

UNITED WE DRINK:
INQUIRIES INTO THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD ECONOMY AND SOCIETY¹

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UNITED WE DRINK

In a United Airlines commercial, we are told that from the outback of Australia we can see Rio, from Thailand we can see the Rhine and from Mt. Fuji we can see Africa. It is United that helps us visualize this new world, a united world, a friendly world. Coca-Cola's advertisement, played during the 1992 Winter Olympics at Albertville, is equally important. Coca-Cola proudly announced that it was sponsoring Olympic teams from **every** nation, the US team being one among them. This is a first in the history of the Olympics and perhaps even the history of civilization. We are united not by our mutual love, we are united not by one ideology, or even by one God, but by our mutual desire to drink Coke. It is the logos of Coca-Cola that stands tall above the planet, the rays of sun glimmering off the bottle, and bringing joy to the world. The world is not evil but friendly, United has made it that way.

In the early 1980's, Johan Galtung, Professor of Peace and winner of the Right Livelihood Award gave a speech in which he reminded us that the coke bottle also makes a great molotov cocktail.² Well those days appear to be over. In the battle of ideologies, capitalism has won--communism and Third World nationalism are in ruins, now only waiting for eager anthropologists to study this failure in civilization building.

The only recent threat to world capitalism was Saddam Hussein. Imagining a global Islamic polity, or at least an Iraqi empire in the Middle-East, and challenging the US backed Saudis and their territorial and cultural claims on the holy land, Hussein moved into Kuwait. He was like the wild gunslinger from the Old American West. Brave but brutal. But the Sheriff did not blink and Hussein's vision of an alternative world, neither Western nor Communist, but dynastic and Islamic, died. He was unaware that the wildness of Iraq was no match for the technological sophistication of the West. The Sheriff might not have had the fastest hand but he did have global satellites.

The end of Islam as an alternative world system appears to now be complete. While the inability of Israel to unite the Arab world was one indication, the misuse of OPEC funds was far more serious. Instead of using billions for Third World development projects, the money was immediately reinvested back into US banks which then was loaned as transformed petrodollars to third world nations. All gained but the poor in the first and third world. But it was in 1981/82 when Hussein attacked Khomeini--the legitimate challenger to the Western worldview in that he did have an alternative to the modern world--that Islam began crumbling from within. Instead of attempting to reconstruct Islam, to make it relevant for the next century--that is, focus on rethinking³ philosophy, science and technology and serving the poor--Hussein, propped up by the

CIA, focused on military power. Instead of developing an Islam that had a strong material growth dimension and a commitment to distributive justice, as well as articulating the fundamental values of Islam so as to contribute to global issues of environment, knowledge and development, particularly outside of the discourse of national sovereignty and instrumental rationality, Hussein turned his gaze on old dynastic disputes. While he failed miserably in conquering Iran he did manage to destroy the Iranian claim to the future. The West enthralled at his version of modernist Islam showered him with praise and funds. It was this same West that was quick to abandon him when Hussein turned his attention to their puppet state, Kuwait.

The Gulf War if not a World War was certainly a global war.⁴ Like other global projects, this war united the world. Even though George Bush's manliness was on the line, it was the United Nations that was fighting, even if merely as an extension of the US State Department. The victor, however, was Cable News Network, with individuals in real time able to judge themselves who was right and wrong, who was winning and losing. The world was now united in a new mythical polity of electronic nerves⁵. While Internet is in its infancy, it remains the planet's larger undertaking, the grandest social and technological innovation, promising to not only create communications among individuals and NGOs and thus in-between State structures but also to provide the vehicle for the Earth as a Shopping Center.⁶

But internet had not yet reached Iraq and thus it was only through CNN that news could be constructed. Still while CNN left out numerous images for global visual consumption, the brutality on Iraqi citizens, for example, we saw more than in the Chinese revolution. In that instance, Deng saw that the workers had joined the students and that real socialism, economic democracy, instead of a State monopolized economy was being vocalized. A few students he could tolerate but workers actually wanting people's socialism was too much⁷. In the guise of Tiananmen Square, workers' associations were crushed. The attack on the Chinese State was defeated and notwithstanding idle trade threats from the United States, from either Bush or Clinton, the Chinese GNP has continued to expand. The message to capitalists everywhere is that your money is safe in China. Our State is strong; labor is weak. Deng knew that Coca-Cola would win. He was merely afraid workers might want a greater piece of the action, of China's political and economic future. And now as China sends its satellite (funded by Turner Broadcasting, among others) into the sky, limiting sovereignty to 19th century visions of the nation-state will not suffice. Even if receiving the signal remains illegal, this temporary shutting of the gaze of the Chinese to the external world will not succeed, for MTV, CNN, Sky News have already entered Chinese social and cultural space (in Taiwan and Hong Kong). And as Deng well knows the Chinese are first of all a people, bounded not by Western articulations of the modern nation-state but by the historical family State. Lee Kuan Yew's moral prescriptions may work much better in managing the paradoxes and contradictions of the emerging world social, spiritual and technological orders than the legislation of the individual gaze.

