

THE NEW MILLENNIUM -

DO WE HAVE THE COURAGE OF OPTIMISM?

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We are leaving behind a century with a horrible reputation. There have been many manifestations of occidental fundamentalist faith in truths that justify killing, repressing, exploiting and alienating millions, even billions: the colonialism/imperialism spearheaded by this country; genocidal hitlerism and stalinism; the blind forces of world, particularly american capitalism now even presenting itself as "globalization"; the (also occidental) islamic, counter-fundamentalism; and some similar practices in Japan and China. There has been an increasing litany of war and violence, some of it today even presented as "humanitarianism".

There were shining lights. Two geniuses, Freud and Jung, penetrated the individual and collective human subconscious. A third genius, Gandhi, followed by King Jr and Mandela, explored the enormous potential of nonviolence. The first two, both Westerners, probed the roots of evil in the darkest recesses of the soul; the other three, none of them western whites, expanded the perimeters of the soulforce of ahimsa, nonviolence. Freud, Jung and Gandhi gave us the theory and practice to overcome the lament of St Paul: the evil I do not want to do I do--because I am driven by the subconscious!--and the good I want to do I leave undone--knowing nothing of nonviolence! Important insights for the International Year of Culture of Peace and Nonviolence!

Some centuries ago enlightened people came to a conclusion that ushered in a new era: the system of the past, feudalism, had to yield and eventually go. Feudalism blocked individual expression, the new economic forces that did not necessarily originate with Church and Nobility, and harbored an enormity of repression, exploitation and alienation. Slowly it yielded, but in our yin- yang world nothing is black or white: individualism begat egoism, enterprise begat jungle capitalism and democracy begat "one dollar one vote" electionism.

The system suits the new upper classes by girth rather than birth, well protected by states ready to fight wars in their interest, and the corporate press with its new censorship of marketable minds. New problems demand new approaches, but no nostalgic return to feudalism.

Today we may come to a similar conclusion: there are two systems that have to yield and ultimately to go; statism as a dominant carrier of wars in the world system, and capitalism as a dominant producer of misery at the bottom of the world system. They are intimately linked to the preceding evil of feudalism. Some feudal lords, stripped of land and serfs, became the heads of armies, excellencies became the heads of foreign ministries, and the CEOs of major enterprises. They carried crazy ideas: what was good for them was also good for the people even when victims of the wars of conquest and exploitation; their peace was

the best peace obtainable; world peace is the sum of negotiated deals among the lords; benefits will trickle down; that they were accountable both for and to the people. They usually turned out to be neither one nor the other.

They carried important, ugly baggage in their subconscious. They see each conflict as an opportunity for a new deal among the strong waging wars, running the UN and serving the dominant companies. In the concepts of "Great Power" and "Superpower"--at two, and particularly at one with no balance--feudalism and statism produced an offspring worthy of them both, with all the power and privilege of veto and monopoly of ultimate power.

Or so they think. The only remaining superpower may now have gone too far: Seattle was emblematic. Why were 100,000 in the streets, with some of the world's best professionals backing them? Simply because the corporate press gives a wrong image, and "democratic" elections fail in voicing key problems.

Two systems to go, two alternative systems coming up: the two major forms of "neither State nor Capital" civil society.

First, an alternative territorial system: local authorities all over the world, maybe two million of them, cities, towns, villages - municipalities in general. They are diverse, in general accommodating all genders, generations, classes; sometimes also races and nations. They are mini-societies, do not have armies and are using economic and increasingly cultural power rather than military power.

They can easily confederate into circles of cooperation. They are the alternative to the 200 states that have capitulated to international capital and "globalization" = americanization. They could increasingly take on the most important task of them all, neglected by the corporate world: guaranteeing subsistence for every body on earth, based on alternative technologies, local credit and money, cooperative rather than competitive economies.

Second, an alternative non-territorial system: NGOs, non- governmental organizations; well above 10,000 in numbers. They are less diverse being instruments of values and interests. They showed their immense power giving the world such instruments as the anti-personnel land mine treaty (Ottawa), the international criminal court (Rome) and the debt forgiveness instruments (Cologne). Governments still signs, but where non-governments manage to lead non-governments tend to follow. They can easily organize massive boycotts, of corporations (Deutsche Shell spoiling the North Sea), of countries (France testing nuclear arms). They take over, with the women, where the power of the working class in providing dignity is now waning.

A little glance at the media: the territorial answer to corrupt corporate media is the local bulletin in the shopping center, well researched; the non-territorial answer is already on the Internet. For sure democratic governments will only be too happy that the free word can still find an expression.

A glance at world politics: LAs and NGOs are indispensable components in a global, transnational, democracy. Only they can be the carriers of alternative, cooperative security. Only they can articulate the ways and means of sustainable development.

Two systems waning--but not yet. Two systems vexing: the process is already there. The waning may learn from them. We can all be active in all these complex processes. The purpose: basic needs, basic human

rights, future and hope for us all.

A very concrete goal that covers much of what has been said above would be globalization of human rights. With the state waning in many corners of the world, having neither the moral nor the economic basis to be the guarantor of human rights, we should search for ways in which the focus on the local level and on the NGOs advocated above could be hitched to a UN reform for global governance and a focus on basic human needs and rights. The task of implementing the rights coming from the world central authority- -in the future some kind of World Parliament--could be gradually shifted from abusive states to local authorities and NGOs worthy of this important task.

The emerging GLOBAL CITIZEN has a right to expect:

- that his/her opinion matters and has an impact;
- that there is protection against major violence;
- that efforts are made to provide livelihood for all; and
- that he/she can feel at home culturally, spiritually.

More concretely, the expectations could be translated into increasingly concrete entitlements and duties, relative to a UN- based world central authority for soft global governance:

- a global citizen is ENTITLED to free expression of how world society should be run, free assembly, and representation through free and secret ballot in something like a United Nations People's Assembly; and the DUTY to participate in elections;
- a global citizen is ENTITLED to protection against violence in the sense that all will be done to transform conflicts before they become violent, that violence is contained, that violence exercised by a world central authority will be minimal; and has the DUTY to serve in peace-keeping by peaceful means, military and/or civilian;
- a global citizen is ENTITLED to livelihood through access to gainful employment with income sufficient to provide for the basic material needs; and the DUTY to pay global taxes;
- a global citizen is ENTITLED to cultural identity based on old and new cultural material, with no right to impose his identity, but with a DUTY to show respect when engaging in dialogues with others about their identities.

This is all within the human rights tradition, but articulates human duties in addition. In the stato-cratic system they were taken for granted. The duty to VOTE for a world central authority assembly like a United Nations People's Assembly, to SERVE in peacekeeping forces, to PAY global taxes and to RELATE to other cultures in a spirit of respect and curiosity would assume their place alongside the rights.

This is still for the future, but a less distant future than people believe. Thus, TNCs may one day wake up and discover that strong NGOs capable of organizing consumer strikes, have entered the global marketplace, taking the place of weak states, and all increasingly backed by world central authorities.

The sky is the limit! - if we have the courage to hope.

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