

Human Rights and Values in East Asia



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**THE RIGHTS OF YOUR ROBOTS :
EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION IN
HISTORY AND FUTURE***SOHAIL INAYATULLAH***I Introduction**

Many years ago in the folly of youth, I wrote an article with a colleague entitled, *The Rights of Robots*. [1] It has been the piece of mine most ridiculed. Pakistani colleagues have mocked me saying that Inayatullah is worried about robot rights while we have neither human rights, economic rights or rights to our own language and local culture—we have only the “right to be brutalized by our leaders” and Western powers. Others have refused to enter into collegial discussions on the future with me as they have been concerned that I will once again bring up the trivial. As noted thinker Hazel Henderson said, “I am happy to join this group—an internet listserv—so long as the rights of robots is not discussed”.

But why the ridicule and anger? Is it because as James Dator says: “the only useful comments of the future should be ridiculous”. That is, most statements about the future are tired and timid, reflections of staid academic thinkers who have no creativity, who are unable to grasp the grand technological possibilities and civilizations bolder souls are willing to speculate on? Is the ‘rights of robots’ a problematic issue because it strikes a deep discord about the world, that is, a world we know is fundamentally unjust, a world where technology will have rights but street children will not? A world where speculative capital is free to choose the most desirous nation but we as labor can at best only hope for a decent retirement account? Where labor can only hope that we will somehow make it and not become landless and laborless?

Or is it something else?

We wrote the piece not only because we believe robots will have legal rights one day—they will, to be sure!—but more so to show that rights are not decreed by nature but are reflections of legal conventions. As Christopher Stone has argued: “throughout legal history, each successive extension of rights to some new entity has been theretofore, a bit unthinkable. We are inclined to suppose the rightlessness of rightless ‘things’ to be a decree of Nature, not a legal convention acting in support of the status quo.” [2]

Is it that we as humans are unwilling to consider giving rights to robots partly because we live in a zero-sum world. If robots have rights than others won't. Our history of rights can be seen as a battle between inclusion and exclusion. The forces of exclusion have not been the same, they have changed through history—sometimes they have been centralized empires, other times centralized religious systems, and other times nation-states operating in a world-capitalist system. They have also been brothers, bosses and all the other petty tyrants we must negotiate with day after day.

II GLOBALISM AND RIGHTS

We have consistently defined others as less than ourselves: once done so, then every possible heinous crime can be committed against them. Globalism, is of course, the latest victory in defining others as somehow less—“become more efficient, more productive, export more, be all that you can be. You are fundamentally a producer and consumer, and unless you do the former first, your ability to engage in the latter will be restricted.” Globalism merely continues the language of colonialism and developmentalism—the same sense of inevitability is there, the same recourse to the grand masters of social evolution—Comte and Darwin—is there. And indeed responses to globalism follow the same simplistic pattern as well—a conspiracy of the powerful, of the West, of capital (instead of an understanding of the deeper structures of history).

The basic presumption of globalism is one of hierarchy, framed neutrally as comparative advantage, but in fact a social-genetic-cultural model of who is civilized and who is barbaric. But what if we were to take a different tack? What if we took seriously, for example, the Tantric Indian civilizational worldview wherein all of

life, including technology, is alive. Or the American Indian, as developed by Jamake Highwater, who reminds us that it is the collective that is alive, existing in a relationship of sharing, caring and gratitude, not dominance. Could the robot then enter as friend?

Again, this does not necessarily mean a totally horizontal world where all have equal rights, as in the Western perspective, nor a collectivized 'Father knows best' vertical world. Rather it means a world where there are layers of reality, where mind is in all things from humans to animals to plants and, even, dare we say to robots.

This certainly does mean a world with some rights for plants and animals as well—a vegetarian world; one cannot love the collective if one eats the individual, the tantrica might tell us. By vegetarian, we are not only situating the personal in the political but reminding ourselves that behind our collective foot habits is an anti-ecology regime, an anti-life regime, an anti-health regime, that is, our eco-system is at stake.[3] Our health would be all the better if we saw animals and plants as being not part of the Darwinian chain of life, the circle of life, but as part of an ecology of consciousness.

But you will say, "This is an ethnocentric argument. We are meat-eaters." Yes, rights then are ethnocentric and more often than not human-centric. The extension of rights has always been unthinkable, the impossible, and yet we have not had any level of human progress without the extension of rights to those whom we previously considered not-worthy.

In an essay entitled, *Visioning a Peaceful World*, Johan Galtung writes: "Abolition of war [can be seen as a similar goal to the fight against] slavery and colonialism, abject exploitation and patriarchy were and are up against. They won, or are winning. We live in their Utopia, which then proved to be a realistic Utopia. So is ours: a concrete Utopia for peace." [4]

III INCLUSION AND RIGHTS

This is the other side of the story, as much as history has been the exclusion of rights, it has also been the advancement of rights, about inclusion, about gentleness, about the struggle for love. My reading is as follows:

Glossing human history, we argue that even while there are certainly cyclical dimensions to history (the rise and fall, the strengthening and weakening, the back and forth of class, civilization, varna, nation), there has been a linear movement towards more rights, towards laying power bare.

