in which capitalism has triumphed, makes clear the extent to which states' policies in these contexts are dictated by market forces created by competition for wealth and power, rather than by values such as justice, equality, caring for one another, creating shared meaning, and development of more inclusive spirituality in which universal connections among human beings and their environment are recognized.

From this perspective, a synthesis that transcends the conflict between totalitarian and capitalist forms of domination entails more integrative constructions of reality, as well as integration of a larger social ethic and core values. Such a synthesis, as articulated and affirmed by broad consensus in the visions of the UDHR and Earth Charter, puts into the *foreground* of a global system the function of caring for one another, the function of building shared meaning in the place of

[4] As a personal example of these widespread practices and unrecognized bias, E. Mustakova-Possardt's research on critical moral consciousness, discussed in Chap. 6, won the 1998 Association for Moral Education Outstanding Dissertation Award in recognition of its serious scholarship, in addition to the 1995 Henry A. Murray Dissertation Award of Radcliffe College, Harvard University. Nonetheless, to this date no subsequent publication on moral psychology includes any reference to this work, which drew on little-known psycho-spiritual and historical perspectives to offer a systemic critique of current understanding of moral psychology and its rootedness in a particular sociopolitical worldview, and a radically different conceptualization of moral development.

conflicting meanings, and the development of forms of spirituality that support and nurture these other functions. Economic and social arrangements also now need to become oriented toward supporting such concerns, while *still* maintaining liberal advances, including respect for the individual, diversity, human rights, and democracy. We view these emergent expressions of consensus as signs of hope for a change that is now, at least, conceivable.

*What may be involved for psychology, going forward, to support and perhaps even help lead the way toward such a synthesis, which promotes the consensual vision affirmed in the Earth Charter and UDHR?*

## 2.4 Beyond Prevailing Assumptions: Developing a Global Action Agenda

This last section lays out beginning recommendations on critical steps we believe are involved in moving psychology away from inadvertently supporting the further revving up of the neoliberal engines of the accumulation of wealth by global corporations at all cost, and toward making psychology a leading moral and intellectual force for progressive global transformation toward social justice.

### *2.4.1 Hierarchical Systems Dialectical Approach in Teaching, Research, and Training*

As this chapter has made clear, teaching, training, and research in socially responsible psychology need to begin with a careful acknowledgment of the socioeconomic and historical roots of the Western and North American discipline of psychology. This also involves a thorough critical examination of the prevalent guiding assumptions of the first 100 years of the discipline.

Further, the training of psychologists and mental health professionals in the twenty-first century needs to be placed on a solid foundation of systemic and dialectical understanding of the historic and socioeconomic forces that shape human development and individual and collective wellbeing. Psychologists need to be trained not only to understand the systemic roots of power and domination, but also to have the skills to intervene at a systemic level. This involves creating space in the curriculum for the development of advocacy and activism skills in addition to clinical and research skills. Psychologists need to be fully aware that the choice of topics to research, the specific research questions asked, and the methods used all reflect values and assumptions. The question of methods is taken up in depth in Chap. 3. However, it is important to mention here that a socially responsible psychology genuinely oriented toward a global justice action agenda needs to value listening at least as much as measuring, as listening allows

psychologists to respond to real human needs. Finally, psychologists need to be competent enough in their understanding of current processes and impact of corporate neoliberal globalization, that they can develop a clear and practical action agenda to begin to transform these processes through the professional field's expertise and leadership.

To summarize the levels of training we believe are required for socially responsible psychology, we draw on Marsella's (2009) chart of hierarchical levels of causes and consequences, offered at his Invited Address to the European Congress of Psychology in Oslo (Fig. 2.1). This chart captures the dialectical co-constitutive interactions among the four levels on which meaning is translated into social reality. It summarizes how basic assumptions and beliefs are connected to particular socioeconomic and geopolitical worldviews, which they tend to reproduce. The chart also provides a conceptualization of how psychologists can work at different levels of meaning and social reality.

