

**PILLARS of
CREATION**

and

**THE CONDITION
OF MAN**

A reflection on the past and an imagination of the future

December 2020

Feeling Europe Foundation

PILLARS of CREATION and THE CONDITION of MAN

Feeling Europe Foundation fosters and guides values and affairs, aiming to improve living conditions as well as human condition. The desk:

- brings European values and affairs in front;
- takes position as nexus between citizens and institutions;
- delivers resonance, builds, informs and connects;
- is doing research.

Changing moral standards and values did stimulate to share European values and affairs. This is done via the website www.feelingeurope.eu, social media, campaign material, the network, and by taking part in gatherings focused on all learning disciplines of life. The desk is an outgrowth from the conferences 'Europe: A Beautiful Idea?' (5th) and 'The Sound of Europe'.

The next centres are committed: The Nexus Institute, Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Bruegel, Dutch Chapter of the European Movement International, Dutch Society for International Affairs, the Royal Dutch Economic Association, Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism, Odyssey, Convention of Independent Financial Advisors.

The founder lives and is trained in the Netherlands. He worked for decades in several professions and business at financial institutions, mainly within the internal control sector, and from managerial positions. He got involved in the different stages of the classic financial bubble.

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“All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.,”

William Shakespeare, “As You Like It” Act II, Scene VII

This edition is from the series ‘*On Values and Affairs*’. Previously published:

- ‘Take care of it’
- ‘21st Century: Beyond the Shock, Homo Humane?’
- ‘BUSINESS IN A DIFFERENT WAY?’
- ‘A ROADMAP FOR THE EU - Europe has a territory, what now?’
- ‘The Case of Moral Capitalism - The Long and Difficult Road’

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- 1. Declaration of Principles on Tolerance**
- 2. United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

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INTRODUCTION

Our conscious behaviours, driven by noble and ignoble origin of the human brain, is challenging in managing them: we danced around the golden calf, built the "temple of the foundation of heaven and earth" Etemenanki in the ancient city of Babylon, fought countless wars, developed humanistic and enlightened thinking, created financial, economic and social systems and forms of government, began to work and live together and we lived alternately in both tribal and humanist eras.

Today, much is happening: harm to human dignity, there are specific views that lead to fanatical arrogance and desperate humbug, there is a big leap forward with digitization and robotics, there are people who just focus on the idea that submission or surrender to the will of a one true God provides the only perspective, there are gangs of violent extremists, and there are religious terrorists who want to be involved in the approach of the Day of Resurrection and final assessment of humanity.

I refer to the European humanist Pico della Mirandola (2nd half of the 15th century), who stated that during Creation God determined that **Man was given the freedom to "determine himself."** The thinker described this decision of God as follows:

"To you, Adam, we have not given a fixed abode, not a face of your own, or any particular gift; you are meant to obtain and possess the abode, face, and gifts that you choose according to your own desire and understanding. The nature of the others is fixed and is curbed within laws prescribed by us. You are not subject to any restrictions.



'God the Creator' (Stanislaw Wyspiansky's stained glass)

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You will determine your nature for yourself according to your own free will to which I have entrusted you. I have placed you in the middle of the world, so that from there you can more easily see everything that is around you in the world. I have not made you heavenly and not earthly, not mortal and not immortal.

As a free and sovereign artist, you have to be your own sculptor, as it were, and portray yourself in the form you prefer. You can degenerate into the lower forms, the animal ones, but you can also be reborn by your own will into the higher forms, which are divine."

**Man is free to
determine himself,
as well to worship the
kingdom of Grace**

And recall the Protestant Christian two kingdoms doctrine, teaching that God is the ruler of the whole world and that he rules in two ways. According to Luther, "*in many places, God rules everything that happens everywhere.*"

He does it in what he describes as "**two kingdoms**" or in other places using "two different powers" or "two different ways of reigning". One kingdom he calls variously the kingdom of law. Of man. Of old Adam. The other he calls the kingdom of Grace.

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PILLARS OF CREATION



photograph of the iconic Eagle Nebula's "Pillars of Creation" (credits: NASA/ESA/Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA)/J. Hester, P. Scowen (Arizona State U.)

Without the accretion process, probably no earth and mankind. A look at the birth, life, and death of a star: the star starts as a cloud of gas and dust (nebula) to die eventually. Older bright stars in the cluster glow intensely colored. The greatest number of stars, several billions of years old, are whitish in color.