GOOD AND EVIL: EVIL AND GOOD

In many ways, we have taken significant steps toward the global civilization "new age millennium seekers" and others have been envisioning for at least the last hundred or so years. But paradoxically these changes have not come about from goodness as the humanists among us would want us to believe, rather they have in many cases come about from our "evil" actions⁸.

Indeed, it is the thin layer of American culture that is universal⁹. It is global pollution that unites us. It is the depletion of the ozone layer that unites us. It is the fear of nuclear holocaust that unites us. It is the unstoppable march of consumerism that unites us, for we are all shoppers now.

It is Coca-Cola that unites us. In an age when many are reverting to nationalism, and renewing vicious historical agendas long suppressed by the materialism and technocracy of modernity, it is Coca-Cola that gives us the message of the new world. And, intriguingly, it is the evil empire, the previous USSR, that saluted not its own national flag but the Olympic flag and anthem when it won medals--perhaps a minor moment in the history of the expansion and contraction of the Russian empire, but nevertheless ripe with poetic charm.

But how has this come to be. This modern world that is now breaking apart began to take shape a few centuries ago. As R.B.J. Walker writes:¹⁰

The claims of Church and Empire, the obligations of feudal modes of socioeconomic organization, as well as the categories of philosophical and theological speculation all rested on a hierarchical understanding of the relation between the collective and the particular, the universal and the specific. With the massive transformations of early modern Europe, these hierarchical formulations no longer provided a plausible account of this relation. It is in this context, for example, that we usually understand the emergence of new conceptions of the individual and nature as radically distinct from each other, of the Cartesian ego set apart from the objective world. It is in this context also that the most fundamental questions about political identity had to be posed anew.

In the battle between Church and Empire--between intellectual expansion and territorial expansion, in the battle between two very different sorts of civilizations, one inward looking the other outward looking, one feudal in its economic mode and the other tributary in its economic mode--both lost. It was not the king or the knight who won. It was not the priest, or the advisor, the minister, the serfs or the slaves. Rather outside the castle wall (but not in the fields where the peasants toiled), but in the trader-led marketplace began the emergence of the world capitalist system¹¹ (and then exported through the power of naval and military technology).

This was the birth of capitalism, the beginning of a five hundred year trend. Central to the new social formation was a system in which the capitalists were at the top, farmers and workers at the bottom and intellectuals/priests and warriors, the military in the middle, existing at and for the will of the capitalists.¹²

Instead of empire, it was now a system of not-so-equivalent nation-states. Liberty, fraternity, and equality, the cry of the French Revolution, eventually became the goals of "civilization" but only in the context of, only in the boundaries of the nation-state. The strength of the West was making its particular "civilization" universal, thus becoming the measure of all other civilizations.

The universalization of a particular civilization further exacerbated the tension between

center and periphery, indeed, Western civilization and modern capitalism thrives on this distinction. However, what is good for the center is not good for the periphery for the periphery structurally exists for the benefit of the center. The first stage in this process was the slave trade, the second was the theft of raw materials, the third was the dismantling of the periphery's manufacturing abilities and the fourth was the creation of a world intellectual space in which the other was culturally inferior, that is, uncivilized. The fifth has been the paradigm of development, of relinquishing the last bit of local knowledge for universal models of economic and political development that implicitly carry on the value structure of social Darwinism, of Spencer and Comte.

This has not been difficult to accomplish as most cultures themselves make this important distinction between the inner and the outer: between the racially pure and the barbaric. Once the definition of the West as modern was accepted, the rest quickly followed¹³. By the end of this century, it has become quite clear who is Center and who is Periphery. Simple indicators such as how we date history (BC, AD), time (GMT), how we see beauty (Paris) and those in the periphery see the West (streets of gold and lanes of sex), and the dominance of "development" (we must develop the natives, the poor, the rural, women, the Other) as the paradigm of science and social science tell us a great deal.¹⁴

We see this most noticeably in the recent Disney movie Aladdin. The magic of traditional Araby are replaced by images of Iowa, of secularization, and of the categories of humor of Hollywood. Aladdin no longer resembles an Arab but a mid-western American. In the beginning of the movie he is called Aladdin--the servant of God--but by its end he wants to be known as just plain "Al." Instead of categories of humor based on the Arab world, we are given mindsets that emerge from American situation comedies. The sophistication of the technology, the brilliance of the editing make an alternative Aladdin a luddite joke. Thus instead of a story of a young boy's dream of spiritual renewal, of challenging the power of the Vizier, we enter a world where all of us become just plain Al. And what does Al do after the movie: he buys Aladdin and Yasmine dolls. What does that do to the innocence of young children who live in the Arab world: it leads to self-hate since they know they are no longer Aladdin nor can they move to Iowa and become plain "Al."