#### 2.4.1.1 Hierarchical Systems Approach

Moral/Ethical Level: Morality, Ethics, and Justice

GeoPolitical Economy Level: Government, Business, Financial, and Ideological

SocioPolitical Level: Social Formation and Structure, Power Distribution, Social Status, Institutions (e.g., Religions, Schools), and Cultural Ethos

Biopsychosocial Level: Mortality, Illness (Physical and Mental), Social Problems, Malnutrition, Starvation, and Emotions.

To illustrate a systemic and dialectical approach to understanding the individual psyche in its sociohistoric context, we use here another figure, offered by Marsella. This figure, drawn from a social media commentary, captures the forces currently shaping the American psyche, and represents a more condensed version of Marsella's (2011) treatment of the US culture as a culture of war. Psychologists need to be trained to understand and work with the dialectical interactions of all these levels of forces, which shape the individual experience (Fig. 2.1).

The hierarchical systemic dialectical approach to understanding causes and consequences of the human condition also makes clear the central necessity to examine the moral frameworks out of which we operate as psychologists in particular contexts. Such examination needs to go far deeper than current discussions of professional ethics.

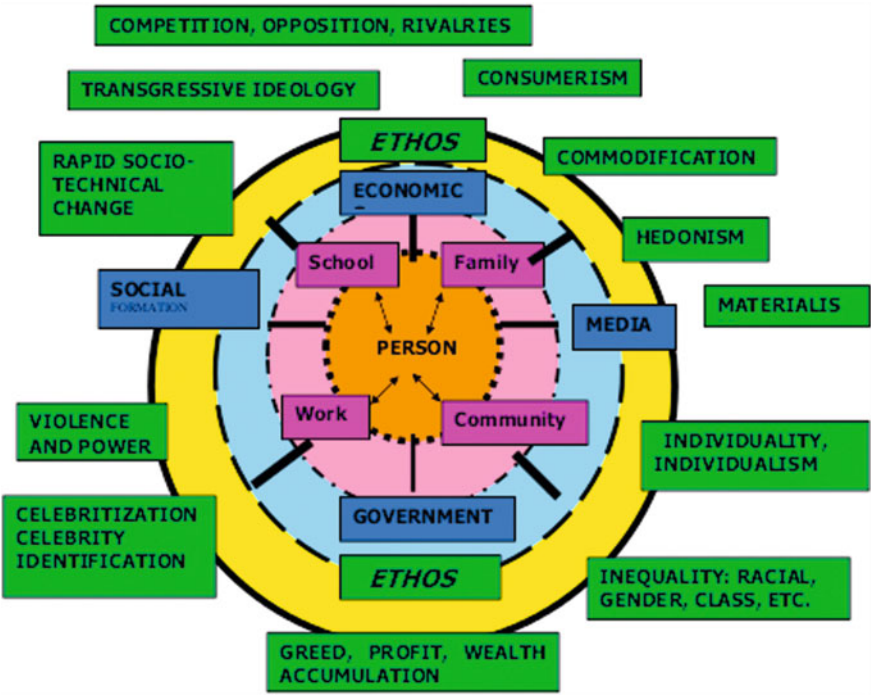


**Fig. 2.1** The socialization of American culture, society, and psyche: *ETHOS* Popular American Culture Ethos, *MACROSOCIAL* Economics, Media, Social Formation, Government, *MICRO-SOCIAL* Family, school, Work, Community, Religion, *PERSON* Psyche, Behavior

### *2.4.2 Centrality of Moral Principles in a Global Psychological Action Agenda*

As the opening quote from President Roosevelt suggests, without a clear moral vision, there is no real movement forward. One recent scholarly illustration of this observation can be found in the comprehensive analysis of the state of the global psyche by Italian philosophy professor Elena Pulcini. Her analysis proposes that the global age is characterized by "a twofold pathology: on the one hand by an instrumental and unlimited individualism and on the other by an endogamous and destructive communitarianism… an absolutization of the Self and… and absolutization of the Us" (Pulcini 2009/2012, p. 79). She writes:

> One has simply to cast an even superficial glance at the analyses of contemporary sociology to realize that the modern image of *homo oeconomicus*, that is, a conscious and rational *sovereign subject*, on one hand able to pursue his own interests and on the other able to control his passions in order to obtain a peaceful coexistence and achieve the common interest, is now nothing more than a residual myth of liberal ideology. What is coming into being today is … a subjectivity with fluid and uncertain outlines, clinging to the immediacy of the present and fleeting pleasures, the unconscious victim of rampant

> conformism, with a parasitic relationship with a world that has been reduced to an immense factory of goods, prey to fears and insecurity and inclined towards entropy. At the same time, it is a subjectivity driven by a vocation towards the unlimited expansion of selfish desires and expectations, making it blind to the desires and requirements of others (Pulcini 2009/2012, p. 19).

Pulcini posits that the moral lostness of the above modern psychological condition has given birth to an opposite response, "a desire for cohesion and re-territorialization, identity and belonging, solidarity and cooperation which is taking on, at the planetary level, the form of a *need for community*" (Pulcini 2009/2012, p. 41). This need is bringing about efforts to deconstruct the old repressive concept of community and to create "non-repressing" community (p. 46). Nonetheless, the moral precariousness of the times has also led to "communitarian ghettoization" (p. 79), increasingly frequently characterized by "ferocity and radicalization of violence which becomes the vehicle of a 'full attachment' capable of exorcising fear and uncertainty by acting… as an exercise in community building" (p. 71).

Against this complex and disturbing moral backdrop of our global age, we can appreciate more fully the significant achievement of the global community in being able to articulate, nonetheless, a comprehensive vision of authentic collective prosperity, captured in the UDHR and the Earth Charter. It also becomes clearer why socially responsible psychology *has to begin* with a careful analysis of its moral framework. Hence this volume's proposal, that at the center of a socially responsible global agenda for psychology should be the aspiration to apply its vast expertise to serve the goal of achieving a sustainable global future for humanity, and to realize the vision of the two global documents, which have been informed by the best understanding of national, cultural, religious, and scientific communities worldwide.

Foremost in the careful examination of the moral foundations of a helping profession is overcoming the previously discussed ideological split between material and nonmaterial aspects of human life. From a dialectical perspective, it is important to see the emergent new synthesis, which transcends the absolutization of either material or nonmaterial aspects of reality, as competing explanations of life, and recognizes that the material and the nonmaterial each represent one side of a duality that needs to be dialectically maintained, rather than supported by the destruction of the other. Material reality may be seen as both an expression of a spiritual condition, and having the power to influence it. As future psychologists are trained to recognize the centrality of meaning, morality, spirituality and consciousness in human life, they can more readily recognize the importance of working in transdisciplinary ways with communities of meaning.

Among the many different kinds of communities of meaning that organize human activity, philosophical, spiritual, and religious communities play a central role worldwide, as they take on as their primary task issues of meaning and of nonmaterial aspects of human life. The strong bias in the past 100 years of Western psychology to dismiss spiritual frames of reference as 'unscientific' (and therefore not worthy of scientific inquiry) reflects the crude materialism and scientism

discussed at length in this chapter. It not only limits critical psychological understanding; it also prevents psychology from serving a meaningful role in the lives of the majority of human beings on our planet, who happen to draw their sense of meaning and social justice from spiritual and religious sources.

It is also critical for a socially responsible psychology in the twenty-first century, which strives to respond to the needs of a global age, to engage "authoritative communities", defined as "groups of people who are committed to one another over time and who model and pass on at least part of what it means to be a good person and live a good life" (Commission on Children at Risk 2003, p. 14). In the quoted Report from the U.S. Commission on Children at Risk, authoritative communities are further described as warm and nurturing multi-generational social institutions, which have a long-term focus on the education of children through shared religious and/or spiritual understanding of healthy limits and expectations, of life values, and a philosophical orientation to the dignity of all persons.

