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TITLE - Daisaku Ikeda's Philosophy of the Poetic Spirit and the

Ubuntu Philosophy of African Humanism:

Youth Empowerment and Peacebuilding Through Dialogic

Cultural Practices

A poet is one who walks in rhythm with the universe, one who illuminates the eternal treasures of society and human beings. For this reason, I have always cherished the belief that leaders of society – be it in politics or some other sphere – should essentially be poets at heart.

(Ikeda, 2003a, p. 40).

Ikeda's philosophy of the poetic spirit (*shigokoro*) aligns with the Ubuntu philosophy of African humanism. In unison, these philosophies can inform practices in the educational realm enhancing youth empowerment and global peace through dialogic cultural practices. The

Ikeda/Soka discourse can be enhanced through discussion of how the culture of dialogue, the poetic spirit and Ubuntu humanism can serve to implant wisdom, compassion and courage in the global citizenship educational sector, revitalizing and invigorating the learning process and restoring our humanity (Ikeda, 1988). In this paper I will explore the poetic spirit and Ubuntu in relation to value-creating education for global citizenship.

The Poetic Spirit (*shigokoro*)

Ikeda (1988, p. 3) writes about a poetic spirit from which emanates considerably more than just poetry. He proposes the poetic spirit as the embodiment of sensitive, intuitive perception; the heart that recognizes the interlinking bonds of humanity and all phenomena; the source of imagination and creativity unleashing hope, courage, unity and the power to revitalize society. Major themes of his vision of the poetic spirit are interconnectedness, imaginative empathy, and creative coexistence (*kyosei*) (Goulah, 2021, pp. xxiii – xxiv; 2024; Rita, 2021). Goulah (2024) explains:

Shigokoro has been translated into English as ‘poetic mind’, poetic spirit’, and ‘poetic heart’...capturing the diverse range of aesthetic, cognitive, somatic, and faith dimensions...To capture the fullness of this term as Ikeda deploys it, the most appropriate rendering for *shigokoro* is ‘poetic mind/heart/spirit’. (p. 229)

For the purposes of this paper, I will be using poetic spirit to encapsulate all meanings.

The poetic spirit can empower daily experiences from mundane processes to the enhancement of the extraordinary aspects of human life. The poetic spirit can serve as a unifying factor fostering interdependence and interrelationships of shared humanity. Some people revel in the fundamental darknesses of despair, inequality, and exploitation in our modern society of

chaos. Nonetheless, Ikeda proposes that all humans have access to the poetic spirit radiating from within. It is inherent within humanity (Chowdhury & Ikeda, 2020, p. 39).

Ikeda has penned significant essays with the poetic spirit as a major theme. He compared (1988) his philosophy of the poetic mind to Pascal's concept of the "sensitive" mind of intuition and sensibility and cautions against its loss and neglect. Ikeda proposed that the poet intuitively feels the living entity of life, in contrast to those who see humans from the scientific mind which produced such ideas as nuclear weapons that indiscriminately destroy life. Through inner transformation, human bonds are enhanced. The poetic spirit can augment human solidarity. Urbain (2018) insightfully includes the poetic expression in his explanation of communicative creativity as an expansion on Ikeda's concept of dialogue (pp. 114-117). The poetic spirit can thus serve as a dialogic aspect of culture and a unifying factor towards creative coexistence (*kyosei*) and other humanistic cultural practices (Ubuntu).

Ikeda and Ubuntu

The essence of the southern African philosophy of Ubuntu ("I am because you are") aligns with the philosophy of the poetic spirit and value-creating education for global citizenship. Ubuntu practice sustains capabilities to unite humanity beyond divisions of ethnicity, nationality or religious differences. Ubuntu humanism has endemically existed within cultures of Southern Africa as a foundational principle for socio-psychological and anthropological approaches to human interaction (Ramose, 2002, p. 734). Ubuntu embodies a unifying philosophical stance of togetherness and interrelatedness. The self does not exist in isolation but only in tandem relationship to others. There is no separate state of being without the totality of the community of

others. The welfare and well-being of all becomes a natural propensity of life. If you suffer, I suffer; we are kin (Robinson-Morris, 2019).

