

天下，一家

Under Heaven, One Family

This is a special time to be alive, a special time to be young. The world's problems seem so great; perhaps they are beyond anyone's ability to master. Yet, the future holds the promise of wonders beyond our ability to imagine, if only our human civilization can survive.

I assert that, in spite of the signs of disintegration and decay in the world's order, we stand on the threshold of the unity of mankind. Today we have the opportunity, you and I together, to build a world civilization on the foundations of friendship and justice. If we accept that challenge, I am confident that we will succeed.

For the first time in history, a united world civilization is possible. In the past, great distances and the lack of rapid transportation and communication hindered the exchange of goods, ideas, and cultures. Our social and political structures have evolved from the family unit to the tribe, the city-state (such as Rome), and the nation. Global civilization is the next step.

You might say that we have not progressed much in our relations among ourselves. Yes, we have organized into larger and more powerful units, but what is the result? Perhaps we have simply created larger and more destructive empires.

Is history simply the story of larger empires, greater conquests, and more widespread oppression? Are we doomed to continue this pattern forever? Will we never learn to control our greed and cruelty?

As we look around the world, we certainly see an abundance of war, famine, and injustice. We see civilization struggling with its own corruptions. We see the forces of darkness and chaos attacking the existing structures of world society. Great changes are coming too rapidly; the old structures cannot meet the challenge.

The old world order is breaking down. What will replace it? More of the same—oppression and war among nations? Will we destroy ourselves completely? Will we lapse into utter chaos, lawlessness, and rule by terror and naked force? Will we survive long enough to create a united earth? If someone does succeed in uniting the world, will it be in the form of an evil empire? Will this be the ultimate result of our political evolution?

I readily agree that the immediate prospects are poor. Surely, human suffering will be great during the near future; it already is, and is likely to become worse. I believe, however, that eventually mankind will succeed in uniting itself and will join together to build a better world. I have great hope for the future of humanity and for our planet.

***Our world future
holds wonders too
great to imagine, if
we can survive.***

***We have the chance
to build a united
world civilization
with friendship and
justice.***

***In the past, this was
impossible.***

***Have we made pro-
gress, or have we
only created larger
problems?***

***Will we ever learn to
control our greed
and cruelty?***

***Civilization is strug-
gling with corrup-
tion, rapid change,
and forces of chaos.***

***What will replace the
old structure of world
society?***

***The situation seems
bad, but I believe we
will build a better
world.***

I often hear that human nature is bad and will never improve. That is, we are fatally afflicted with greed, hatred, and anger. Whenever someone does something good, some bad person will destroy it. Furthermore, we can't change our basic nature, so it's useless to try. This is the most common excuse given by pessimists and those who don't bother to work for positive change. I want to inform them of my view of human nature and give them another model to follow.

Humans have a special place in this world. We are masters of the earth; we are the smartest and most successful of animals. I believe, though, that we are more than simply super-smart monkeys. Humans have powers of mind that are unique on earth. We have special abilities to imagine, to create, and to build.

In my model, human nature has two sides. One side developed from our connection with the other animals. We have the urge to survive, to eat, to make ourselves comfortable, and to take what we want. I might call this side our lower nature, or base instincts.

Our other side might be called our higher nature. It shows itself in the virtues of kindness and love, of mercy and justice. I think it is this side that defines us as humans. Yes, we are human because we are intelligent, but even more, we are human because of these special virtues.

Many people ignore this side of themselves. They act out of greed and don't care for the happiness of others. After a while these actions become habit, and they forget that they ever had a higher nature. When this happens, they are more animal than human. No matter how smart they may be, they are no better than the wild beasts of the forest. Because they have the ability to understand their actions, they actually are worse than the wild beasts.

Some people pay attention to their higher nature and try to develop their virtues. Of course, these people are not perfect. They make mistakes, they get angry, and occasionally they do things that they know are wrong. However, they recognize their failures and try to improve their behavior. Over time, their good deeds outweigh the bad, and they have a positive effect on society. If enough people set this example, this behavior would become the norm instead of the exception. Young people would quickly develop good habits, and the "beasts" of the world would have less influence.