Given the global historical reality of the frequent mutation of what are initially 'authoritative spiritual communities' into religiously rigid and divisive social and global forces, it is that much more critical for psychologists to possess the skills to both research and learn from the best practices of such communities and to engage in dialectical dialog with them.

The dialectical approach to understanding historical processes as a developmental movement through phases of thesis, antithesis, and eventually new level of synthesis, was first defined in the first part of the nineteenth century by German philosopher Georg Friedrich Hegel (1977). When applied to psychological functioning, the dialectical approach has been more recently described as containing a mandate to actively seek and invite what does not fit into the existing orderings (Basseches 1984). Such a dialectical approach to dialog across the tensions between current scientific perspectives and spiritual perspectives would provide a generative foundation for the enrichment of both psychological and spiritual understanding, as they each seek to address the human condition.

It will take a concerted effort by the community of socially responsible psychologists to establish ways in which psychological understanding and skills can be enriched by trans-disciplinary dialectical engagement with spiritual communities.

This volume is infused with many examples of how spiritual communities have found profound psycho-spiritual solutions to critical issues that face our global community—solutions that need to be further studied and engaged. As an example, Chap. 7 focuses on the Hinduism-inspired approach to nonviolence and Buddhist and Catholic inspired approaches to social action. Another important example is the way Bahá'í communities, since their inception in the early years of the twentieth century, have developed a unique global process of racial healing and integration, which deserves to be the object of psychological research.[5]

[5] Since the founding of the Bahá'í Faith in the middle of the nineteenth century, the overcoming of racism has been recognized as a central spiritual challenge. In 1933, long before the Civil Rights movement, Shoghi Effendi, one of the central figures of the Bahá'í Faith, called racism "the most vital and challenging issue" (see *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 33). The first Bahá'í inter-racial

However, beyond research on specific best practices that spiritual communities have developed to address critical social issues, what is needed is an in-depth re-visiting of guiding moral principles in a dialectical dialog with philosophical, spiritual, and religious communities. While Chap. 11, our closing chapter, discusses the need for and the emergence of a global ethic that addresses the possibility of unity across our vast diversity, here we offer some specific recommendations on central values and assumptions that require serious re-thinking in the direction of overcoming the split in current psychological understanding between material and nonmaterial aspects of life.

*Dialectical integration of the role of the individual and the role of the community in healthy human development*. In contrast to the current psychological tendency, discussed in this chapter, to seek the roots of human suffering primarily in the individual, all spiritual and religious communities, as well as many philosophical orientations have recognized the central role of communities as holding environments (Kegan 1982; Commission on Children at Risk 2003), sources of stabilizing collective values (Hatcher 2007), and cultures of cooperation (Ratner 2013). Psychologists need new sets of conceptual and practical skills to work competently and in global contexts with this central moral principle in order to mitigate the excessive emphasis on self-interest and consumerism, as well as the failure of character inherent in the spread of global corporate capitalism. Psychology needs to develop systemic understanding of the interactive processes by which individuals, collectives, and communities are continually constructing each other within a world in which such communities are increasingly interconnected. In addition, psychologists have a role in cultivating both the will and the skills to engage constructively these interactive processes.

*Recognition of the important ways in which intuited nonmaterial, spiritual reality infuses, and influences the quality of people's experience of life.* As discussed earlier in this chapter, crude materialism, rapidly spreading into the global culture, has left growing numbers of people stuck in past-and-fear-based construction of experience, which can be at best mitigated by psychological management and coping skills. It is essential that psychological understanding incorporate systemic conceptual and practical skills focused on recognizing and working with people's ability to access higher orders of possibility and reality within themselves.