Wars over material wealth as well have continued the peripheralization process. World War I destroyed the old empires and created the possibility for the American economic miracle. Standardize and buy: Mix and Melt. Destroy Nature. Create Technology. Destroy History. Create Movies (and now virtual Reality). Destroy tradition. Create obsolescence.

World War II also destroyed the idea of world unity based on the victory or the superiority of any particular race. But it created the possibility of world unity based on a particular nation. America claimed the mantle previously held by the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Dutch, and the British. But now the arena of power has moved from the riverine, to the Mediterranean, to the Atlantic and now with the rise of the Japanese (and South-East Asia) to the Pacific¹⁵.

Even having debt denominated in one's own currency (just print more money, one doesn't have to worry about exchange rates) has not made up for high military expenditures and the costs of being a global policeman. Caught within its own paternal and expansionist cosmology, the US can but take itself too seriously. The American image is that of a global division of labor where the US provides power and high finance, the Pacific manufacturing, and

Asia and Africa raw materials and labor. But as the Japanese have most recently shown, humans are so not because they are spiritual or reflect on the world, but because they can improve on nature.

Using the following indicators¹⁶, we can better understand what has happened. Their c/n ratio was even higher than the America's (c/n is culture over nature, value added manufacturing), their quality/price ratio was also higher and they understood (having few commodity resources) that they had to be self-reliant. Working together, again family as State--state and business, labor and management, high tech and artisinal--they created a system of vertical integration where each level, from multinational, to local suppliers, to labor, was provided security. Moreover with Mahayana Buddhist and Confucian culture there existed the prerequisite ethic to allow for a view in which heaven had to be created on earth. The vertical structure of its culture was isomorphic to a bureaucracy and an industrial organization while its horizontal structure also allowed for distribution for all¹⁷. Unlike hindus who resorted to karma, the acceptance of the will of god, East Asia wanted to improve upon God. Understanding that high-tech markets were chaotically dynamic and that once buyers and suppliers became locked into a new technology, profits would create a positive cycle of growth also helped accelerate the miracle economy.

But like the US, Japan has one economic ratio that does not bode well. This is the f/r ratio: the finance economy to real economy. This is the relative amount of money that one can make through speculation versus the amount of money that one can make through labor, manufacturing and services. For example, why work when there are millions to be made in the speculative markets. It is this speculative bubble, this misuse of money--money which does not work, that takes money away from reinvestment, from science and technology, from redistribution and demand--that leads to cultural and economic decline. The markets go up not because of industrial expansion (because of fundamental value) but go up when the real economy goes down because interest rates fall. Ultimately the two economies disengage, concentration of wealth goes to record highs, money does not roll over and a deep economic crisis sets in.¹⁸

However, the Japanese seeing their real economy slowly delinking from the finance economy have tried to cool things off and instead of a spending spree they have been on a building spree, mostly in East Asia. Like others, they know that the US is a sinking ship, and it is time to get off.

In the third world case it is the not f/r ratio that accounts for financial crises but the c/r ratio--the corrupt economy to the real economy. Individuals feel hopeless since economic rewards go neither to the speculators nor to the hard workers, rather they go to who has caste, class, or family advantage, to those in the bureaucracy. The wave of privatization is partly about reducing the power of bureaucrats and creating an emerging entrepreneurial class. This, however, does not give labor a better or new deal, as the Japanese have managed. Labor remains local, while capital is global and mobile.

But from the Japanese corporate perspective, national capitalism is only one stage. According to the President of Canon Corporation, capitalism is ready for its final phase, having traversed the earlier three.¹⁹

Phase 1-Jungle capitalism, survival of the fittest in Spencer's terms. If you are poor, you deserve to be miserable. God's smile has not touched you.

Phase 2-Modified capitalism. Labor is as important as management. Treat labor well for they provide demand, they buy goods too. Moreover, well treated labor is loyal and works hard. The goal is to reduce the ratio between the wealth of the manager and the laborer, not 80 to 1 as in the US but say 20-1.

Phase 3-National Capitalism. In this third stage, the State enters the economy so as to provide discipline to money. It is the State that should protect so that corporations do not suffer from "quarteritis" as Loy Weston²⁰ argues, so the long term, that is market share is kept in mind, not merely short term profits. The State also ensure that labor does not suffer from the cycles of growth and recession. But the nation is limited in mobility and corporations can do a better job at giving identity anyway. In short: the new world of the corporate world government.

Phase 4--World corporations. In this final stage, corporations finally gain sovereignty and individuals identify with them first, nations and race, second, and families, third. They work directly with people and with consumer associations, and other types of NGOs. States mainly create an environment where corporations can thrive (without hurting the system as a whole) and the State sets limits when battles between corporations hurt the common good, for example, when they damage the global environment.

This then is the future: a world led by corporations, where our sense of identify is linked to companies. Will they issue passports, why not²¹? Do we need nations? Only for the short run, in the long run a world government that can aid in capital accumulation would be better. The world government would have a military force needed when a particular group reverts back to racism and nationalism or feudalism (Hitler or Bush or Hussein).