Ikeda has discussed African political, economic, and educational programming in many of his annual peace proposals presented to the UN. He consistently expressed interest in global issues related to African progress and affairs. He presented proposals for aiding African development based on his conceptualization of global citizenship in resonance with African paradigms of communalism, humanism and Ubuntu. He believes that African philosophies such as Ubuntu embody a humanistic ethos enabling people to manifest happiness and self-fulfillment in their daily lives. Ikeda wrote:

The Buddhist perspective on life has much in common with the traditional spirit of Africa...Nelson Mandela...once told me the following: ‘In Africa there is a concept known as *ubuntu* - the profound sense that we are human only through the humanity of others...’ I assert that education in the twenty-first century, in an effort to secure happiness not only for oneself but for others, must find inspiration in the *ubuntu* spirit-the very ethos with which Nelson Mandela lived his life. (Indangasi et al, 2018, p. xiii)

In his final essay (2024), originally published in the November 15, 2023, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, Ikeda outlines emphases of the Ubuntu philosophy:

Because all people embody the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, they equally possess the supremely noble life state of Buddhahood. This teaching of Nichiren Buddhism resonates deeply with the African wisdom of *ubuntu*, a philosophy emphasizing compassion, inner goodness and the interconnectedness of all people that says, “I am because you are.” The indomitable champion of human rights former South African President Nelson Mandela (1918–2013) stressed the importance of *ubuntu*. (p. 2)

Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali, a South African poet, was read by Nelson Mandela while in prison. Mtshali was the person who connected the imprisoned Mandela to Ikeda’s writings and

contributed to the eventual journeys of Mandela to Japan (1990 and 1995), his meeting with Ikeda and introduction to the Soka University system (Ikeda, 2023, pp. 129-132).

Upon his first visit to the United Nations in New York, October 14, 1960, Daisaku Ikeda concluded: “The twenty-first century will be the century of Africa. The world should support the growth of this young sapling” (1995, p. 184). He was profoundly impressed by the youthful and energetic dynamism of the African delegates representing countries, newly independent from European colonial rule. In a published dialogue with Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter (2017), Ikeda stated: “Africa is the spiritual home of jazz and the cradle of humanity. I have long declared that the twenty-first century will be the Century of Africa. The twenty-first century cannot be prosperous unless humanity’s place of origin prospers” (p.167). In his 2001 Peace Proposal, Ikeda states:

Africa is the birthplace of humankind. It has been a continent of hope, giving rise to a rich diversity of civilizations since ancient times which have given humanity numerous blessings in many areas, including philosophy and science. It has long been my belief that the twenty-first century must be the century of Africa...The destiny of Africa and indeed of all humankind...hinges on the degree to which ordinary people awaken their inner capacities for strength, for wisdom and for solidarity. I cannot stress enough the value of open dialogue in bringing forth these qualities. (Urbain, 2014, pp. 138-140)

Odari points out that Ubuntu practice does not negate the individual: “Tutu stresses that *Ubuntu* is about compassion and harmony, and it encompasses doing good for the world. *Ubuntu* is challenging ourselves to not only recognize and appreciate our similarities, but also welcome and respect our differences” (Odari, 2020, p. 191).

Ubuntu African humanism reinforces the importance of each human being in holistic oneness with others and the environment. African traditional philosophies celebrate the oneness

of human life and the environment, including nature, the importance of the ancestors and cultural history (Williams. 1980). Global citizenship education supports an ethos of human unity, solidarity and interrelatedness which aligns with Ubuntu humanism (Mino & Heto, 2020, p. 44; Odari, 2020, p. 189-191). Mino (2018) shares her educational observation: “Through my experiences of teaching in East Africa, I have found that the philosophical underpinnings of Soka education echo the African humanist philosophy of *Ubuntu*, and I use both Soka and *Ubuntu* as my theoretical frameworks... Soka’s vision of nurturing human wholeness resonates with the African humanist philosophy of *Ubuntu*” (pp. 13-15).