*Consistent orientation to the inherent dignity of every individual*. Given how rapidly assumptions of contingent worth, meritocracy, celebrity worship, and commodification have spread around the world along with corporate globalization, psychology is challenged to develop new and systemic approaches to combat this

(Footnote 5 continued)
marriage in the US dates back to 1912, and integrated Bahá'í gatherings throughout the South began in 1956. For further understanding of how the Bahá'í Faith treats the issue of racism, see Nathan Rutstein's *Racism: Unraveling the fear*, and Perry's *The last war: Racism, spirituality, and the future of civilization*. For an overview of the current status of racial integration throughout the global Bahá'í community, see the annual editions of *The Bahá'í World*.

reality, and to infuse in education and practice a consistent orientation to the dignity of every individual. Spiritual traditions have much to offer in terms of both understanding and upholding the inherent dignity of the individual in community life (Hatcher 1998, 2007).

The centrality of moral transformation in any global action agenda toward social justice and peace is succinctly summarized in the words of James O'Dea:

> We cannot just switch on peace. … We have not collectively cracked the codes of peace because they interrupt the fundamental patterns of how we live, do business, and conduct social, political, and cultural life on the planet.
>
> Genuine peace represents a whole new order of being and an evolutionary reframing that entails the transformation of communication and cultural processes, new forms of participatory democracy, and the redesign of socioeconomic systems (O'Dea 2012, pp. 6–7).
>
> Only authentic peace carries the design codes to allow us *to scale up our values* so that we can envision and organize around collaborative models of planetary governance, economic sustainability, cultural plurality, evolving consciousness, and spiritual development (O'Dea 2012, p. 39).

## 2.5 Final Thoughts Regarding a Global Curriculum

For the science and practice of psychology to become a leading force in advancing the human condition in a complex global age, it has to transcend the ethnocentricity, discussed in Chap. 1, and develop a globally adequate curriculum. While we cannot explore here the many aspects of this task ahead, a number of them have been elaborated in recent publications (Leong et al. 2012).

A global curriculum needs to include in meaningful ways the multiplicity of different metaphysical assumptions about personhood and relationships across cultures around the globe. It needs to draw systematically on the knowledge and wisdom of the full range of world cultures, on how they construct the fundamental relationship between the individual and the community. It needs to study systematically how different cultures negotiate the tension between rapid and constant global change and the need to preserve the stabilizing influence of tradition and continuity. Psychological understanding of human nature can be profoundly enriched by the careful study of how different cultures handle the human tension between seeking pleasure and self-restraint and endurance; between competition and cooperation; and most importantly, between the three central variables of any conception of morality—love, power, and justice (Hatcher 1998). Psychology needs to respond to the zeitgeist of our times by defining a truly transcultural vision, identity, and mission. Finally, global socially responsible psychology has to articulate a clear global action agenda.

We end this discussion with a quote from Marsella's extensive writings on the education and training needed for global psychologists:

> Global psychology is committed to more than the resolution of the many challenges facing our world today. Its fundamental calling is to pursue, support, and promote peace and justice. The very word "global" in its identity means, that the process and content, which are embraced are oriented toward the world—not toward the group, nor the state, nor the nation, but the world. Humanity, in its totality, is its focus and concern… Though reality may constantly diminish this vision, it is nevertheless the horizon toward which the global psychologist proceeds. Every act we perform as psychologists is a moral act and has moral implications… This concern for morality is, in my opinion, at the heart of what we do as global psychologists…
>
> There is so much for the global psychologist to do. Global psychologists can help change behaviors associated with problems (e.g., sustainable agriculture, environmental management, urban design), conflict resolution, healthy lifestyles, population control, humanitarian aid, a civil society). They can assist in envisioning, negotiating, designing, and evaluating a humane social order and a meaningful world peace. They can help clarify, reconcile, or better negotiate the divisive dialectical tensions between the rational and the intuitive, the secular and the sacred, the individual and the group, and the sciences and arts…. That is global psychology! (Marsella 2007, p. 358)

We believe that such an approach to psychology in a global era can allow it to lead the way toward an enlightened understanding of civilization and prosperity, as well as in the will and skills to help humanity move in that direction.

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