Daisaku Ikeda and Poverty Eradication: An Introductory Review

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[T]he rapid advance of globalization has magnified the problems of poverty and economic inequality and has brought to all corners of earth such crisis as the destruction of the natural environment and the collapse of traditional cultures.

—Daisaku Ikeda (2002, p. xi)

Introduction

This article introduces Daisaku Ikeda's (b. 1928) perspectives on and proposals for international poverty eradication. Although poverty is regularly examined in academic scholarship, there is of late a renewed interest in poverty as a central focus of scholarship in general and of educational research in particular. For example, the theme of the 2013 annual convention of the American Educational Research Association was *Education and Poverty: Theory, Research, Policy and Praxis*. In 2014, Routledge published both the *Routledge Handbook of Global Poverty and Inequality* (Hulme & Wilkonson, 2014) and the *Routledge Handbook of Poverty in the United States* (Haymes, Haymes & Miller, 2014). As Weis (2007) and Levin (2009) have cogently demonstrated that socioeconomic status, more than any other factor including race and gender, determines academic and social achievement, consideration of Ikeda's decades of contributions to poverty eradication is warranted.

Known widely as president of the global Buddhist organization Soka Gakkai International (SGI)[1], Ikeda is also a renowned peacebuilder, prolific author, and the founder of the secular Soka schools network, which includes six kindergartens, three primary schools, two secondary schools, a women's college, and two universities across Asia and the Americas. As SGI president and as an educator and peacebuilder, Ikeda has addressed local and global poverty eradication before and during the context of neoliberal globalization by both anticipating and responding to the United Nations' two *Decades of Poverty Eradication* (1996–2006 and 2008–2017) in 24 of his 32 annual peace proposals (1983–2014; hereafter peace proposals), as well as

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in numerous other publications. Nevertheless, scholarship on his contributions to poverty eradication is lacking in the extant, particularly Anglophone, literature (e.g., Haymes et al., 2014; Hulme & Wilkinson, 2014). Moreover, whereas poverty and wealth disparity have been examined from Western, specifically critical (often Marxist), perspectives (e.g., Anyon, 2011; Darder, 2012; Fisk, 2005; Giroux, 2011; Peters, 2011; Weis, 2007), Eastern, Buddhist perspectives are in general less present. By focusing on Ikeda's contributions to poverty eradication, this article aims to begin to fill that gap and, simultaneously, contribute more broadly to the emerging field of Ikeda studies.

Method

Spanning 65 years, the Ikeda corpus is extensive and voluminous. For this article, I first read the Japanese and (where available) English versions of Ikeda's many publications, conducting a bilingual, thematic discourse analysis (Rogers 2004). In particular, I located instances where Ikeda explicitly addressed issues of poverty, poverty eradication, income disparity, class, socioeconomics, and so on. I created themes around such key terms as they pertained to individual, (non) governmental, and global levels. I then collapsed themes chronologically to create an historical portrait of Ikeda's perspectives and proposals for poverty eradication.

More specifically, I excerpt and analyze Ikeda's peace proposals, published dialogues with renowned leaders in peace, culture and education (e.g., with Boulding, 2010; Díez-Hochleitner, 2008; Krieger, 2001; Simard & Bourgeault, 2003; Wickramasinghe, 1998; Yalman, 2009), university addresses (e.g., Ikeda 1991–2014, 1995–2010, 2010a), essays and speeches (e.g., Ikeda, 1979, 2006, 2008), and novelizations of the SGI's history and development (Ikeda, 1995–2013, 2004). Although I used both Japanese and English versions of Ikeda's works, throughout I reference only the English translations if they are available and, for my use here, complete.

Ikeda's perspectives on poverty emanate from a Buddhist philosophical framework, and analysis of his proposals to eradicate poverty suggests that he embraces micro- (individual) and macro-level (governmental) measures rooted in dialogic value creation of the greater self. I begin with a brief biography of Ikeda in the context of poverty and then present his perspectives and proposals.