Many people have asked the questions: Is there a purpose to life? Is there some reason that I was born? I answer that there is. In my opinion, our purpose in life is to overcome our lower instincts and develop our higher virtues. More than that, we have a responsibility to improve society. We cannot separate these; each reinforces the other; we cannot achieve one without the other. Simply stated, our purpose in life is to improve ourselves and at the same time improve society.

Pessimists say that humans are bad and will never change. They don't bother to make life better..

Humans are more than smart monkeys; we have special abilities to imagine, create, and build.

Human beings have two sides; one is the animal instinct.

The other is our higher nature; this is what truly makes us human.

Many people ignore their higher nature and become like animals.

Some people try to develop their virtues. Of course, they make mistakes, but they do more good than bad.

The purpose of life is to improve ourselves and improve society at the same time.

To the pessimists, I say that your life will only grow more empty. If you don't work to improve society, you will not make any real improvement in your human qualities. If you neglect your purpose in life, you will become more like the bad people you point to as examples. Your material pleasures will not bring you happiness.

When I talk about improving society, what society do I mean? Am I talking about American society, Chinese society, our perhaps our university society? I try to act like a citizen of the world society. Yes, I was born in America and I will always be an American, just as you will always be Chinese. This is natural and good. It is good to be patriotic and proud of your homeland. However, I try to remember that, first of all, I am a human being and, therefore, a world citizen. This realization bonds me to all the peoples of the earth. This essential unity is more important than the differences between us.

Our vision should include the whole world, and our arms should embrace the whole world, but we don't need to travel across the world to improve society. The best place to improve society is right here. Think globally, of course, but act locally. Don't wait for tomorrow. Don't think that someone else has the job of making the world better. Don't think that you need to do something great; start small. There is plenty of work to do, here and now. It's my job. It's your job, too. Be responsible to yourself and to the world.

I often hear people say that they can't change the world, but that's not true. It's simply an excuse to do nothing. Here is a powerful idea. *Everything* you do changes the world. Maybe the change is small, but it is real. If many people make a small change, it will add up to a big change. Don't paralyze yourself with the illusion that you are helpless. You have a choice: will you make the world better or worse? Choose wisely.

Let me return to my original thought. I said that history shows the growth of human society from a family group to large nations. In the last century, for the first time ever, a truly worldwide civilization began to develop. Airplanes, television, the Internet, and other technologies are connecting all nations into a larger global system. For the first time, humans looked down on the earth. They saw one planet—beautiful, diverse, unique, and delicate. Every day, in little ways, our world is becoming united.

What opposes this process? Only our lower nature, and our refusal to give up our prejudices.

A wise man said: Treat others the way you want them to treat you. Another wise man said: Let your heart burn with loving kindness for every person you meet. We should think of all other people as our dear brothers and sisters. Don't think of others as enemies or competitors or targets. No, they are part of your family—the human family.

If you don't work to improve society, you won't improve your higher nature.

Although I am an American, I try to act like a world citizen. It is good to love your country, but world unity is more important.

Think globally, but act locally. You can begin now, wherever you are, to improve society.

Everything you do changes the world in a small way. When many small changes work together, a big change happens.

Every day our world is becoming more united.

Only our prejudices and greed oppose the process of unity.

Think of every person you meet as a dear brother and part of your family.

Perhaps you are thinking that, yes, all of this sounds good, but it will never happen. You have been told many times that human nature is bad. History is full of examples to support this claim. If everyone accepts this idea that we have a fatal flaw, however, then we will never make any improvement in the world's problems. If we all sit back and do nothing, then we are already defeated. If you want the world to be better for your children, then you need to do something to make it better. If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.

I look at history as a gradual development of our higher nature. To be sure, this development has been slow. As our technological powers have increased, so has our capacity for destruction and oppression. Hidden behind these cruelties, though, I believe that our capacity for kindness and fair play has increased.