Value-Creating Education for Global Citizenship

Ikeda’s concept of global citizenship entails a broad view of the cosmos linking all humanity, bearing witness to the promise of a united world view similar to human unity encompassed within the spirit of Ubuntu. He proclaimed the need and provided many guidelines for the development of value-creating educational processes. He emphasizes an unrelenting declaration of the absolute value and necessity of dialogic practices, inner transformation, and the harmonious, creative coexistence (*kyosei*) of Earth’s diverse populations. He espouses an equitable evaluation of the rights of all humans to participate in these non-violent processes, and the nurture of the characteristics of wisdom, compassion and courage toward global citizenship for peace. Global citizenship education aims to bring people together despite diversities in ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, political orientation or any other potentially divisive components of human life.

Ikeda (2010) offered his goals for education in relation to global citizenship in a address at Teachers College, Columbia University. He outlined these essential elements:

1) the wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living; 2) the courage not to fear or deny difference but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures and to grow from encounters with them; 3) the compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one's immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places. (pp. 20–1)

These characteristics parallel the bodhisattva practice which he describes as "...an unshrinking confrontation with what Buddhism calls the fundamental darkness of life" (2010, p. 115). Evil is equally a part of human nature resulting too often in destructive machinations of the collective ego (Ikeda, 2010). He further explains: "The struggle to rise above such egoism and live in larger and more contributive realms of selfhood constitutes the core of the bodhisattva's practice. Education is, or should be, based on the same altruistic spirit as the bodhisattva" (2010, p. 116). These themes of Ikeda's concept of global citizenship of wisdom, compassion and courage also coalesce in his explication of Ubuntu: the wisdom of interconnectedness; compassion; and the courage of inner goodness, of human revolution.

Value-creating pedagogy as outlined by Makiguchi, aimed to revitalize the teaching and learning processes and improve education in early twentieth-century Japan (Gebert & Joffee, 2007). He proposed that the creation of value is a uniquely human endeavor that augments daily life, the process of living and the joy of learning. Makiguchi established a new pedagogy to circumvent the deleterious effects of the militarized educational program prevalent in Japan during his lifetime. He proposed that the true aim of education is the happiness of the learner in a contributive and transformative personal and social context. Makiguchi envisioned the school as the place where the harmonious community development is lived, taught and fostered (Goulah,

2010). How can students be happy if they are taught to believe that the only purpose of their life is to die and to devote their lives to the emperor? Makiguchi abhorred the visions of lost lives and minds to obfuscated values such as the nation, the emperor and war. He believed in the right to self-determination for all students, not just the privileged. He never gave up on his dream (Goulah and Gebert, 2009).

Makiguchi delineated six transformative indices, whereby the results of value-creating education can be evaluated. These indices demarcate the progress of humans from self-centeredness toward personal well-being in the context of the greater social good:

1) from unconscious, emotional modes of living to a life of self-mastery, consciousness and rationality; 2) from a life of less to one of greater value creation; 3) from self-centered to a social and altruistic mode of living; 4) from dependent to independent modes of living in which one is capable of making principle-based judgement; 5) from a life dominated by external influences to a life of autonomy; 6) from a life under the sway of desires to self-reflective modes of living in which one is capable of integrating one's actions into a larger sense of purpose. (Ikeda, 2010, p. 20).

Ikeda's philosophy of value-creating education for global citizenship contributes to beauty, gain and good, wisdom, compassion, and courage for the betterment of humanity. Value creation takes place in sustainability with the global community of the earth and the universe in human harmony and harmony with the natural environment. Urbain (2010) proposed findings of three dominant components of Ikeda's philosophy of peace: 1) inner transformation, 2) dialogue, and 3) global citizenship. Urbain (2018) elaborates in his explanation and description of these processes as inner transformation leading to inner peacebuilding; dialogue towards communicative creativity; and global citizenship expanded to planetary awareness and preventive peacebuilding (pp. 111- 119).