Daisaku Ikeda: A Brief Biography in Poverty

Born in 1928 the fifth of eight children (with two adopted siblings), Ikeda (1998) suffered first hand crippling poverty in pre- and post-war Japan, often sharing that his mother referred to his family as "champions of poverty." As a child and young adult, he was too poor to enter a

sanitarium for treatment of chronic tuberculosis or to continue on to higher education. He recounts, "But, because I had my share of sickness and poverty and other such worries, I am able in full measure to sympathize with others who are sick or troubled. It is something I am deeply thankful for" (Ikeda, 1979, p. 63). In an essay titled "Poverty and Wealth," published in Japanese nearly a decade before its publication in English, Ikeda (1979) laments that the common people of Japan remained impoverished before, during and after the war as Japanese leaders focused solely on the latter half of their slogan, "Enrich the nation and strengthen the military," until there "emerged the militaristic and ultranationalistic regime of the years immediately preceding the Pacific War, whose sole objective seemed to be to 'impoverish the nation and strengthen the military'" (p. 25). In the turmoil of post-war Japan, Ikeda searched for a response to the overwhelming concerns about the forces that ravaged his youth and family life, namely, power, political authority, patriotism, the proper way to live, and good and evil (Ikeda, 1980, 2004, Vol. 2). This search led him by chance in 1947 to a Soka Gakkai meeting on the Buddhist philosophy of 13th century reformer Nichiren (1222–1282) and an encounter with future second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda (1900–1958), whose imprisonment for opposing the Japanese militarist government's wars of aggression earned Ikeda's respect and trust. Ikeda embraced Toda as his mentor and joined the Soka Gakkai days later; he became the organization's third president in 1960 and quickly internationalized it. The meeting with Toda forever changed the course of Ikeda's life and Nichiren Buddhism came to form the basis of his philosophical perspectives on peace, culture and education, as well as on poverty and poverty eradication. In the early years of post-war Japan, Soka Gakkai was pejoratively called an organization of "the poor and the sick," which Ikeda (2014a) recalls with a sense of pride:

> But who in society, if not the Soka Gakkai, was reaching out to help the poor and the sick? Who was joining the people in the midst of their hard-fought struggles against adversity, engaging in dialogue with one person after another, encouraging them tirelessly with the promise that they could transform karma into mission, and open the way to happiness and victory? (pp. 24–25)

In his novelization of the SGI's history, for example, Ikeda (1995–2013) recounts the plight of a woman whose family faced staggering poverty before she joined the organization: "For all her efforts, however, life didn't get any easier, and often she and her family went hungry. One of her children rebelled at this poverty by repeatedly running away from home. The hopelessness of her situation had even driven her to contemplate suicide…At first, no one paid any attention to the poverty-stricken couple" (Vol. 2, pp. 261–262). After they joined the SGI and embraced its philosophy of individual self-empowerment and value creation, they pulled themselves from poverty and cultivated a harmonious family. Ikeda asserts that likewise con-

comitant with the Soka Gakkai's increasing national membership Japan rapidly moved from post-war poverty to becoming the world's second largest economy.

Nichiren Buddhism, Value Creation, and Poverty: Ikeda's Philosophical Framework

For Ikeda (2006), poverty is the most pressing human rights issue—it dehumanizes individuals; it prohibits effective education, health care, medical treatment and enhanced social infrastructures; and it causes overpopulation, violence, terrorism, and biospheric destabilization, among other concerns. His perspectives on and proposals for poverty eradication are couched in the Nichiren Buddhist philosophies of the three poisons; *engi* (dependent origination); *esho funi* (oneness of life and the environment); human revolution, or an inner transformation toward the "greater self"; and in Makiguchi Tsunesaburo's (1871–1944) theory of value creation, or *soka* (see Ikeda, 1991–2014).

