

**THE ROLE
OF A SOCIALLY
RESPONSIBLE
COMPANY**



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"Spaceship Earth: All for One, and One for All" By John Renesch

Description: This speech is affectionately known as John's "Buckminster Fuller Meets the Three Musketeers" talk; it demonstrates how a truly sustainable future for humanity will require greater "inclusivity" and the downfall of the closed system approach utilized by traditional businesses. He points to the need for enlightened corporations to lead the way toward an attitude of a "global commons" so that the future for our children and their children will be optimized.

ABSTRACT:

"Spaceship Earth" is a metaphor popularized by visionary inventor, scientist and futurist R. Buckminster ("Bucky") Fuller (1885-1983) as a metaphor for a way of thinking about modern day humanity. "Bucky" is perhaps best known for inventing the geodesic dome and he's been honored by having a carbon cage molecule (C₆₀, or "Fullerene") named after him. His point: we should be thinking of Earth as a spaceship in which each person's survival is connected to the survival of the entire "crew" of the spaceship.

French writer Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870), wrote *The Three Musketeers* and featured the exploits of the young d'Artagnan who joined the three musketeers, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, sworn protectors of King Louis XIII. The musketeers had a motto which became famous through the many movies which were based upon Dumas' 19th Century novel: "All for one and one for all."

Human beings should take the approach of both of these metaphors in all human relations, not just with people in their community, or nation or region. The fate of the world depends upon how we all get along in this world of high-technology, nuclear weaponry, climate change, growing population, deteriorating global environment and compacted time horizons.

While many indigenous cultures recognize the philosophy or spiritual principal of the interconnectedness of all living things, industrialization and modern western

thought has emphasized the material and technological aspects of life. Inter-relational qualities have become largely under-appreciated.

One indigenous tradition has allowed one nation to resolve centuries of injustice and a long history of atrocities without violence. South Africa avoided a bloodbath by allowing victims to be heard and forgive their perpetrators in a huge public venue instead of resorting to national riots or civil war when apartheid ended in the mid-1990s. Why was this possible? Because of the African principle of “ubuntu,” which translates roughly into “my life is tied to your life; my humanity is linked to yours.” This is quite similar to what Fuller described in his Spaceship Earth ideas as well as the motto expressed by the fictional Three Musketeers.

Today, perverse nationalism is outmoded and could lead to annihilation of the human race. What is called for is global citizenship, or a “global patriotism,” whereby we commit to the preservation and maintenance of the global commons, including our air, water and support structure for life. Marine life, the Earth’s ozone layer, rainforests and many other parts of our environmental support system which need to be optimized or human extinction will no longer be a question of “if” but rather a question of “when.”

John will address benefits of *inclusivity* and *diversity*, “the wisdom of crowds;” *dialogue* (as opposed to social conversation, discussion, debate or gossip; greater *consciousness*, including conscious evolution or evolving on purpose (or intentionally); and *leadership* from within. He will also address the need to confront our *addictions* or destructive obsessions, on personal and societal levels; and he will speak to the world’s widespread *cynicism*, *apathy* and *resignation*.

Humanity must mature, grow out of our adolescent indulgences, and take responsibility for the conditions we have created and evolve to a higher level as a species; this will likely require our learning from other disciplines such as systems theory, psychology and philosophy. There is a need for corporations to learn how to remain in relationship with other human-made institutions instead of dominating them.

The multinational corporation, the new “nation-state” of the modern world, is in the dominating power position over the rest of society and thus has a responsibility to engage responsibly. This requires a focus much wider than mere profits, or economic betterment for stockholders alone; to be in a balanced relationship with the whole of society, it requires being responsible global citizens. The corporation’s success also lies in the health of the communities in which they function, the well-being of the people who work there, and the contribution their products or services make to the common welfare of global society.

See next page for quotations>

Translators: Here are some quotes that John may mention in his talk:

"We must welcome the future
Remembering that soon it will be the past;
We must respect the past
Remembering that once it was all that was humanly possible."
- **George Santayana** (Spanish philosopher)

"The reasonable man adapts himself to the conditions that surround him. The unreasonable man adapts surrounding conditions to himself. All progress depends on the unreasonable man." - **George Bernard Shaw** (American playwright)

"Everything has changed save our modes of thinking, and we thus drift towards unparalleled catastrophes." - **Albert Einstein**

"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." - **Alvin Toffler**, futurist

"Society gives legitimacy and society can take it away." – social scientist and futurist **Willis Harman**...who also said, "Perhaps the only limits to the human mind are those we believe in."

'Of all the creatures of earth, only human beings can change their patterns. Man alone is the architect of his destiny...Human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.' -- **William James** (American philosopher)

"Those with visible responsibility for leadership are nearly always too visible to take responsibility for change..." - **Harlan Cleveland**, author, *Nobody in Charge*, former U.S. ambassador to NATO

"If humankind could spend just a fraction of the countless millions of dollars and millions of hours we spend trying to predict the future, instead on imagining preferred future options together, we'd be living in a different world." - **Ed Lindaman**, Director of Program Planning, Apollo Spacecraft Project