

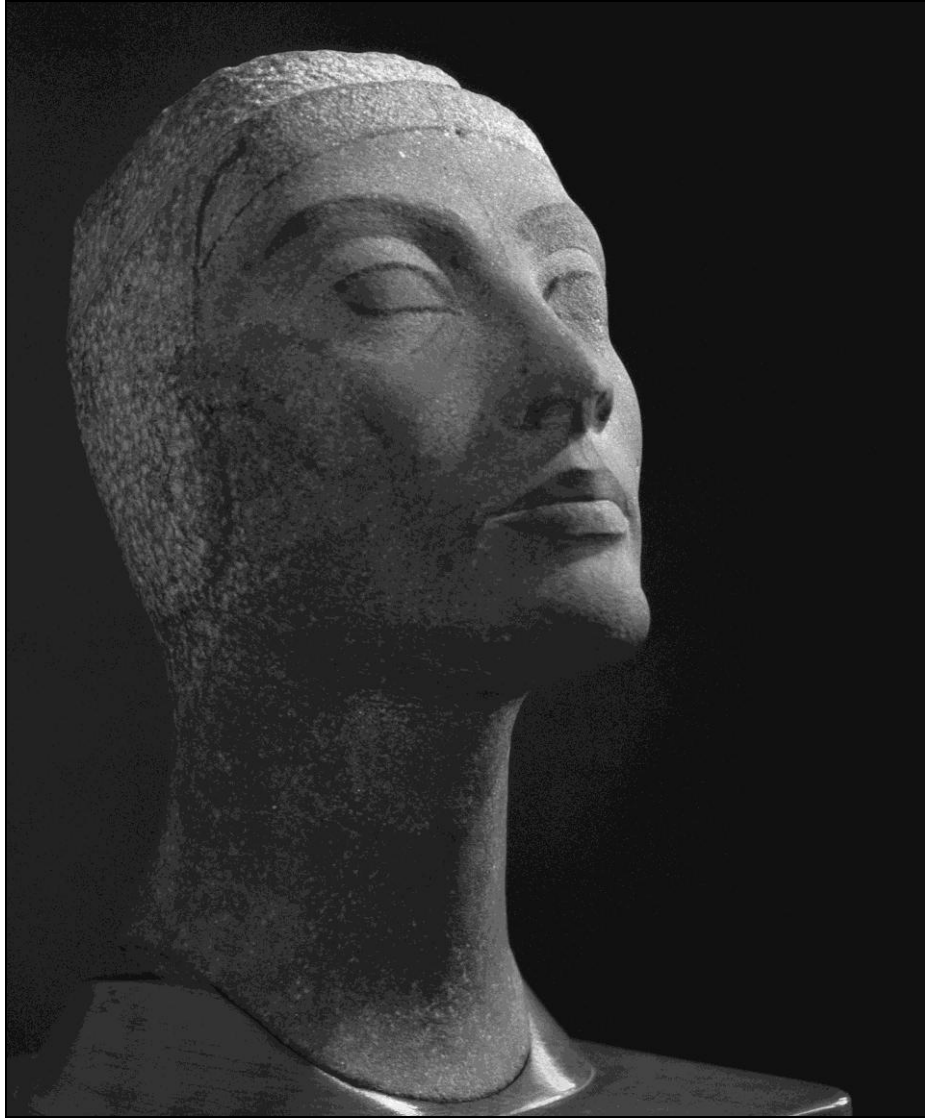
Universal Values as the Foundation for Social Transformation

An Inter-Spiritual Forum in Cairo, Egypt, November 13-18, 2011

القيم العالمية كأساس روحاني في القاهرة، مصر

Organized by The Contemplative Alliance, The Global Peace Initiative of Women &

Civilizations Exchange and Cooperation Foundation



“We need to reclaim the simple truth that spiritual life is “not about us,” and open to a larger, all-embracing vision. If spiritual life is not about the whole, it has lost its true nature...”

- Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, Sufi Teacher

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People around the world are challenging their political, economic and religious institutions, claiming that they no longer represent the realities of an evolving society. From people in many nations we hear calls for the development of more inclusive and equitable governing systems and for an economy based on principles of long-term sustainability, with a wiser use of earth's natural resources. The Arab Spring, where young people in particular were able to effect significant changes in their governments, is a symbol of this yearning for change. A new spirit is clearly rising, bringing a shift in awareness and expectations. But change brings cause for caution as well as great potential. Without clear vision and leadership, there can be backsliding into more traditional and habitual structures. The challenge facing today's new generation of leaders is how to integrate the wisdom of the past with the more inclusive and global vision that is emerging. Can they be the bridge to a more promising future?

We know perhaps more deeply than ever before the interdependent nature of our world. We are interconnected on every level. The social media that helped create the Arab Spring is one indication of this. Climate change is another. Increasingly we must come to acknowledge a basic set of universal values that can guide the development of our global community. These values include embracing religious and cultural diversity, knowing that no one people, religion or culture has exclusive hold on truth; seeing again the sacredness of the earth and our relationship with the natural world; and cultivating a new understanding of wealth and wellbeing, where material development is guided by an inner development that is based on the qualities of integrity, compassion and the willingness to share earth's bounty. An integration of these values will bring a shift in mindset that will enable governments to be more responsive to

the needs of the people and will ultimately foster a more peaceful, equitable and sustainable world community.

Each society will find its own way to merge the past with the present, but no society today can undergo this process in isolation, and it seems that no society, east or west, is being spared this internal reformatting. Collectively, as a human culture, we are being called to rethink the way we interact with each other and with the natural world. Fortunately there is a common set of spiritual values that each society can tap to guide their internal and external development.

This forum in Egypt will explore what these universal spiritual values are and how they can provide the foundation for the social transformation people seek. It will also explore the science of unity, of oneness, which can help us better understand the interconnection that makes social change both a local and global phenomenon.

Many sectors of society will need to participate in the shaping of a new social reality, as existing structures and institutions adapt and evolve. It is the consciousness of the people that will ultimately determine the outcome. As we think, so we are, and so our society becomes. The greater the numbers of people who can discuss the issues and engage in the process, the greater the likelihood that the society will internalize these universal values, thereby ensuring a truly sustainable and beneficial transformation.

This Forum is being organized by The Contemplative Alliance – an international movement that seeks to foster an integration of material and spiritual development – the Global Peace Initiative of Women – an international ngo committed to ensuring a leadership role for women in shaping a more peaceful, sustainable and compassionate global society, and the Civilizations Exchange and Cooperation Foundation.