In "Poverty and Wealth," Ikeda (1979) refers to then contemporary 1960s Japan, arguing the situation of a rich government with impoverished citizens "lies in the poverty of the political ideals of today's politicians. From impoverished ideals one can never expect anything but impoverished government" (p. 25). However, Ikeda does not believe the abovementioned interlocking structures of poverty operate in political and economic dimensions alone. More recently, in his foreword to *Subverting Greed*, Ikeda (2002) argues that unless measures to assess and alleviate poverty are couched in deep examination of our attitude toward human life itself, they will remain incomplete. For Ikeda, the Buddhist principle of the three poisons—greed, anger, and fundamental ignorance—offers philosophical answers to such examination. Among the three, greed embodies "a negative energy that blinds us to the existence of others as we engage ourselves in an open-ended and finally fruitless search for gratification" (p. xii). In his dialogue with Chandra Wickramasinghe, Ikeda laments that while Japan and other industrialized nations "produce cultures of consumption and greed," developing nations face "population explosion, famine, and extreme poverty…" (Wickramasinghe & Ikeda, 1998, p. 184); and in his dialogue with the Turkish social anthropologist Nur Yalman, Ikeda suggests that from the perspective of Buddhism greed is an arrogance additional to those that cause aversion to and revulsion of the ill, old, and the dead: "[O]ut of a desire to avoid poverty, the arrogance of wealth breeds contempt for poor people and impoverished countries" (Yalman & Ikeda, 2009, p. 82). He adds in his 2010 peace proposal that such greed causes humanity to abstract the other and fail to see the self in the other's suffering, which has resulted in a state of valueless pessimism, or nihilism, the flip side of which Ikeda contends is mammonism and evaluation of the other in solely economic terms:

> The basic orientation of modern civilization is to identify economic capacity—the ability to maximize profit and wealth—as the sole criterion of human worth. This chronic tendency of modern civilization and capitalism—driven by the limitless expansion and unleashing of desire—remains essentially uncorrected even after the massive and devastating experiment of Soviet-style communism. Almost forty years after The Club of Rome issued its stark warning *The Limits to Growth*, the time has surely come for humanity to learn from the bitter lessons of the current global downturn and acknowledge this underlying pathology.
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> We need to develop the awareness that the standard of values that judges human worth solely on the basis of economic capacity… represents the effective absence of values. We need to ask ourselves why there is such pervasive pessimism and nihilism in advanced industrial societies where the standard of living, judged on a strictly material basis, surpasses that of the monarchs and aristocrats of the past. (Ikeda, 2010b, p. 2)

At the same time, Buddhism teaches that the eradication of desire is not only a practical impossibility, but also that "denying desire would deprive us of that life energy that is essential to our existence as human beings" (Ikeda, 2002, p. xi). Thus, in many of his peace proposals, Ikeda contends that if the grip of such ingrained greed seems difficult to loosen, another obstacle, *need*, is even more primal. Ikeda views abject poverty—the root of primal need—to be the cause of devastating conflict and so he asserts that it must be the central issue of concern in the current era (e.g., Ikeda, 1987, 1996, 1997). Ikeda (1987) proposes that we—and education, in particular—must work to "eradicat[e] hunger and poverty and should devote attention to establishing a system of economic welfare for the approximately five hundred million people who suffer from malnutrition today and to the two-thirds of the world's nations that are impoverished" (p. 14).

Instead of cutthroat competition, Ikeda envisions a humanitarian competition of value creation (e.g., 1987, 1996, 1997; see also Makiguchi, 1981–1988, Vol. 2, pp. 398–401). In economic terms, this means the move to a constructive economy where human beings participate in the act of creating lasting worth for themselves and others. More specifically, value creation theory positions genuine human happiness as the aim and purpose of life (Ikeda, 1991–2011; Makiguchi, 1981–1988, Vols. 5–6, 8). Makiguchi conceptualized value from an educational perspective relative to the neo-Kantian system of value as truth, good, and beauty. His system of value comprises the creation (*sozo*) of values (*kachi*) of individual *gain*, social *good*, and aesthetic *beauty*. For Makiguchi, value creation, or *soka* (a neologism), is volitional and necessarily targets individual and social betterment; it corresponds with but transcends constructivist notions of "meaning making" in education and can be practiced in all facets of daily living.