In the final stage of a life of 10 billion years, its hydrogen as a fuel runs out. The core begins to shrink and to heat. The outer layers of the star are blown away and are lit by the rays of the star. They leave a cloud of dust and gas behind. Cooling of residual gas causes that pieces of ice, stone and metal solidify and that these pieces are getting bigger by collisions (accretion). It is believed that our planet Earth arose from a similar process.

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THE DANCE AROUND THE GOLDEN CALF

Aaron built an altar before the calf and proclaimed the next day to be a feast to the Lord. So they rose up early the next day and "offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."



The golden calf was a cult image made when Moses went up to Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments **(1)**. After forty days and forty nights Moses went down from the mountain, but upon seeing the calf, he became angry and threw down the two Tablets of Stone, breaking them.

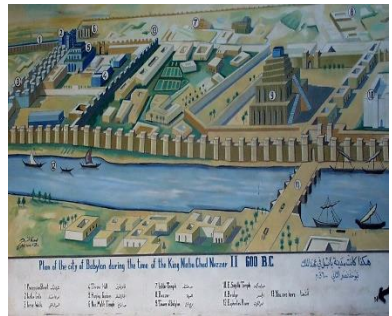
(1) a set of biblical principles relating to ethics and worship.

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THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES

Etemenanki, the "temple of the foundation of heaven and earth" in the ancient city of Babylon was a ziggurat (1) dedicated to Marduk in the ancient city of Babylon. Originally 91 meters in height, it now exists only in ruins about 90 kilometres south of Baghdad.

Babylon had been destroyed in 689 BCE by the Assyrian king Sennacherib, who claims to have destroyed the Etemenanki. In 331 BCE, Alexander the Great captured Babylon and ordered repairs; when he returned to the ancient city in 323 BCE, he noted that no progress had been made, and ordered his army to demolish the entire building, to prepare a final rebuilding.



His death, however, prevented the reconstruction. The Babylonian Chronicles and Astronomical Diaries record several attempts to rebuild the Etemenanki, which were always preceded by removing the last debris of the original ziggurat.

The Ruin of Esagila Chronicle mentions that the Seleucid crown prince Antiochus I decided to rebuild it and made a sacrifice in preparation. However, while there, he stumbled on the rubble and fell. He then angrily ordered his elephant drivers to destroy the last of the remains. There are no later references to the Etemenanki from antiquity.

(1) (in ancient Mesopotamia) a rectangular stepped tower, sometimes surmounted by a temple. Ziggurats are first attested in the late 3rd millennium BC and probably inspired the biblical story of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1–9).

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EXISTING EQUIPMENT

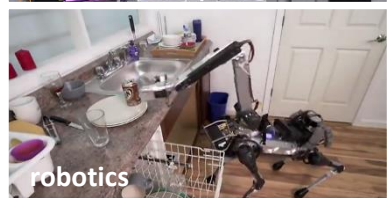
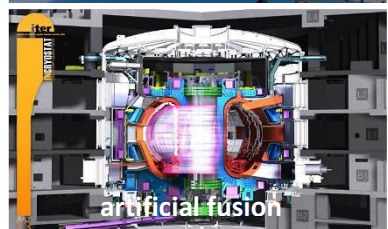
Man has not been idle: agriculture, key development for sedentary lifestyle, led to the emergence of early civilizations from about 5,000 years ago (the Bronze Age), which first began in Mesopotamia. And to this day, civilizations still continues to make huge progress.

The Scientific Revolution, Technological Revolution and the Industrial Revolution brought discoveries as imaging technology, major innovations in transport, such as the airplane and automobile; energy development, such as coal and electricity. With the advent of the Information Age at the end of the 20th century, modern humans live in a world that has become increasingly globalized and interconnected, like nodes in blockchain.

But human population growth and industrialisation has led to environmental destruction and pollution, significantly contributing to the ongoing mass extinction of other forms of life.

It were not only formal sciences that brought us forward. The social sciences and humanities did too with concepts of solidarity, tolerance (**annex 1**), humanism, and multilateralism.