NEITHER FEUDAL NOR CAPITALIST OR COMMUNIST

But this is not the only vision of the future. Another very important vision comes from, among others, Indian philosopher P.R. Sarkar. In his view we are in dramatic times, when time itself changes shape and begin to "gallop." In the language of Ilya Prigogine²², we are not in a stable situation, we are a state of flux, in a state of chaos, a time of bifurcation when the actions of a few can change the world system. In these times, the action of a few can change the direction of history. Human agency does matter.

Sarkar approaches identity in a dramatically different way than conservative or liberal traditions. For him, we can associate with our ego, which we often do or we can expand to our family. Then onward to our nation, then often our race, and for a few of us, humanity. But there is a step further which the Japanese model of growth, which the Coca-Cola model of the future forgets. This is that nature is alive, we can improve upon it but everything in the world is alive, animals, plants and humans. Everything is an expression of the supreme consciousness. Humans, of course, are special not because they can produce hierarchy but because they have purpose. In a recent show of Star Trek: The Next Generation, everyone suddenly finds themselves without identity. One character suggests that we will know who we are once we know our mission, our purpose. Another says we will know who we are once we know our enemy, we are here to fight. A third response is we will know who we are once we know our rank, where we stand in the hierarchy of humans. Who are the ruled and who are the rulers becomes the key question. A fourth possibility not developed in the show is that of examining our pockets, to see how much we have in our wallet or bank account and then locate ourselves.

For Sarkar it is **purpose** that makes us special, this ability to reflect on consciousness, and following classic Indian thought to become that consciousness through meditation on it, since our individual mind is essentially the same as the universal mind, universal consciousness.

What results are strategies to save the whales, dolphins, rare plants, to protect global life and diversity. But Sarkar is not merely focused on the concern for the Other, he also understands that a civilization cannot stand unless it provides for the economic vitality of its people. But unlike the language of material resources which ends up commodifying everything, for Sarkar the task is to create conditions where we can use physical, mental and spiritual potentials to the utmost. Humans have all types of potentials that are not used: land, labor, but especially imagination and spiritual wisdom. Our global poverty is not only a result of the concentration of wealth but also because of the lack of use and misuse of our various potentials. Moreover, these resources are rarely used for the global good, instead wealth remains in the nation. Can the model of the family be extended beyond the nation, to the global itself; instead of, Japan inc., World inc.?

However, while the spiritual potentials are endless mundane potentials have limits and their overuse and abuse hurts the planet as a whole. Thus in Sarkar's model there would be limits to wealth accumulation. These would be tied to minimums placed in the context of basic needs--survival needs, housing, air, water, health, education, food. The largest part of the economy would be the people's economy run as cooperatives with management and labor working together. In this needs-based economy, new technologies would reduce hours of work. Economic projects too large or complex could be run by large organizations, corporations or government. And projects too small should be run by individuals in a market economy.

Where the communists went off track is that they placed labor value at the center of everything, forgetting the value of capital, imagination, and spiritual development. Where capitalism is incomplete is that it minimizes the value of labor placing the accumulation of capital at the center. One totally attempts to place land in the hands of the collective, the second in the hands of the individual. Certainly humans have a desire to own some land and wealth but we neither need nor can afford unlimited land for everyone, nor should we place wealth in the hands of a central authority run by bureaucracies (as in the nationalizing industries model).

Sarkar also understands the value of research and development, of entrepreneurship, for it is this which leads to new wealth, which increases our potentials, which leads to growth. There should be incentive structures! Humans, after all, learn from struggle. Following Indian philosophy, there is no end to history as with communism where all ends with the perfect state or with capitalism where all the rich end up in heaven. It is the individual in the context of the planet that is paramount; the economic vitality is a prerequisite for creating an environment where enlightenment is possible. Social perfection is not possible since central to the Indian experience is diversity; individual perfection, in terms of spiritual enlightenment, however is not only possible but central to one's life mission.

But most important is that these principles should be applied differently in different places. But given Sarkar's neo-humanism, of the placement of our identity in the cosmos, what of our local conditions, what of our local environment and our sense of territorial place? For Sarkar, these local units should be our basic economic units, decided on local languages, bioregions, and historical cultures not on the category of artificial nations (created largely by departing colonial

masters. (Rwanda being the latest Western export to the US). As each unit becomes self-reliant it will expand its trade until there is a world economy. Sarkar does not argue against trade, however, as third world nations know, when you sell your raw materials, in the long run you become poor. The prices for commodities fluctuate, but the prices of manufactured goods go up. Also with raw material there are no automatic multiplier effects. With manufacturing there is learning as the challenges of development are met. Schools and other industries grow up around manufacturing centers. But where should these centers be? Where the raw materials are, that is in the countryside, not in the city, argues Sarkar. Thus for Sarkar local economic development is critical as it leads to economic vitality, especially when based on economic democracy.