Makiguchi was an elementary school teacher, principal, and the founding president in 1930 of Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Value Creating Education Society), forerunner to the Soka Gakkai and Soka Gakkai International. He elected to work in schools located in some of Tokyo's most impoverished neighborhoods, often dramatically improving them based on his theory of value-creating pedagogy, which empowered students to learn to learn such that they could move in and out of socioeconomic classes. In his foreword to a special issue of *Educational Studies* dedicated to Makiguchi's educational philosophy, Ikeda quotes the following from Makiguchi's early writings about impoverished students and their teachers:

> They [the pupils] are pure and selfless, artless and naïve, innocent of any real understanding of society. Even if they happen to come to the school soiled and dirty, why do we not see the bright lights that shine from their simply garbed forms? Society unhesitatingly drives these children into their economic and social class, forcing them to remain there. In this respect, society is all too cruel. When interacting with their social peers, these children unselfconsciously maintain a position of proud independence. But once they face those of a different [higher] social status, they recoil in fear and lose their accustomed composure. At such times, their only possible source of support or protection is the teacher. (Makiguchi, 1981–1988, Vol. 7, p. 813; see also Ikeda, 2009, p. 112)

According to Ikeda (2010a), "value creation is the capacity to find meaning, to enhance one's own existence and contribute to the well-being of others, under any circumstance" (p. 54). For Makiguchi and Ikeda, such a tripartite value-creative life is genuinely happy. This perspective of value creation is undergirded by the Buddhist doctrines of *esho funi* and *engi*, that "although they appear as different phenomena, life (*sho*) and environment (*e*) are essentially one indivisible whole" that co-arises or co-falls (*engi*) (Ikeda & Díez-Hochleitner, 2008, p. 42). For Ikeda, once humanity awakens to this fundamental doctrine, it engages in *kyosei*, or a value-creative coexistence, whereby the self and other compete at effecting mutual betterment.

Value creation provides a way for the individual to take action that simultaneously benefits the self and other; it is founded in a perspective that sees the self in the other and engenders social self-actualization. Therefore, suffering of another at the hand of the self is not value creation; it is anti-value. As Ikeda (with Simard & Bourgeault, 2003) states,

> The Buddhist concept of human dignity is grounded on the doctrine of dependent origination (or dependent causation) and the conviction that [sic] Buddha nature is inherent in all human beings. The first refers to the interdependence of all phenomena. All beings, including humans, exist or appear through relationships with other beings or phenomena. This means people must live in mutual interdependence and mutual assistance and not seek to satisfy their own desires by sacrificing others. (pp. 46–47)

Such belief and action develop the full complexity of the human condition from what Ikeda calls the "lesser self" to the "greater self." In other words, deep inner transformation—for example, from a position of greed—occurs most completely through value creation, whereby such transformation is an intentional and continuous self-mastery that involves rejecting the lesser self "caught up in the snares of egoism" and developing the greater self that is spatiotemporally infinite and realized in causality (Ikeda, 2010a, p. 175). Grounded in the principles of dependent origination and oneness of life and environment, the greater self can be grasped simply and practically as one that fully identifies and empathizes with others' suffering and is thus driven to relieve that suffering.

Ikeda believes this greater self of one's full humanity emerges wholly through persistent dialogue (Ikeda, 2010a). Thus, he asserts, "Dealing with poverty and injustice is a long-term endeavor. But we can start right now. Dialogue is the best way forward" (Boulding & Ikeda, 2010, p. 52). Likewise, in his dialogue with president of the Club of Rome Ricardo Díez-Hochleitner, Ikeda maintains:

> Misunderstanding, prejudice, hatred and conflict generate the cycle of violence; refusal to engage in dialogue is related to this process. So the harder the situation, the more resolutely we must strive to promote dialogue. Our dialogues must heed the voices of the suffering; they must replace despair with hope. The leaders of international organizations, such as the United Nations, must promote dialogue of this kind and back it up with relevant actions. (Díez-Hochleitner & Ikeda, 2008, p. 49)

As president of the SGI and as a peacebuilder and educator, Ikeda (2010b) has therefore led a global movement of engaged dialogue "that seeks to dispel the clouds of nihilism in order to reveal the language and values of good that languish on the verge of extinction. It is a movement that works quietly to revive the human spirit and reawaken ordinary citizens, exhorting people to choose the good that is the fruit of self-mastery and resist the destructive pitfalls of evil" (p. 3). Some may question dialogue as a powerful means to ameliorate poverty; however, Ikeda concludes that this dialogue-based movement "is an attempt to realize a fundamental transformation in human priorities based on the idea that a change in the destiny of a single individual can change the destiny of all humankind, the key theme of my novel *The Human Revolution*" (Ikeda, 2010b, p. 3). Such dialogic and value-creative human revolution is not Ikeda's sole proposal to ameliorate poverty; rather, it is an ethos underlying his various proposals, which I address below.