Can I prove it? No, especially not if we look at the daily news. It seems to me, though, that the foundation for a new world is quietly being built as the old order decays and crumbles. I see hundreds of service organizations formed in the last century. They are dedicated, not to profit, but to peace, understanding, justice, and assistance to those who suffer.

I see a United Nations Organization that was created voluntarily by the leaders of all the countries of the world. It organizes hundreds of programs to improve the living conditions of many millions of people. Last year I saw the leaders of 150 nations join together and sign a Millennium Declaration dedicated to "all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs." Nothing remotely similar has happened in human history. Did this solve all the problems? Of course not, but it is a giant step in the right direction.

I might compare human history to the growth and development of a child. We spent thousands of years growing, learning, and increasing our abilities. However, we were immature and unable to coordinate ourselves or act responsibly. Now we are at that awkward and dangerous age, when we must change from children into adults. Like college students, the human race must overcome its rebellious passions and find a stable position in the world. We have no other choice, and time is running out.

I said that I was a world citizen. In my small way, I'm working to build trust and understanding around the world. A wise man said: All the earth is one country, and all people are its citizens. Today, most people would agree with this statement without giving it much thought. If we put this principle into action, however, it will create profound changes in the world. I am confident that it will be accepted by more and more people, and that it will reach closer and closer to their hearts.

If you are not working to make the world better, then you are part of the problem.

History is the story of the slow development of our higher nature.

The foundation for a new world is being built, while the old order destroys itself.

The United Nations and Millennium Summit are examples of steps in the right direction.

Like a child growing into adulthood, humanity must overcome its rebellious passions and become more stable.

All the earth is one country, and all people are its citizens. When we put this principle into action, it will create great changes.

When this knowledge has been fully understood, we will dedicate ourselves fully to living together as one large family.

I believe the world *is* one country. Do I think that national governments should disappear or give up all their power? Do I think we should all become exactly alike? No, of course not.

We need responsible government at all levels—local, national, and global. Each level has its own functions, powers, and responsibilities.

I believe in unity in diversity. That means we can join together without losing our special identity. Think of the beauty of nature, with so many kinds of plants and animals that make up one environment. The diversity of life creates strength, stability, adaptability, and beauty. It is the same with our cultures. We should celebrate the things that make us special, not eliminate them. Respect for the ideas and customs of others is a sign of maturity. It is possible to achieve unity and at the same time retain our precious diversity.

In summary, I am very optimistic about the future. This helps me to be happy and joyful each day. It inspires me to help others and work to build a better world.

If we think only of our differences, then we are trapped in the ancient cycle of prejudice and injustice. If we work together, we can turn those differences into strengths. Think about this: All great deeds were accomplished by people who worked together in unity. When a group divides itself with arguments, nothing will be accomplished. How, then, can the world solve its great problems if it does not find a way to unite, if the nations do not find a way to cooperate?

I am certain that this is the age when the unity of mankind will be established. It is more than a dream. It is a necessity if we expect to survive into adulthood.

We are one family. We are like the flowers of one garden. Each different flower adds its own special beauty. When most people accept this with all their heart, then prejudice will be conquered. This will lead to equal rights, which will create a climate of justice. Then true peace will be possible and world unity will be achieved.

Under one sky, under one heaven, we will live as one family. You can contribute to the current process of unification. You can begin to examine your prejudices and remove them from your heart. As you do this, your thoughts, noble and positive, will spread and the light of unity will shine brighter until it illuminates the whole earth.

***With a united world,
national governments
will still be necessary.***

***We can achieve unity
and keep our pre-
cious and beautiful
diversity.***

***I am optimistic about
the future. I can be
happy and joyful
while I help to build
a better world.***

***Our differences make
us stronger, when we
work together. All
great deeds are the
result of unity.***

***This is the age when
the unity of mankind
will be established.***

***We are like flowers in
a garden. Each
different one adds its
special beauty.***

***When people give up
their prejudices, then
justice, peace, and
unity will follow.***

***Under heaven, one
family. You can help
to make it happen.***