Ikeda's philosophy of value-creating education for global citizenship was expanded through interactions with Josei Toda, his mentor, and built upon the system of value-creating pedagogy developed by Makiguchi. Urbain (2010) refers to Toda's concept of "one-worldism":

One important concept proposed by Josei Toda was that of *chikyu minzoku shugi*...A literal translation...would be 'global nationalism,' but in the English version of the novel *The Human Revolution* it is translated as 'one-worldism.'... Toda's 'one-worldism' can be considered as a call for people to place priority on humanity instead of the state." ...I would like to suggest that in modern times, Toda's idea of 'one-worldism' as defined by Ikeda corresponds to 'global citizenship. (p.63)

Urbain (2010) stated: "There was a progression from Toda's 'global nationalism' and 'one-worldism' to Ikeda's 'global citizenship'" (p. 63). Goulah and Ito (2012) examine the etymology of wording, the various Japanese words utilized and their English translations (pp. 71-73). This highlights the evolution of the language used over time and focuses on Ikeda's recent usage of "*sekai shimin*" (world citizenship) emphasizing the shared human identity of the world's people more so than the shared geographical homeland of earth (Goulah, 2016, p. 7).

Relating his global citizen concept to the tutelage of his mentor, Josei Toda, Ikeda (2003c) explicated the enduring alliance of the Soka Gakkai with the United Nations:

...Shin'ichi [Ikeda's pen name] keenly felt the need for a political party that...championed the ideal of global citizenship. It was President Toda who had advocated that concept, which holds that all people have a shared destiny and should be united as global citizens, transcending all ethnic, national, and ideological differences. The Komei Political Federation's emphasis on the importance of the United Nations grew out of this ideal of global citizenship. (pp. 314–315)

Global citizenship as outlined by Ikeda and in tandem with the proposals of his mentor, Josei Toda, aims to bring people together despite diversities in ethnicity, nationality, political orientation or any other potentially divisive components of human life. The global citizenship

component of Ikeda's philosophy relates to the need for world peace to be realized based on an international united mind-set placing human life and harmonious community of the species as top priority. As society dissects along a thousand fissure lines, the primordial communal roots of biogenetic unity among diverse individuals, cultures and lands have been submerged along lines of ethnic, cultural, and racial attachments (Ikeda, 1993). These attachments have proliferated to the point of widespread intra-human species hatred and selective annihilation and genocidal attacks. Without reconciling self and other, humans can get lost in an ego dominated, dispassionate posture that allows for the emergence of fanaticisms. The collective ego can reign in forms such as virulent nationalism and extreme ethnocentrism (Ikeda, 2020, p. 91). The burgeoning of AI (Artificial Intelligence) and virtual reality can exacerbate the dehumanizing process (Goulah, 2024). Ikeda's philosophy and actions seek to deter a negative, destructive trajectory of violence, prejudice and discrimination; toward the value creation of beauty, gain and good; positive human interactions and dialogue toward peace based on solid human bonds.

In his 2014 United Nations peace proposal (Ikeda, 2014), Ikeda has an entire section on "Value creation that always takes hope as its starting point" (p. 12) with a subsection on "The power of hope" (p.18). Ikeda uniquely positions the addition of hope as a component of global citizenship education. His model is based on the hopeful wisdom, compassion and courage emerging from the processes of value creation and human revolution.

The theme of global consciousness is one of the most difficult and intractable components of global citizenship education—the transcendence of nationalism and the nation-state toward a broader creative coexistence. This is a common reality of daily life: the reluctance, unwillingness or sheer ignorance of how to think beyond one's global location. This has also

been a political impediment to Pan-Africanism and the creation of a United States of Africa as proposed by Kwame Nkrumah and supported by Ikeda in his 2001 peace proposal (Urbain 2014, 137–140). African politicians have been reluctant to relinquish their countries' national boundaries, in spite of the fact that these boundaries were artificially created under vicious colonial military onslaught.