These humanities concepts weakened. We must re-embrace and respect these concepts: the ties in a society that bind people together as one, one of six principles of **The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union** and a core concept in Christian democratic political ideology



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..... while mutual understanding among cultures and peoples can grow by allowing or accepting an action, idea, object, or person which one dislikes or disagrees with, without destroying each other's set of aims and ideas

.... and humanism, a philosophical stance, that emphasizes the value and agency of human beings, individually and collectively. Generally, humanism refers to a perspective that affirms some notion of human freedom and progress. It views humans as solely responsible for the promotion and development of individuals and emphasizes a concern for humans in relation to the world.

Multilateralism, in the form of membership in international institutions, serves to bind powerful nations, discourage unilateralism, and gives small powers a voice and influence that they could not otherwise exercise.

By interaction, ideas and his view on the world, man has come to where he is now. But systems, forms of government, purpose of a business and ways how to live together are up for discussion and in need of reform. If we don't want to get stuck, then we are obliged to follow a common ideal as to how to live together by making compromises and by building a common factual basis, a shared analysis framework.

We should not step into profiling and manipulation of man made race, ethnic and religious thoughts. That can lead to variant treatment and impact social identity, giving rise to racism and the theory of identity politics. Erasmus knew that 500 yrs ago, Obama knows that, as well as all the greater political leaders.

Recently, Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism brought recommendations in response to summer's crisis over accusations of systemic racism in Minnesota's policing, economy and society:

first, improvement of law enforcement. Secondly, a smartphone App to enable to set up personal investment accounts in equity portfolios, which can make a difference in the acquisition of wealth. And thirdly, to facilitate the building of community, the improvement of translation skills to bring strangers together, which builds acceptance and trust.

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BUILDING OUR 21st-CENTURY

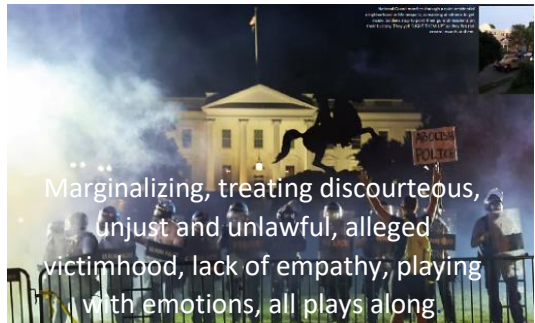
The mess

Set in motion by changing political discourse, the current pandemic, cracking financial, economic and environmental systems, scarcity of raw materials, we live in an ad interim era and in a vacuum in which troublesome and unpleasant symptoms occur: conflicts, grim atmosphere, protests, anger, aggression, violence and countermovements. There's injustice, dead ends are being walked and landmarks disappeared. It appears people are missing foundations. What are we heading for?

In a conversation with The Atlantic Barack Obama said: *"If we do not have the capacity to distinguish what's true from what's false, then by definition the marketplace of ideas doesn't work. And by definition our democracy doesn't work. We are entering into an epistemological crisis"*.

Worrying is that polarization is taking place along existing fault lines in society: in the European Union we see contradictions in political belief systems.

Contradictions grow along ethnic and religious lines.



And in many countries, parties are emerging with an "own people first" -like agenda.

If we don't watch out, it can get out of hand.

The socio-economic differences are also large. The risk now is that both a pandemic and a recession will make the contrasts even greater. If governments doesn't find an answer to that, it will set things up for further polarization.

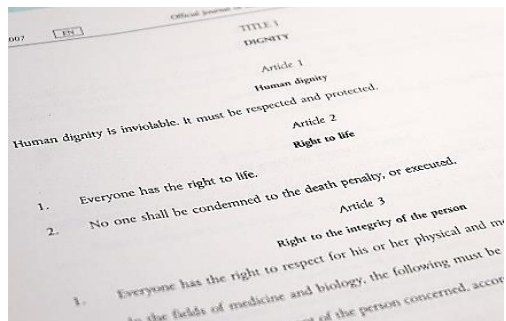
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"The Battle Between Good and Evil", "Change we can believe in", "How to Change the World", "What Is a Good Society?", "A new space where everyone (and everything) can become part of a solution to a 21st-century challenge", "How to achieve fundamentally beneficial and requisite integration of worldly goods and spiritual aspirations", "Tribalism or Humanism: Will Humanity Ever Resolve the Tensions?"

The work

At first, we must work to ennoble our soul - the cultivation of the spirit. That requires decisiveness of one's own free will. The beginning is self-control, the virtue of temperance, the virtue of good balance and the right middle. When we master our senses, that is the first, but also the most important step on the road to our elevation as a human being.