But this is not localism based on race as many would define it during economic downturns (blame those that look or talk different is the easiest strategy for the politician who wants to rule, as Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia knows very well). Localism is based on where one puts one's wealth. One is local if one uses money for the area's growth, not use it to make profit which is sent far elsewhere; if one contributes to the area's social and cultural development.

Sarkar gives us another model of economic growth. Compatible efforts include community development projects, cooperative centers and on a larger scale through the activities of the Green Movement. But Sarkar develops the most comprehensive, eclectic model. His model gives us a real alternative to that of world capitalism or corporatism that challenge identification with the logos of Coca-Cola.

But then who is right? Which way will it turn out? In the short run clearly realpolitik will determine the future, that is, new models that threaten traditional order are often resisted intellectually and if that strategy fails, through physical force. But in the long run a model succeeds if it is complete. To begin with, a new model will have to bring economic wealth. But it will also have to satisfy the needs of the French revolution which have all but become universal, that is, equity, liberty and fraternity. And it will have to satisfy some basic spiritual needs.

To better understand this let us frame this in a simple two by two table.²³ The top left square is survival needs. The top right square is for well-being needs. The bottom left is freedom needs and the bottom right is identity.

Capitalism and liberalism have been strong on freedom: the right to travel, the right to mobility (especially for capital, less so for ideas (monopolized by Western categories of thought) and less for labor (bounded by nations and now larger economic blocks). Even with these boundaries, one could still leave the farm, go to the city and make a million dollars. One could buy a house and ensure that one's children were not laborers, that their life was better off. Of course this worked better for the center than for the periphery. Africa which lost its male population because of the slave trade did not fit so well into this model. Recently General Ibrahim Babangida, former president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, argued that debts would be written off because the billions and billions of units of wealth that was lost because of the slave trade²⁴. Indeed, the West should be paying reparations to Africa because of the slave trade. This was true for India as well where Indian weavers had their hands chopped off if they dared weave clothes and defy the East India Company.

Thus capitalism does well in survival and well being categories at the center but not at the colonies, for it is the colonies that provide the raw materials, that provide the labor, that provided the gold. For instance, imagine the opium wars if they were held today. Can one

imagine if the cocaine cartel attacked the US and forced Americans to become addicts. Impossible and yet this was China's fate not too long ago.

The community development model provides identity (localism, the local group, often religion), provides well being, but only for a few and at modest levels of wealth. It is excellent at survival, there is employment, but is weak at freedom in terms of mobility. It works at the local level but is more difficult at the national or global level. What is needed are models like Sarkar's that attempt to bridge this gap borrowing the best from the socialists, the capitalists, the Japanese. Freedom, however, in terms of the accumulation of capital and land is limited.

The presence of the periphery underscores the crisis within global capitalism for not only won't the periphery go away but it has now seeped into the Center, in a kind of reverse globalism. Among other, Robert Nelson understands that there is a crisis within capitalism.²⁵ He reminds us that it is theology that gave legitimacy to capitalism. However, capitalism has lost its ethical bases. It has not won! The critique of inequity that television world travel show to all is no longer hidden. And people know, especially women, that you can't blame the victim; there are social structures that create victimhood. You thus can't blame females for rape. Nor can you blame the rape and genocide of the third and fourth worlds on those worlds themselves. With terms such as structural violence becoming more current, then we should not be surprised that the idea of progress is in trouble. For as Nelson argues, capitalism might be efficient but it hasn't caught people's imagination. Remember, economic growth was once linked to bringing heaven on earth. At one time greed was harmonious with the predestined elect. It is no longer. Self-interest was harmonious with the Newtonian worldwide since the world was perfectly ordered and lawful (but relativity has made that problematic). Spencer raised corporations to the top of evolution and although many are still riding the crest, they have yet to deliver. Even Pope John Paul II reminds us that while capitalism might be efficient, investment choices are always moral and cultural. While the world has rejected socialism, it has not rejected egalitarianism and environmentalism.

Of course what John Paul was saying was that people want markets, the free exchange of ideas, goods, and services but not, but not, monopolies, excessive greed. For Nelson, if capitalism is to survive, it needs new moral arguments and spiritual dimensions, a task for theologians not economists. Unfortunately or fortunately, Coca-Cola has not hired any theologians, and Disney only hires people who believe in animism.

Again what is needed are theories and practices that create a new blend of spirituality, environmentalism, distribution and growth. What is needed are systems of thinking, like Sarkar's, wherein there is not one right or wrong, but there are layers of reality, as with Spengler and Buddhism, deep and shallow. Most of us exist at the base levels of intellect and body. But great inventors and artists enter the realm of intuition, while prophets go deeper into super rational realms in which the unity of being is prima facie evident.²⁶

DIVERSITY AND UNITY

The last important criterion point is the ability to be diverse as significant as survival, well being, identity and freedom. One must be able to respond to the problem of philosophical diversity.²⁷ There are a range of positions available. (1) one could argue that there is only one truth and others are false. History and the diversity of humanity have not supported that view.