Global citizenship education might be viewed as an ethos or ideology of human unity that is mandated to sustain shared life on this planet. The unifying theme of Ikeda's "human education (*ningen kyoiku*) (Goulah, 2021, pp. xvi-xviii)," value-creating philosophy and global citizenship education is a humanizing educational stance. Ikeda's philosophy of value-creating education for global citizenship can work in tandem with Africana notions of Ubuntu humanism to transform Africa toward an egalitarian, communalist, social humanist and united continent as envisioned by Nkrumah, Mandela and other Pan-Africanist philosophers and activists as well as contributing to a larger global ethic.

Ikeda's philosophy of global citizenship education also incorporates the existential phenomena of humanism and human unity (*humunity/hunity*) (Williams, 2016, p. 65). This is the basis of Ikeda's concept of human revolution, which is the inner transformation that leads to and results from dialogue and global citizenship. The end goal manifests as environmental balance, equilibrium, homeostasis, harmony, joy, human happiness, and peace.

The Wisdom of Interrelatedness

Wisdom is an essential element of global citizenship as it relates to the ability to perceive the interconnectedness, interrelatedness, and dependent origination of all phenomena. There is a

prominent Buddhist conceptualization of dependent origination or interrelatedness referring to the reciprocal or mutual relatedness of all phenomena, including human life. It teaches that no beings or phenomena exist on their own; they exist or occur because of their relationship with other beings and phenomena. In Ikeda's second Harvard speech presented in 1993, entitled "Mahayana Buddhism and Twenty-First Century Civilization," he elaborates on the theme of interrelatedness:

Thus, each living thing manifests the enlightenment of which it is capable; each contributes to the harmony of the grand concert of symbiosis. In Buddhist terminology, 'dependent origination' (*engi*) describes these relationships. Nothing and no one exists in isolation. Each individual being functions to create the environment that sustains all other existences. All things are mutually supporting and interrelated, forming a living cosmos. (2020, p. 48)

Everything in the world comes into existence in response to causes and conditions. Nothing can exist independent of other things. The doctrine of the twelve-linked chain of causation is a well-known illustration of this idea (Soka Gakkai, 2002). Indra's net is a net that adorns the palace of the god Indra, or Shakra. Each intersection of the net has a reflecting jewel that mirrors all the other countless jewels in the net. Indra's net is frequently employed as a metaphor for the interrelation or mutual inclusiveness of all phenomena (Soka Gakkai, 2002). This metaphor alludes to the interlocking realities of life. When one jewel moves the action is reflected in the others in a dynamic dance of unity.

Understanding the interrelatedness of all phenomena bestows a let's get together and work together mindset. "...People will go beyond petty egoistic thinking to become total human beings who...relate their own lives to the fate of all mankind. I am firmly convinced that cultivating excellent human beings of this caliber is the true purpose of education" (Ikeda, 1984,

p. 334). The realization of interconnectedness leads to freedom and liberation. “It is through education that we are liberated from powerlessness” (Ikeda, 1997).

The Courage of Dialogic Practices

One way value creation in education can be supported is through dialogic practices. It takes courage to dialogue with self and others especially when at odds (Obelleiro, 2013). Ikeda (2018) extols the mandate for dialogue as a necessary, uplifting and empowering activity:

Ours is an age where there is a critical need for truly creative dialogical processes grounded in respect for the dignity of life...Austregesilo de Athayde...once shared with me his conviction that the power of mutual understanding and solidarity arising from dialogue can triumph over the threats of evil. (pp. x-xi)

Creative commitment to dialogue can enhance and facilitate human solidarity based on respect for life and living toward a culture of peace. Goulah (2018, p. 64) explains the importance of dialogue in Ikeda’s peace philosophy in line with the mentor and disciple lineage of the Soka tradition: “...My mentor, Josei Toda, said: ‘We are entering an age of dialogue. Conversing with others is a way to voice our ideals and bring people together...’ This was also a conviction voiced by...Tsunesaburo Makiguchi...” Urbain (2010) connected the mentor-disciple relationship to Toda’s practice of dialogue:

Toda’s favorite technique to promote the Soka Gakkai movement was dialogue. He spent an inordinate amount of time talking to individuals, and this was at the heart of his activities as the leader of a burgeoning grassroots movement. It was through dialogue that Toda educated Ikeda as his successor... I would like to assert that Ikeda’s philosophy of peace revolves around the mentor-disciple relationship, which I consider as a specific form of dialogue, deeply linked to inner transformation and global citizenship. (pp. 72-73)

Ikeda's philosophy views dialogue as a master key for the processes of human education. "Dialogue, with its ability to inspire and stimulate, is the source of education" (Ikeda, 2009, p. 121). As a consequence: "Engaging in dialogue is a struggle to positively transform our own life, as well as those of others. It is the act of breaking out of the shell of our lesser self, surmounting the wall of our callous ego, and creating and expanding positive connections with others" (Ikeda, 2010, p.5). Moreover, dialogue accelerates our momentum toward the development of value-creating solutions to contemporary ills: Ikeda suggests that "...when we speak frankly on the basis of our common humanity it is always possible to see our way to the next step forward" (Urbain, 2018, p. 110). In "Radicalism Reconsidered," a speech delivered at Claremont McKenna College, 1993, Ikeda emphasizes again the importance of dialogue to human life and living: "It is only with the open space created by dialogue...that human wholeness can be sustained" (Ikeda, 2020, p. 32).

Creative Coexistence (*Kyosei*)

Dialogic practices often work well when practiced with the right ethos. *Kyosei* is defined as "an ethos that...is based more on 'us' than 'me'" (Ikeda, 2003b, p. 9). This statement is acutely prescient of the parallels of *kyosei* with Ubuntu. Furthermore, in a section of *Soka Education* (2010), subtitled "Restoring Human Bonds," Ikeda mandates: "... We must not become divided or isolated. Rather, we must deepen human bonds that transcend differences of race and nationality...We must give the highest priority to cultivating in young people the strength of character and values that will enable them to take the lead in building a world of creative coexistence" (p. 91). Fostering the poetic spirit in our youth can facilitate interconnection, imaginative empathy and creative coexistence.

Goulah (2010) highlights the contribution of Ikeda: “Ikeda’s application of *kyosei* is couched in Makiguchi’s theory of value creation and, thereby, takes on the essence of conscious and volitional *creativity* or *creation*...and conveys the sense that human beings must actively work at peaceful and harmonious coexistence by creating the values of beauty, individual gain, and social good ...with all human beings, species, and nature”(p. 266-267).

Significantly, Ikeda explicitly relates *kyosei* to his vision for African development (Urbain, 2014): “I believe this vision of peaceful solidarity, defined as Africa’s mission by President Nkrumah, should be the guiding principle of regional integration in the twenty-first century...The overflowing vitality of the human spirit seeking creative coexistence and autonomy cultivates hope, trust, and friendship” (p. 140). Ikeda’s philosophy and actions seek to redirect a negative, destructive trajectory of violence, prejudice and discrimination, toward value creation and positive human interactions and dialogue toward creative coexistence based on solid human bonds. Ikeda compassionately issues a warning:

...All the world’s peoples are one people, and that the various peoples who inhabit this same planet must overcome any discriminatory consciousness and feelings of hostility that arise from differences in borders, languages, customs and living environment, awaken to the reality that we form a community bound by common destiny, and live in harmonious coexistence. (Goulah, 2020, p. 40)

Bradford (2018) poses a hint at one of Ikeda’s proposals for an active process toward mutual understanding. “Ikeda points out that this is not a passive process, but an active effort not to force one’s own views and to understand the views of the other [Unger & Ikeda, 2016]. This process teaches self-restraint and humanitarian competition” (p. 124). Makiguchi called for a humanitarian competition which would initiate augmented global ties and more positive communally oriented interactions. Urbain (2010) elucidates the principle of humanitarian

competition: “Instead of the win/lose options of traditional competition, Ikeda proposes the win/win solutions of humanitarian competition, with groups vying with each other to show the greatest proof of humane behavior” (p. 163).