Secondly, there is human dignity, which is at the heart of human rights and has its place in both a human rights framework (**annex 2**) and a religious framework (religions teach that humans are essentially equal for one reason or another. This unites all people in their quest).

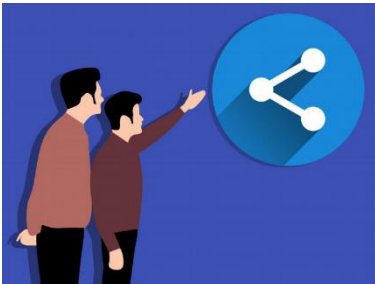


This concept is the belief that all people hold a special value that's tied solely to their humanity, the right of a person to be valued and respected for their own sake, and to be treated ethically. It is of significance in morality, ethics, law and politics as an extension of the Enlightenment-era concepts of inherent, inalienable rights. It has nothing to do with their class, race, gender, religion, abilities, or any other factor other than them being human.

Thirdly, social domains and movements are increasingly seeking to change the direction of our way of life towards principles of the common good, a new socio-economic model using innovative digital techniques. Economy, politics and society are preparing to do business in a different way, also emphasizing the importance of Bildung and value system:

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- *integration of worldly goods and spiritual aspirations is the foundation for human well-being and happiness. To achieve this fundamentally beneficial and requisite integration, we need a moral community in which to live which provides scope and vision for our aspirations and talents ([Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism](#));*
- *a new space where everyone (and everything) can become part of a solution to a 21st-century challenge. The challenges to tackle are complex problems that involve multiple stakeholders and cannot be solved by a single company, industry, or state. They have a global societal and economic impact, and are tied to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) ([Odyssey](#));*
- *feasible proposals to solve pan-European grievances, to be drafted together with citizens, who participate to rethink and to shape politics ([Volt Europa](#));*
- *thinking and talking about the questions that really matter. How are we to live? How can we shape our future? Can we learn from our past? Which values and ideas are important, and what are they based on?*
Be at the centre of the Western cultural and philosophical debate in the best European humanist tradition and in the spirit of tolerance and erudition ([Nexus Institute](#));
- In his encyclical [FRATELLI TUTTI](#), the Pope advocates a just and fraternal society, for more solidarity, and calls to reject wars.



Be an agent of change:

ennoble the soul, embrace sharing, broaden company's purpose, stimulate creativity, retrieve reasoning

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SUMMARY

Man was given the freedom by the Supreme Being to determine himself. Sometimes we put that value to good use (the great finds, both in the formal and social fields, as in the field of the humanities), sometimes we don't (the golden calf, countless wars).

Throughout our history, the world has undergone 'Spring of Nations', 'Springtime of the Peoples', political upheavals. Today we are again confronted with a lot of unrest and dissatisfaction. Worrying is that polarization is taking place along existing fault lines in society. If we're not careful, things can get out of hand. To counteract troublesome developments, we must work to ennoble our soul - cultivate the mind, embrace the concept of human dignity and change our mindset, where sharing and purpose, creativity and reasoning become routine and are put into practice in all aspects of daily life.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said: "Great minds discuss ideas; Average minds discuss events; Small minds discuss people". Let's be agents of change and make great ideas for a new era of civilization a reality by using innovation, policy, media and by implementing a social change through a movement, a network of groups of people and organizations.

Annex 1

Declaration of Principles on Tolerance

16 November 1995, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Article 1 - Meaning of tolerance

1.1 Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace.

1.2 Tolerance is not concession, condescension or indulgence. Tolerance is, above all, an active attitude prompted by recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. In no circumstance can it be used to justify infringements of these fundamental values. Tolerance is to be exercised by individuals, groups and States.

1.3 Tolerance is the responsibility that upholds human rights, pluralism (including cultural pluralism), democracy and the rule of law. It involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism and affirms the standards set out in international human rights instruments.

1.4 Consistent with respect for human rights, the practice of tolerance does not mean toleration of social injustice or the abandonment or weakening of one's convictions. It means that one is free to adhere to one's own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs. It means accepting the fact that human beings, naturally diverse in their appearance, situation, speech, behaviour and values, have the right to live in peace and to be as they are. It also means that one's views are not to be imposed on others.

Annex 2

United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights

10 December 1948, drafted by representatives from all regions of the world and proclaimed as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations.

Articles 1 and 2

1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.
2. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.