(2) One could be zen like and argue that all positions are useless since they are created by the intellect and we must thus transcend philosophy. True, but creating structures and theories is what humans do. Entering a zen frame of mind will not change that. (3) One could argue that only the material world is real and culture and spirituality are not important. (4) Or one could argue that only the spiritual world is real and the material world is not important. We have seen civilizations focus on either of these directions and obviously both are true from different vantage points (as Pitirim Sorokin argues). However, overly materialistic perspectives lead to crises of faith and overly spiritual civilizations result in a loss of economic vitality. There are a host of mid range positions that are more useful, for example, the view that all cultures are trying to approach some type of truth but are seeing different fragments of it or there is one absolute truth and the material world is a representation of it, not eternally true but relatively true. In this latter case the relationship between the infinite and the finite needs to be worked on, however. But what the ecological movement has shown us is the importance of diversity. It is crop rotation that preserves the land and leads to greater wealth. To this Sarkar adds prama or balance between the individual and the collective, between body/mind/spirit, between inner and outer directed activities.

As important as ontological diversity, the nature of the totality of reality, is epistemological diversity, the ways in which we know we know. A balanced perspective would acknowledge multiple epistemological perspectives: logic/reason, sense inference, authority, and intuition. It would also include love or devotion as not merely an emotion but as a central way of knowing and changing the world. Most theories or perspectives focus on one or two of the above but rarely do we have attempts to include all of these epistemological perspectives.

One can thus judge the future based on the ability to meet freedom needs, identity needs, well being needs and survival needs as well as diversity (ontological and epistemological) needs. At the same time as important are visions that blend the inner with the outer, the need to bring heaven to earth and earth to heaven, that is those that provide a moral and spiritual theory to our material dimensions and a material dimension to our idealism. Socialism has failed. Capitalism has united the world but cannot it lead us further. Most likely it is efforts such as Sarkar's Prout and other similar efforts, that are both authentically based on a civilization's categories, the local, and try and transcend these categories through dialog and borrowing from other cultures, the global. It is this link between the local and the global that will provide the next model of the next century.

Postmodernity, Chaos, and Civilizational Stages

While we await new models of sustainability and transformation, the present can be characterized by the end of systems. There is a pervasive sense that things no longer make sense, that is the world is no longer familiar. One possible accounting for our sense of homelessness is that we are in between epochs. Sorokin²⁸ is useful in helping us understand this transition stage. He argues that the range of type of possible systems can be understood by answering the question, what is real. We answer this question either as matter or idea or both, or nothing is real, or believe the question itself is meaningless, that is, we can never know what is real. The first answer leads to a materialistic type civilization, what he calls sensate, the modern world. The second leads to ideational type civilization based on the transcendental, the middle ages, for

example. The third type leads to a brief period where both mind and body are real, where both heaven and earth are considered important. The fourth type cannot lead to any type of civilization and the fifth leads to despair since there is no ground to stand on. Writing much earlier, in the 1960's, Sorokin believed that we are at a time where sensate civilization is in its final era and a new civilization is starting. Thus the world does not make sense because the bases of the world is changing. Sorokin predicts we will now enter the idealistic, both mind and body, golden era.

But we could also move to a new ideational civilization. This was the attempt of Iran to move an essentially spiritual religion civilization run by the clerics. This is the effort of evangelical Christians where the key question is not how much one has saved but is one saved? This is fundamentalism--religious and scientific--a return to the original text, uninterrupted by history and uninterpretable by those not chosen. For the fundamentalist, we should live in a world without metaphors but with the utterances of the original text since they were truth and will always remain so. Interpretation is not considered problematic since there is only one cosmology (Islamic or Western or Sinic or Scientific) anyway. The problem is what is the status of the Other: are they barbarians, their text but shadows of the real book, the real science. Thus fundamentalism sees the future of a diverse world, a world of many cosmologies, and evokes not the ancient world when language was magic but the dying modern world wherein language neutrally describes reality, where language is unproblematic. Seeing a vision of many, it returns with vengeance to a world of One.

Others see the future and argue that we need new metaphors that break us out of the universalizing and civilizing project of modernity. Joseph Campbell certainly based his career on examining traditional representations of reality across many cultures, arguing that it was time for new mythic stories. Others ask: is it possible for civilizations to engage in a grand conversation of who we are and what the future for all of us can be?