Bonds of Solidarity

The ultimate goal of education and life is happiness. Gathering together, bringing people together makes people happy. Dialogue, conversation, poetic sensitivities, friends, love, mentor disciple; learning, playing, living together bring us joy. Solidarity of spiritual bonds develop in the process of becoming fully human. No man is an island. The question is how to make human life the optimum experience. These philosophies and practices flourish by keeping in mind the fertile metaphor of the bonds of solidarity.

The experience of a truly human life --genuine happiness--can only be realized in the bonds and interactions between people. Herein lies the essence of the Buddhist perspective on human life and happiness...If these bonds are severed, the human spirit can only roam aimlessly in the pitch darkness of solitude. In psychological terms this might be referred to as a ‘communication disorder,’ a pathology of modern society due to a weakening of the bonds among people. (Ikeda, 2010, p. 87-8)

The poetic metaphor clearly depicts the angst of existential suffering experienced by many in contemporary society. Without the camaraderie of fellow humans, we are little more than animals in interactions and mindsets. In a subheading “Restoring Human Bonds,” Ikeda points out:

Modern depth psychology and ecology show that interrelations expand infinitely to connect human beings with each other, with the world of nature, and with the entire universe...But modern civilization has turned its back on this wisdom and...the cords that once bound man and man, to say nothing of man and nature, have been severed and the individual man himself groans in the small, enclosed and lonely space to which he has been driven. (Ikeda, 1984, p. 332)

Youth Empowerment

Ikeda often expresses concern for the development of youth and their educational opportunities. Solidarity functions to empower. People working in harmony together can enhance feelings of self-worth and empowerment. Empowerment functions beneficially by enabling people to change their life conditions toward clarity of goals and constructive actions. . Value-creating education covers the parameters of nurturing students toward the understanding that they can create the values of beauty, gain and good under any and all circumstances; wherein learners are imbued with the spirit of creation and the knowledge that they have the inexorable ability and opportunity to create new ideas and solutions to social ills.

The youth are not just our only future; they are our now. Reawakening the love of life in local communities based on the fundamental principle of respect for human life and human unity can inspire youth. To identify and counteract the root causes of violence through the creative commitment to dialogue can facilitate the transformation from a culture of violence to a culture of peace. The factors that need emphasis and further examination are those which unite us. From what we have in common, we can further build and sustain unity and united action. The prevailing and dominant global materialistic pattern veers us away from humanism. We will lose our youth if we do not correct these contradictions and inequities. Our focus must be on the bestowal of the heritage of resilience upon our youth. Nothing can be perpetuated without the youth on board. It is all up to them now. The possibilities of revitalization and invigoration of the learning process by virtue of the dialogic cultural practices of the poetic spirit and Ubuntu as unifying philosophies of humanism are well worth advancing.

Global citizenship orientation, the poetic spirit and Ubuntu humanism can appeal to youth who too often find the current educational practices to be non-engaging, irrelevant, and counterintuitive to daily realities and needs. Curriculum and extra-curricular activities can be designed to promote maximally optimum conditions for value creation through accessing and fostering the poetic spirit. The heart/mind/spirit nexus lies dormant in many; awaiting opportunities to awake and inspire the creation of causes and conditions leading to problem solving, more harmony and connection throughout the world. Human-unity-minded educators can collaborate to create a new wave of educational practices toward happier students of agency who follow and implement their dreams. The goal is to create a global society in which all are valued, imbued and armed with resilience and contributive lifestyles. Structural and institutional change has its rewards, but fundamental change is mandated from within. This is what Ikeda terms the human revolution that individuals have the choice, and hopefully the chance, to experience. There is a crucible of value-creating potential, a cauldron of capabilities existing within each person. The poetic spirit and Ubuntu humanism can add to young people's repertoires of coping skills and enhance international cooperation. Ikeda's models of youth education and human liberation can serve to unite peoples and cultures in leadership roles in world affairs.

Conclusion

Various dilemmas are identifiable in today's global reality, particularly in the realm of global citizenship education. Controversies abound related to themes such as cultural diversity, curriculum, neo-liberalism, economics, decolonization. How will the world turn out? Ikeda has a vision. Ikeda's view of what global peace and citizenry will look like informs and parallels

principles of the poetic spirit, Ubuntu, *kyosei* and the quest for a lasting peace. Fostering dialogic education has a great role to play in efforts to enhance educational opportunities. With harmonious relations prevailing, youth will be able to avail themselves of brighter opportunities to facilitate a transformation from a culture of global violence to a culture of global peace.

