Chapter 9

ETHICS AND ENLIGHTENED PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract: Three decades after the publication of C. West Churchman’s main works, it seems necessary to reevaluate his perspective on ethics and to reframe it within the much modified and ever more complex interrelations between the widely different cultures in the world. In fact, his views on ethics are, like everyone’s own, culturo-centrated.

On the other hand, it seems obvious – taking particularly in account Magoroh Maruyama’s work on “mindscapes” – that different personal psychologies lead to also quite different Weltanschauungen and ethical stands.

Anyhow, in the present dangerously unstable situation of mankind as a whole, only a genuine transcultural ethics can save us from a variety of possible global mega-catastrophes, mostly engineered by man himself.

The crucial questions are: Can we hope that such a globally recognized and accepted ethics will emerge in time? And what should be its prescriptions?
9.1 MUSINGS ABOUT CHURCHMAN'S VIEWS ON ETHICS

9.1.1 Ethics?

We should start with the following quotation from *The Design of Inquiring Systems* (p.238);

"The religious Weltanschauung, ... describes a certain kind of relationship – such as love, adoration and obedience – between men and other men, or between men and some superior being, or between men and 'Nature'".

To begin with, the religious Weltanschauung does in fact prescribe (not merely describe) certain kinds of relationships. This is specially true in the case of the three great monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianism and Islam.

All three prescribe more or less the same type of behavior, in most cases.

But there is a ploy: The "faithful" should only adore the "true" God ... and moreover strictly in the specific ways established by the sacred scriptures.

And, in most cases, this love, adoration and obedience is not due to god. When and as described by any other creed, but exclusively to the only "proper" one. Those people who are not regarded as true believers in the "true" God are most generally not loved. No obedience is due to "alien" scriptures and "heretics" are excommunicated.

Indeed, the "infidel", the "pagan" or even simply the non-believer can find himself in dire straits and is frequently margined or hostigated. He can even be killed, under the most sanctimonious reasons, be it during a cruzade, or by an inquisitor, or by some Jihad fighter.

All this is ominous in view of the religious origins of ethics in the cultures that emerged from monotheistic faiths. The case of Eastern creeds, as Hinduism and Buddhism would need a different approach. The first mainly prescribes a rigid and highly fragmented social order, while Buddhism is oriented to personal introspection and betterment.

Ethics, as derived from different religious beliefs, has thus in each case a specific flavor, specially in the Western World.

9.1.2 Why, how and what do we believe?

While we are generally unconscious of the deep sources of our individual behavior, it is however evident that our personal ethics largely depends on