Equally significant are postmodern writers such as Michel Foucault who argue that we cannot know what is real since the real is always mediated through language and culture.²⁹ Everything is politics since language is not transparent, it does not merely describe the real, but it creates the real. This goes a step further than Noam Chomsky who argues that language participates symbolically in creating the real by reference to deep structures. It also does not return us to the magical world of the mantra where the utterance of the right word can unite us with the Other, be it God, nature or self. For Foucault and other postmodernists, deep structures and ancient mantras are in themselves metaphors. In the postmodern view, nothing indeed is really real since all is representational. While this move certainly avoids the reification of power to any particular vision, ideology or metaphor, it does not help in creating possibilities and models for economic growth, for sustainable development, for even as it opens up spaces for alternatives, it refuses to allow these new spaces to be filled by possibilities of a different world, of an alternative praxis. As Sorokin would say, one cannot base a civilization when nothing is really real. We need some anchor point, some point to place hand, heart and head as we move onwards into the next century.

But again, Coca-Cola and United Airlines represent the world far better than social scientists or revolutionaries. Through drinking Coke we can participate in the soon to be global civilization; we participate in a deeper emerging global structure. Helping every Olympic team is

not the act of traitors but the act of those who are truly patriotic to the world--that market share goes up doesn't hurt either.

CULTURES OF TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGIES ENDING CULTURE

But not only are discussions of reality changing our world whether from chaos theory or postmodern politics so are the rise of the new technologies: physical, mental, spiritual and social. While change has always been destabilizing, a few new technologies in particular promise to change how we know ourselves and which categories of the real we will inhabit.

Through virtual reality, we will be able to practise safe travel and safe sex. Indeed it is the potential for pornography that will drive this new technology. With the ability of expanded computer technology, we will be unable to differentiate the real from the imaginary. An image of a world leader promising prosperity might just be an image constructed by a few hackers. Fidelity to traditional notions of representation will be broken. The problem of the original text especially for fundamentalists will be further complicated since distinctions between types of reality will be blurred. Will religions then offer virtual reality experiences of their image of God. Perhaps the redeemer, whether Jesus, the Mahdi, the taraka brahma, is returning and might be available to all, at all times. Reality will never be same again (of course, postmodernists tell us, it never was other than peculiar, it was always based on the episteme, the epistemological boundaries of the time). However, now we will be in many epistemes, which will grow perhaps by each technological innovation cycle. What then will be fundamental?

Equally damaging our traditional notions of reality will be advances in genetic engineering. But instead of ending the real, genetic reconstruction will end the natural. While genetic engineering will start out quite harmless since all of us want to avoid abnormalities, or various genetic diseases, thus we will all want to be checked by our family genetic engineer. But soon this will lead not to disease prevention but capacity enhancement. Intelligence, memory, body type and beauty will be open for discussion. Birthing will eventually be managed by State factories and we may potentially be the last generation to produce children the old fashioned way. It will be the final victory of the feminists and their final defeat. The biological cycle will have been terminated by technology and women will essentially be not any different than men once their reproductive capabilities become unnecessary. The causes of alarm are there (since the most likely scenario will be one where it will be managed by the few for the profits of the few with our genes moving from personal space to the marketplace) but perhaps in latter stages when everyone can be beautiful it will be moral and spiritual potential that will matter the most. Perhaps then with fewer genetic diseases, our differences will become once again charming instead of attributes that keep us from uniting as humans. Perhaps genetic engineering will paradoxically lead not to sameness but to difference and to a greater humanity.³⁰

Development in robotics and artificial intelligence will potentially not only transform the labor movement and our definitions of work but also our conceptions of humanhood. We can foresee a time when they will have legal status³¹. Perhaps not the same as humans but certainly some type of legal category will be found or will develop that gives them protection as well as culpability.

To begin with, the best way to eradicate the exploitation and drudgery of labor (and to

tame labor as well) is to increase the use of technology. In capitalist structures this means layoffs, under cooperative structures such as Sarkar's this means more leisure and time for philosophy and play; politics and love. Eventually, a robot will injure a worker and will be found culpable since it will be argued that the manufacturer and owner should not be found liable since the robot learned, since the robot is alive. While the initial drive will be juridical, concomitant with ways of thinking that see everything as alive, like quantum physics, Buddhism, animism and Indian thought, and with advances in artificial intelligence it might be that we will develop a new ethic of life where humans are only one life form among many. Their utility value will be surpassed by their existential value. While a robot uprising is unlikely, the move from robots as represented as machines, to be seen as dumb but lovable animals and then to gaining similar rights as children is quite easy to imagine.

What results from a view in which everything is alive, that the real has numerous dimensions, is a perspective that frames technology not only as material but as mental and spiritual as well. The first stage of this results from the human potential movement. If we assume that most of us use less than a percent of our brain and geniuses use two percent, then technologies whether concentration and meditation exercises or those that merge the brain with type of brain enhancement physical technology should take off. A more balanced worldview (body and mind) would encourage these types of developments more than chemical based ones. These might also change our theories of the nature of science as we search for unities that are both mind and body. Sarkar, for example, posits that there exists microvita, basic "energies" that carry information, viruses and can create life. They link perception and conception and are thus both mental and physical not either material or ideational as we have historically tended to view the subatomic world. The basic substance of what is then is no longer dead matter but living bottles of energy that both use us and can be used by us in a variety of ways.