Ikeda makes his philosophical contribution toward human unity and interrelatedness from his stance as a man from the culture of the East and from the influence of Buddhist thought. Eastern philosophy extols the unity and interrelatedness of all phenomena. The culture of the capitalist West has lauded a dogma of rugged individualism, individual rights, and liberties. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* applauded a me-first, divinely ordained, personal, ‘pull-yourself-up-by-your-own-bootstraps’ belief system (Weber, 2003). This self-help philosophy and practice did not always function to benefit all contenders. Social inequities and injustices held groups of people in poverty and dismay. The Eastern culture and the Buddhist view of interdependence, interrelatedness and interconnectedness allow for a more holistic approach to progress than currently operating in the world under the dominant tutelage of Western culture.

In this paper, I have explored dimensions of global citizenship education which can be related to the power of the poetic spirit and Ubuntu humanism. I examined interconnections and parallel themes of interrelatedness, dialogic cultural practices and creative coexistence. Bonds of solidarity can provide important foundational buttresses for peacebuilding and youth empowerment. The poetic spirit (*shigokoro*), creative coexistence (*kyosei*) and Ubuntu humanism are socio-cultural concepts derived from the global East and South. The importance of these concepts clarifies in contrast to the prevailing ideologies currently dominating the globe

emanating from the West. Euro-American ideologies have inculcated such deleterious paradigms as white supremacy; capitalist profiteering and exploitation; the hubris of humans in domination over others and the natural environment prevailing in the Anthropocene era. Global citizenship education provides antidotes to contemporary ills. The unity of humanity in creative harmony for the good of all remains a goal striven towards. The scaffolding of peacebuilding strategies such as dialogue, dignity, respect and belonging can be solidly erected upon such inclusive philosophies as the poetic spirit, Ubuntu, *kyosei*, and the interrelatedness of self and other. These concepts fit together in an interlocking nexus of wisdom, compassion, courage, caring for the uplifting of the many over the few. The astute and insightful attention that Ikeda has directed toward Africa over many decades highlights a global perspective of compassion toward the neglected and exploited. Buddhist and African humanisms meld optimally for the benefit of humanizing the social, cultural and economic realms, leveling the playing fields in a manner benefiting equitable global progress.

Outer and inner dialogue are mandatory to a fully humane experience. Vitality and empathy dwell within the inclusive spaces of self and other transcending the limitations of egocentricity. Unifying philosophies help us to amalgamate, integrate and synthesize our components of life and consciousness, suggesting that Ikeda's philosophy of value-creating education for global citizenship can work in tandem with notions of humanism and the poetic spirit toward enhancement of global unity.

The significance of Ikeda's views lies in their stimulation and inspiration to our vision of the future world of interconnection, a world without groups of humans dominating and exploiting others. The philosophy of Ubuntu and the poetic spirit as outlined by Ikeda can

provide a means by which a path to value-creating and human revolution can lead to lasting change.

An over abundance of my historical, political and educational studies and lived experience has been depressing, contentious, polarizing and imbued with divisive paradigms. I found myself experiencing Ikeda's poetry and his philosophy of the poetic spirit as comforting, as guides toward restoration of my spirit and rejuvenation and an antidote to polarity. I began to pen voluminous verses of poetry myself, expressing my own poetic spirit from within which I never realized I possessed. I am inspired to be "...purehearted and seeing the beauty in all things like a poet" (Ikeda, 2021, p. 10).

The unifying theme underlying Ikeda's human education (*ningen kyoiku*) philosophy and global citizenship education is a humanizing educational stance. The dominant-negative paradigm can be changed through educational actions with a conscience. Value-creating global citizenship modeled curriculum can generate opportunities for the dialogic cultural practices of the poetic spirit and Ubuntu African humanism to thrive.

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