Ikeda's Proposals for Poverty Eradication: A Chronological Review

In addition to his Eastern, Buddhist perspective of individual empowerment and under-

standing—"human revolution" toward the greater self through value creation—Ikeda has also made specific proposals to eradicate poverty through cutting defense spending and providing individual "human security," and instituting a Global Marshal Plan and a Social Protection Floor in every country. The majority of these proposals are outlined in his annual peace proposals; and consonant with his approach of engaged dialogue, these proposals envision multicultural and international cooperation from individuals, individual governments, nongovernmental organizations, and the United Nations.

In general terms, Ikeda's peace proposals consistently focus on nuclear abolition, human rights, education, environmental sustainability, and international collaboration as major and interdependent themes undergirding his central goal of peace through human security and human development. A sub-category within these interdependent themes is poverty eradication. Ikeda began submitting peace proposals in 1983, but his perspectives on poverty eradication can be traced back to the late 1960s. For example, in a 1969 message to American members of the Soka Gakkai, Ikeda declared:

> Even though travel to the moon is now possible, solutions to such urgent problems confronting humanity as hunger, poverty and disease have yet to be found. In order to solve these problems…people need to transcend the divisions of nationality, ethnicity and ideology to work together in the shared awareness that we are all members of the same human family. It [is] crucial for people to overcome feelings of hatred and discrimination and to transform the world from one of conflict and opposition to one of trust and harmony. Toward that end…the Buddhist principles of equality and respect for life [must] be established in the hearts of every individual. (Vol. 14, pp. 105–106)

In "Poverty and Wealth," Ikeda (1979) reiterates this notion, stating: "If man has the mental capacity to solve the problems of space travel, he certainly must be capable of coping with this much more urgent and immediate problem of how to harmonize the [economic] interests of the individual and of society" (p. 27).

1980s and 1990s

Ikeda addresses poverty eradication more thoroughly in his 1986, 1987, 1990, 1992, 1996 and 1997 peace proposals, linking poverty, overpopulation and environmental degradation and arguing that in addition to assistance from industrialized countries, success depends on internal efforts by poor countries to develop themselves, and the key to this lies in education. In these early peace proposals, Ikeda's perspectives on poverty remain largely at the level of observation and summary, and in most cases his treatment couches poverty in other interrelated issues of global concern. Nonetheless, he has consistently revisited these themes in ensuing peace

proposals and in many of his published dialogues. For example, in his dialogue with Wickramasinghe, Ikeda maintains:

> [A]id from industrialized nations to eliminate poverty in [developing] countries [experiencing population growth] is an urgent necessity. We must end this vicious circle in which poverty in developing nations makes children a necessity to ensure a labor force, and the high birth and death rates simply accelerate poverty. I believe that aid that helps these developing nations become prosperous—including financial, technical and educational aid—will ultimately become an effective way to alleviate the population explosion. (Wickramasinghe & Ikeda, 1998, p. 198)

In addition, under the sub-heading "Poverty and Social Health," Ikeda recapitulates these ideas in his dialogue with René Simard and Guy Bourgeault, researchers in health and biomedical sciences. He focuses specifically on wealth disparity between the North and South:

> In recent years, the economic gap between the industrialized North and the developing South has been widening, in spite of efforts to close it. While many people in the developing nations have neither roofs over their heads nor food to eat, in the industrialized nations, people consume far too many calories and pollute the environment by squandering energy resources…. Many developing nations have tried to encourage industry and free themselves from poverty. But their efforts have been defeated by serious infrastructural deficiencies—lack of power generators, waterworks, railways, roads and other infrastructure necessary for industrial society…. Not to mention the vicious circle of poor sanitary conditions and high birth and infant-mortality rates. When survival is precarious, people tend to produce more offspring. Then, when sanitary conditions improve faster than families manage to adjust their priorities, the result is often a demographic explosion that destroys any economic gains made. (Ikeda et al., 2003, p. 182)