Less concerned with holistic technologies, Freeman Dyson³² believes that we need to move away from metal-based technologies to biological-based technologies. Among other suggestions, he has introduced the idea of the Astro-Chicken: a space ship that is biologically grown instead of engineered. We already have life substances that eat up bacteria, that among other uses, can help deal with pollution spills as well as provide food. His central argument is that we are looking in the wrong direction for the future. Equally far reaching is the work of Eric Drexler³³ on nano-technologies. These are minute technologies which in effect would break down matter and recreate it in any shape or form we want. Instead of growing food, we could create food by simply rearranging molecules.

These new areas of technology then promise to change the world. They certainly at one level make the vision of a small community, of local spaces, less possible. However once these new emerging cultures transform us, it could be that we might return to a more intimate tribal lifestyle but choosing not only our tribe but our genetic make-up, our version of the natural and of the real. These new intended communities could be on Earth, in our minds, or we could be hurtling through the stars either with or without our bodies.

Unlike most spiritual thinkers, for Sarkar, these new cultures of technology provide us with great possibilities to create a better future. Properly controlled, that is used for needs not profit, and delinked from instrumental rationality (if that is possible!) they can help create a planetary society. For capitalists these new technologies promise a renewal, rejuvenation from

the exhaustion that has set in. They promise to revive the idea of progress. Thus, it is not theologians who will provide the new spiritual basis for capitalism, but hackers, lab experts, and new age visionaries. These new technologies pose the most dramatic problems for those of us who consider the natural as fixed instead of as constantly changing and in the process of recreation. Fundamentalists, in particular, will find the next twenty or thirty years the best and worst times for their movements. The best because the forces of tradition will flock to them; worst because the technological imperative and humanity's struggle to constantly recreate itself and thus nature will not be easily forced back. Even biological spills will most likely not be controlled by State regulations but by new technologies themselves. The answer to these types of problems may be in newer advanced--physically, mentally and spiritually--technologies. Technologies in themselves will be redefined in this process as not merely material processes but mental and spiritual processes embedded in particular cultures. Our notions of the natural, the real, of truth, of the technological will no longer be fixed but porous just as United and Coca-Cola have made the idea of sovereignty deeply problematic. Fundamentalists will attempt to dam these leaks through appeals to the classical words: God and nation. Humanists will look to citizen control groups to stem the technological avalanche ahead and scientists will stand in stunned silence at the world they have helped undo.

And unlike the evening news which has numbed us to fear, the emergence of a world without a concrete notion of truth, natural, life and good is cause to fear and rejoice. In the chaos ahead, we may begin the slide down into a long depression. Center/periphery distinctions could worsen. Genetic technology or biological technology could yield new viruses, new types of life that end our life. The planet itself, however, might not care. Gaia³⁴, argues James Lovelock, is a self-regulating mechanism that keeps life alive, humans might not be needed, just an experiment that went wrong. She might "choose" rabbits instead of monkeys this time. Out of this disaster instead of world church, or world capitalism, we might end up with a world empire again with restrictions on freedom, survival, identity and well being. Mad Max and The Terminator instead of the Jetsons or Ecotopia. Or more likely an Internet system that feeds directly into our brains as we imagine we are feeding into its nervous system.

However, we can hope that in this postmodern chaotic period, a new world will emerge that will have not one center but numerous centers, with many civilizations in dialog with each other, with many forms of cultures and life, rich with diversity but with some sense of unity, of enchantment with a larger vision of basic values that we have willed ourselves to: of dignity for all forms of life; of the right to basic economic, cultural and spiritual needs for all of us on this planet.

However, in the meantime, the logos of Coca-Cola hangs above the planet. But once we have drunk from the bottle, it is empty, and we need replenishing. While spiritual perspectives remind us that only consciousness is the real thing, local community efforts would have us switching to juice or local forms of drink. The new technologies promise to recreate drink itself so that imagining the real thing will be as tasty as the real thing. Fundamentalists would remind us that the real thing came only once and it cannot be symbolized as it exists outside of culture and history. A balanced response might go ahead and drink the real thing but when finished would search for consciousness and would question how it was produced, would examine the economics and politics of distribution and growth. A balanced approach would also want to

make sure there was enough air, food, family, community, education, health, and mobility for everyone. Neither God nor economy or culture should be scarce. Like visions of the future they should be abundant.

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¹Revised numerous times, this article is based on a keynote speech given to the Congress of the United Church of Christ, Waialua, Hawaii, February 24, 1992. I am thankful for comments and editorial assistance from Dr. Levi Obijiofor. A part of this essay appeared in New Renaissance (Vol. 3, No. 3, 1992). Dr. Sohail Inayatullah, The Communication Center, Queensland University of Technology, Box 2434, Brisbane 4001, Australia. Internet: S.Inayatullah@qut.edu.au.

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⁵ibid.

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