

Declaration of Values of the Botton Village community

September, 2011

A practical idealism informs the way of life in Camphill communities. It springs directly from two sources: the significance of Christ in the evolution of mankind and the earth, and anthroposophy, a modern, holistic view of the human being as elaborated in the teachings of Rudolf Steiner.

From these twin foundations we assert the following precepts, which we hold to be universally true:

Declaration of Values

- 1 That every human being is a sublime creation; an imperishable, immortal being evolving towards freedom through repeated lives on earth. Thus each person is a citizen of two worlds, the earthly and the spiritual, and each is a threefold being comprising body, soul and spirit.
- 2 That all human beings are created equal in their humanity, but unique in their gifts and limitations. That is, each is equal by virtue of the divine image of the human being impressed within, yet a sovereign individual in outer expression. And further, that their essential spiritual core is whole and healthy. This is true even where the physical instrument may be damaged or inadequate.
- 3 That every human life has meaning and purpose, and is subject to influences which cannot be ascribed to chance alone. Hence the particular destiny of each person, no matter how constrained, is in reality an opportunity for growth. This view underpins the conviction that a lifelong burden of disability is no arbitrary misfortune, but has far-reaching significance as preparation for a future life.
- 4 That every human being is endowed with certain inalienable rights, fundamental among which are: freedom of self-determination; equality before the laws of the nation; brotherhood with all mankind. No one may demand these rights for himself without also according them unreservedly to every other member of humanity, irrespective of nationality, race or creed.
- 5 That every human being is his brother's keeper. This moral imperative to take active responsibility for the wellbeing of one's fellows cannot be abrogated to the state, or to any institution. It becomes socially effective only when *actively practised* by each individual towards others. To this end, the creating of such conditions as will meet the full spectrum of spiritual, social and physical needs of its members is a necessary endeavour of any civilised group or society.
- 6 That all human beings are enjoined to assist in working to promote the good on earth, and thereby to further the progress of humanity. The good cannot be achieved merely by thinking, no matter how enlightened, nor simply by feeling, no matter how compassionate (although both may be powerful incentives), but only through altruistic *action* springing from the sovereign power of a moral conscience. This cannot be legislated for.
- 7 That every human being is endowed with self-will as a primary force for initiative, and may be used for good or ill. To curb it from becoming selfish by placing it in the service of higher aims is a cardinal virtue in any community which shares a common vision, for without such willingness to sacrifice personal volition when necessary, unrestrained self-will becomes destructive.

- 8 That no human being is an island. To be human means to live in mutual interdependence with other human beings, trusting in their differentness as a wellspring of collective strength and resilience. This precept is the touchstone for an ethical social life and may be summarised as:

The healthy social life is found when in the mirror of each human soul the whole community is reflected, and when in the community the virtue of each one is living.

- 9 That the true purpose of work is to meet the needs of others. This is an immutable law that applies in all realms of social life, and was first formulated in 1905 by Rudolf Steiner as:

In a community of human beings working together, the wellbeing of the community will be the greater the less each individual claims for himself the proceeds of his own work, that is, the more of these proceeds he gives over to his fellow workers and the more his own requirements are met, not out of his own work, but out of the work of others.'

To work for wages is to retain the value created by one's own labour. It obscures the underlying reason for work and leads to inequity in the meeting of needs.

- 10 That humanity bears responsibility for the living being of the Earth, which has become the body of Christ, and for each of its kingdoms of Nature.

Although by no means exclusive to Camphill, the foregoing precepts inform its vision and practice at every level, flexibly adapted to the life circumstances of each of its communities. As intentional principles they are necessarily beyond the executive reach of any legislature or judiciary — in other words, they may be freely espoused by the individual but cannot be imposed upon him.

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[In these notes I have tried to describe principles and values on which a sustainable way of life shared in common with disabled and vulnerable people has gradually evolved in this community; values whose intrinsic worth and social effectiveness have been borne out in daily practise and continuing re-evaluation over sixty years.]

*Nicholas Poole
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Appendix 1

What is ‘community capacity building’?¹

7. The term ‘community capacity building’ means different things to different people. We understand it to mean developing the capacity and skills of the members of a community in such a way that they are better able to identify, and help meet, their own and others’ needs, and thus participate more fully in society.
8. Community capacity building as we understand it is therefore concerned with
 - providing opportunities for people to learn through experience — opportunities that would not otherwise be available to them; and
 - involving people in **collective** effort so that they gain confidence in their own abilities and their ability to influence decisions that affect them.

Thus individual involvement and collective activity go hand in hand: the aim is to encourage people in a community to join together with others so as to provide through collective effort what the community needs, but in such a way that those taking part also develop their own potential as members of society.

What do we mean by a ‘community’ for this purpose?

9. We mean a group of people who share a position of social and economic disadvantage or social disadvantage only. They may share that disadvantage by virtue of living in the same geographical area (a ‘geographical community’). Or they may share it because they have something else in common, such as a disability or membership of a particular ethnic group (a ‘community of interest’).

[Ref: ‘The Promotion of Community Capacity Building’. The Charity Commission. Doc. RR5, Nov 2000, revised Oct 2003]

Appendix 2

Extracts from the legal Opinion of Peter Trevett QC, 1998

6. ...True community life is fostered and reflected in “non-hierarchical” decision-making processes which involve many different people who aim to reach a consensus as to what is to be done...
8. Camphill communities operate solely on a basis of mutual trust and shared belief. (...) A co-worker who chooses to leave has no rights against the community that he or she has been a part of, and conversely, the community has no rights against the co-worker (...) This lack of enforceable obligation between co-worker and community is an essential element in each community — the shared sense of purpose and belief which is fundamental to the successful working of a Camphill community cannot be imposed by any form of contractual or other legal obligation.
9. The lack of any enforceable rights between a community and a co-worker can work to the significant disadvantage of a community. (...) Disadvantages such as these are accepted because all communities agree that the fundamental tenets of the Camphill Movement are inconsistent with the imposition of any legal obligation on co-workers.