Around the same time, Ikeda also focused on poverty in his international university addresses. His 1991 speech *Beyond the Profit Motive*, delivered at the business school at the University of the Philippines, in particular can be viewed as a linchpin connecting his perspectives on greed—and greed run amok—and his later articulated views on poverty and environmental degradation and evaluating human beings in valueless, purely economic terms. Ikeda (2010a) states,

> By its very nature, business is geared to economic efficiency and the pursuit of profit. A businessman who works strictly for the good of his enterprise alone will think only in terms of the bottom line. That narrow focus has given rise on occasion to competition so excessive as to blow up in military conflict. If business activities are to contribute to efforts toward peace, the logic of capital must be tempered by the logic of humanity. (p. 19)

He proposes the conscious cultivation of *kosei*, or the "spirit of fairness," which also means equality, impartiality and justice. He states:

> A person with the spirit of fairness recognizes the inherent contradiction in economic activity that makes the rich richer and the poor even poorer, both on the individual and national levels. Such a person clearly recognizes the insidious threat of economic growth that thrives at the expense of the global environment and the delicate balance of the ecosystem. The "export" of pollution to countries with less strict regulations, for example, is anathema to people who place justice and equality first. (Ikeda, 2010a, p. 20)

In his 1987 and 1996 peace proposals, Ikeda anticipates and recapitulates the negative effects of a globalized business model absent such a spirit of fairness but instead rooted in military might and free competition for economic domination. For example, Ikeda focuses on poverty eradication in his 1996 peace proposal, arguing in a section titled "Toward the Elimination of Poverty" that we live in a period of "cold peace"—symbolized by the problem of crushing poverty. The 1996 proposal coincides with the UN *International Year for the Eradication of Poverty*, which inaugurated the first year of the first *UN Decade of Poverty Eradication*. Here, Ikeda calls for measures that focus on poverty eradication at the individual level rather than macroeconomic measures. As he would later indicate in his dialogue with David Krieger, "[C]oncentrating on national interests relegates the poor to a position of secondary or even tertiary significance and can overlook future generations entirely" (Krieger & Ikeda, 2002, p. 163). For Ikeda, this is perhaps nowhere more obvious than in defense spending at the expense of fulfilling individual basic human security, particularly as he sees poverty as a major cause of violence and conflict. He rejects the persistent myth that growing military expenditures have a positive effect on the economy, citing data from authoritative research institutions (e.g., Ikeda, 1987, 1996).

Scrutiny of Ikeda's peace proposals from the 1980s and 1990s in which he addresses poverty and poverty eradication indicates his consistent perspective of reallocating military spending to ameliorate poverty. Ikeda sees poverty as a major cause of conflict because it destabilizes societies; poverty engenders conflict, which in turn exacerbates poverty. Severing this brutal cycle, Ikeda asserts, would at once eradicate a key cause of war and enhance fundamental human rights. Ikeda is not alone in making such assertions; Sachs (2005, 2009) and other economists have argued likewise.

In the 1996 peace proposal, Ikeda outlines more substantive initiatives, including the necessity to shift toward a new concept of "human security" that centers not on the security of states but on the wellbeing of people. Ikeda juxtaposes his notion of human security with traditional notions of "development," arguing that it is imperative to effect a fundamental reorienta-

tion of current assistance programs because "development" has strong utilitarian overtones different from those of "human development." He contends that when people's basic needs are met and they are given the opportunity to establish their lives, they naturally develop their abilities and, manifesting those abilities, begin to take an active role in society. Once people are set on a path to participatory "human development"—one which encourages self-reliance and autonomy—the societies and nations to which they belong move steadily toward stability. As such, the aim of such human development is to draw forth the limitless capacities of citizens (Ikeda, 1996). In the 1996 peace proposal, Ikeda also echoes his 1988 peace proposal and cites Karl Jaspers' (1883–1969) notion of "axial periods in history," arguing the present age, more than any past era, demands individuals committed to the welfare of the whole of humankind[2]. In his 1997 and 1998 peace proposals, Ikeda reiterates these issues in light of North-South disparities and again emphasizes his proposals for measures whereby individuals can realize their inherent potential and manifest self-reliance.

