

Each year a theme is chosen to guide program development and proposed discussions at the Institute of World Culture. Each theme is derived from the Aims of the Institute as presented in its Declaration of Interdependence

Theme for 2008
**Imaginative Use of Spiritual, Mental
and Material Resources**

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The theme for 2008 is based on Aim #7 of the Institute's Declaration of Interdependence, *"To investigate the imaginative use of spiritual, mental and material resources of the globe in the service of universal welfare."*

As the worldwide circulation of ideas germane to an emerging world culture flourishes, one might ask what can be done to promote more concretely the use of ideas in the service of universal welfare. Is there not too much deprivation and suffering around the globe to merely talk about ideas of universal unity and causation (interdependence)? Imaginative use of resources offers both a moral and a practical path for building a world of plenitude where poverty now (apparently) prevails. The challenge is not a quantitative scarcity as much as poverty of imagination. Resources are boundless *in potentia*. The task is to discover the rich layers of spiritual, mental and material resources constituting the cosmos (universe of life) and give shape to their ethical, transformative and self-sustaining use. Resources might be seen as sacred in origin even for those who don't believe in a creation story. Resources give life and sustain a multitude of creative and intelligent activities by life forms. While the natural world appears guided by ancient sources of intelligence, human beings demonstrate a great capacity for obscuring what is intelligible with the delusions of ignorant selfishness. Can we not improve our clarity of thought and motivation? Is not the first step to discovering the plenitude of resources a step of self-discovery? Spiritual and mental resources may seem shrouded in invisibility and difficult to actively utilize. Yet small, immediate commitments may engage us in constructive experiments for the sake of universal welfare. In the popular novel by Herman Hesse, *Siddhartha*, the seeker representing the life search of the Buddha was challenged by a wealthy courtesan: What did **he** have to offer? His answer was both immediate and timeless in application: "I can think, I can fast and I can wait." Who cannot make some modest use of these self-directed disciplines that contain seeds of insightful responses to many of the controversial and excessive uses of material resources?

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There is nothing small about the recognition that we live on the planet Earth with well over six billion human beings and billions upon billions of other centers of life and consciousness. A very big breath is needed to absorb this cosmic fact. Recognition of the interdependence of life enables us to investigate the use of resources with greater scientific effectiveness. Who could have imagined forty years ago that various household spray cans could contribute to a hole in the earth's protective cover? What other "inconvenient truths" could we respond to if we truly cared about the well being of all the life forms with whom we share the spaceship earth? Our immediate goal in investigating the use of resources may be very instrumental. A broader, more inclusive and deeper level of inquiry may nurture the intellectual and moral growth of individuals serving within healthy, self-sustaining communities.

Spiritual teachers remind us of ethical principles such as universal brotherhood, cooperation and non-violence. Without the application of such principles, our knowledge

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