2000s

Ikeda also focuses on poverty eradication extensively in his 2000, 2001 and 2002 peace proposals, outlining the intersection of biospheric degradation and poverty, and asserting that eradicating poverty is the clear means to fostering human rights and environmental sustainability. Specifically, in 2000, Ikeda builds on the Cologne Debt Initiative as "one tangible step toward the eradication of poverty" by proposing "an even bolder…Global Marshal Plan," centered by the UN, to enable impoverished societies to raise themselves from poverty. As he reiterates in his dialogue with Díez-Hochleitner, "World leaders must pool their wisdom and devote all their energy to solving the poverty problem that is seriously disrupting the world order" (Díez-Hochleitner & Ikeda, 2008, p. 41). Citing the 2005 UN Millennium Development Goals and poverty statistics, Ikeda articulates his personal proposals for poverty eradication: "In…2000, I suggested what might be called a global Marshal Plan for dealing with the poverty problem. Also, in addition to its work in the name of nuclear disarmament, the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, which I founded, is now dealing with this poverty problem as a focal issue of our age" (Díez-Hochleitner & Ikeda, 2008, p. 41).

Ikeda reiterates his initiatives for poverty eradication centered on dialogue and a reformed and strengthened UN in his peace proposals published in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012. It warrants noting that Ikeda is not an economist engaged in the daily minutia of economic theory and policy negotiation and implementation. Nevertheless, in these, as in his peace proposals from the 1980s and 1990s, he provides cogent understanding of the conditions that cause poverty and offers broad measures to eradicate it. His proposal for a Global

Marshall Plan is one example. Admittedly, this plan lacks specific details for implementation, but like many of Ikeda's proposals in other areas—and in line with the principle of value creation, not "value consumption" (Saito, 2013/2010, p. 142; see also Saito, 2010, p. 629) —such generality is invitation rather than prescription offered for specialists and government officials to consider and develop. For it is through such consideration and development that value-creative dialogue is actualized and human revolution occurs.

Perhaps Ikeda's most direct treatment of poverty in the 2000s is his 2006 op-ed in *The Japan Times*, "Extreme Poverty: The Gravest Violation of Human Rights" (Ikeda, 2006). In this piece, Ikeda not only demonstrates command of the nuances and statistics of crushing global poverty, but he also reiterates the central Buddhist view of interdependence, asserting that extreme income disparity not only causes hunger and torments the poor, but it ignites hatred and violence in reciprocal measure, which negatively impacts the affluent. He maintains: "It is crucial that we develop real awareness of ourselves as citizens of Earth, linked by mutual and indissoluble bonds. When we clearly recognize this reality and ground ourselves in it, we are compelled to take a strict accounting of our way of life" (Ikeda, 2006, p. 2). Moreover, he entreats us:

> It could in fact be said that all those whose lives and dignity continue to be threatened by the unaddressed issues of poverty are victims of the "violence of apathy" on the part of the international community. To fail to take action even with clear knowledge of such suffering can only be called cowardice. (Ikeda, 2006, p. 2)

Toward this end, Ikeda again proposes macro-level, international measures to ameliorate poverty. He calls for "creative and carefully thought-through action of government agencies mobilizing resources on the scale to which only they have access, working in partnership with UN agencies and local government and nongovernmental organizations" (Ikeda, 2006, p. 2). Ikeda here too proposes redistributing global military spending to eliminate poverty worldwide, the cost of which the UNDP indicates would be less than 1% of global income. He likewise calls for micro-level, individual action toward poverty eradication relative to our own ways of living:

> The processes of economic globalization have further deepened the inseparable bonds linking our daily lives with the rest of the world. This both requires us to reconsider our daily lives against the backdrop of this larger context, and provides us greater opportunities for doing so. What is the influence and impact of our actions on people in distant countries? Is there nothing we can learn from others' ways of living? Thinking in this way, we come to realize that there is much that we each as individuals can do toward resolving the crisis of poverty. (Ikeda, 2006, p. 3)

Most recently, in his 2013 peace proposal, Ikeda (2013) notes that 2013 marks the 65th an-

niversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and calls for urgent attention to poverty as a human rights issue. He urges implementation of a Social Protection Floor in every country to enable those living in extreme poverty to regain a sense of dignity. This proposal echoes his 2006 *Japan Times* op-ed, in which he cautions:

> Aid to poor countries is not something to be undertaken out of pity. These are women and men, people young and old, who retain their pride as individuals struggling powerfully to live amid the most difficult circumstances imaginable. That they are forced to live in fear and insecurity is a violation of their fundamental human rights. (Ikeda, 2006, p. 3).

Thus, together with his proposal for a Social Protection Floor in every country, Ikeda also calls for human rights education and training on a global scale.

Conclusion:

This article introduced, excerpted and briefly reviewed Ikeda's perspectives on poverty and proposals for poverty eradication. Ikeda's perspectives on poverty emerge from a philosophical framework of Buddhist humanism and value creation, and analysis of his proposals to eradicate poverty suggests that he embraces both micro- and macro-level measures rooted in dialogic value creation of the greater self. As Ikeda is not an economist, his proposals are general, such as his proposals for a Global Marshal Plan and a Social Protection Floor in every country. As indicated above, these general ideas can be read as invitations for politicians and governments to engage and develop dialogically. Some may critique his focus on persistent and engaged dialogue as a primary means of alleviating poverty in substantive ways. Such critiques likely derive from a desire for top-down, perhaps international, policies. However, Ikeda's focus on dialogue demands that any such top-down policies result from individuals' serious inner transformation, a paradigm shift rooted in an underlying awareness of our fundamental interdependence as human beings. For Ikeda, it is such a perspectival shift through dialogue that will foster sustained and sustainable measures for poverty eradication. Forced, top-down measures will likely collapse under the weight of imposition if they are not undergirded by broad participation and bottom-up support. Ikeda's approach of value-creative dialogue may take longer, but he is convinced that it is the surest path to alleviating poverty in concrete ways and, thereby, for people to develop more fully as human beings. Thus, although Ikeda's proposals may seem modest, they are nonetheless important.

Ikeda (2006) is assured: "There is hope…efforts have opened the way for large numbers of people to lift themselves out of poverty. They offer important new models for action" (p. 2). However, he also maintains that much more is necessary and calls on the international community to ameliorate this most pressing human rights issue.

Schools, universities, and thousands of individuals worldwide apply Ikeda's educational ideas in practice (Goulah & Ito, 2012), and over 40 university-affiliated Ikeda research centers have been established in Argentina, China, Japan, Taiwan and the U.S. These centers examine Ikeda's efforts in peace, culture, and education; however, scholarship on Ikeda's perspectives and proposals with regard to poverty eradication is lacking in the extant literature, particularly as these impact education. As the field of education reengages poverty in the current moment, Ikeda's ideas offer much for consideration.

This article merely scratches the surface of understanding Ikeda's contributions to poverty eradication. More substantive inquiry is necessary. Particularly important is quantitative and qualitative scholarship that examines the extent to which Ikeda's ideas have been implemented in some form or fashion, and toward what end. Further desirable is scholarship that examines the extent to which individuals, nongovernmental organizations, and state officials have considered and engaged Ikeda's proposals.

Notes:

1. As an NGO in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the Soka Gakkai International cooperates with the UN in a variety of humanitarian and public information programs.
2. Ikeda also repeatedly referenced in his 1996 peace proposal the work of distinguished economist Amaryta Kumar Sen, who, according to Ikeda (2014b), "has dedicated a lifetime of pioneering research in the quest for solutions to poverty and other human security challenges" (p. 2). Coincidentally, 18 years later, Sen delivered the commencement address at Soka University of America, which Ikeda founded.

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