1. In the European context, for example, there have been a succession of revolutions, each one granting increased rights to a group which had been exploited by the dominant social class and limiting the powers of those at the top.
2. The revolt of the peasants against feudalism (the late middle ages, the 14th century). Increased rights for peasants.
3. The revolt of aristocrats against clergy (church/state)—wherein church power was contested (modernity). The breakdown of Church dogma and the development of scientific thinking.
4. The revolt of aristocrats against the king, a constitutional revolution as in the English Glorious Revolution of the 17th century, a process started much earlier with *Magna Carta* in the 13th century.
5. The revolt of the bourgeoisie against the aristocrats and clergy. This was the French Revolution and created the Enlightenment—a victory for rational humanism and science against ideational church dogma.
6. More recently the revolt of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. This was the Russian socialist revolution of 1917. Increased rights, at least in the short run, for labor. In Nordic nations this was more of a gradual evolution of labor power, of the welfare state.
7. Elsewhere, there was the revolt of the peasants against the city. This was Mao Zedong's formula (the argument that the two opposing camps are the city and the rural). Pol Pot took this view to its tragic consequence. The city, however, appears it is winning although telecommunications might allow a return to the village, but at this stage it is more the Los Angelisation of the planet than the creation of a global village.
8. More recently (and of course, part of a long term trend) has been the revolt of women against men, against patriarchy in all

- its forms. This is the pivotal trend of increased rights for women.
9. The revolt of nature against industrialism. This has been the Green position calling for limits on technocracy.
 10. The revolt of the Third World against Europe, with calls for Third World solidarity. This decolonization process—the 18th century American Revolution being a much earlier example of this—has eventually led to.
 11. The revolt of indigenous peoples against all foreign social formations, calling for the creation of special status for them as guardians of the planet.
 12. Finally there is the revolt against the nation-state worldview, wherein social movements are aligning themselves to create a third space that is beholden neither to the prince nor merchant, nor to the interstate system nor to global capitalism.[5]

IV DEFINE OR BE DEFINED

These last four have not only been about increased rights but about defining the rights discourse, deciding what constitutes a right, who defines it, and how rights are to be protected and implemented. This is one of the crucial battles of the near term future, to define or be defined by others.

Globalisation is of course about defining the world of others—asserting that traditional systems of knowledge, local languages and self-reliance cannot lead to a modern society. As Ashis Nandy writes: “Few hydrologists are interested in what the natives think about their grand irrigation projects and megadams; health planners depend almost entirely on modern medicine; and agricultural innovations are not introduced in consultation with farmers.”[6] In Australia, the nomadic way of life of aborigines is to be rooted out if Aboriginal health is to improve—they have already been defined as out of the norm. “Health practices based on modern sedentary lifestyles are not seen as the problem”, writes Michael Shapiro.[7] Of course, even multinational pharmaceutical companies now scourge the planet looking for the latest herb to patent but this process is undertaken within the modernist corporatist context and not within the cultural knowledge system of the local. Defining what is real, what is

important, what is beauty has become as important as ensuring that one is not periphery but centre in the world economy.

While the general trend at one level is progressive—more happiness for more people—at another level there are exaggerations of systems such that the victory of the Enlightenment over religious systems, over traditional society, has led to a pendulum shift back to traditional systems—localisms, ethnicity, and in many ways a pre-scientific world. This tension is also leading to the possibility of a post-rational and post-scientific world, which integrates the sensate and the ideational.

Finally, at a third level, there has been little progress, each new technological improvement creates new side effects. Each new growth spurt in the world economy creates new losers and vaster sites of impoverishment.

Certainly then, the advancement of rights, while progressive, does not go far enough. Among others, including our robot friends, I think not. They need to be expanded.

- (1) First, following Sarkar,[8] we need to expand humanism to neo-humanism, which struggles against the Enlightenment's human centrism and argues for increased rights of plants and animals—towards global vegetarianism and for an global ecological regime.
- (2) Following, numerous Third World activists and federalists, what is needed is to expand the concept of the *Magna Carta* (against the power of the king) into a *Neo-Magna Carta* and develop a world government with basic human rights; rights of language, right of religion and right to purchasing power (related to this is maxi-mini wage structure wherein minimum economic rights are guaranteed).

The expansion of these rights, however, will not come about through polite conferences, but as we know, through epistemic (the language/worldview battle), cultural (through a renaissance in art, music, and thought) social (the organizations of values and institutions) and political (challenging state power) struggle.

V THE PROCESS OF RIGHTS

At the level of rights, the process, according to Neal Milner is as follows.[9]

His first stage in this theory is imagery. Here imagery stressing rationality of the potential rights-holder is necessary. This has been part of the struggle for rights of nature, since nature is not considered a rational actor. The next stage of rights emergence requires a justifying ideology. Ideologies justifying changes in imagery develop. These, according to Milner, include ideologies by agents of social control and those on the part of potential rights holders or their representatives. The next stage is one of changing authority patterns. Here authority patterns of the institutions governing the emerging rights holders begin to change. Milner next sees the development of "social networks that reinforce the new ideology and that form ties among potential clients, attorneys and intermediaries".[10] The next stage involves access to legal representation. This is followed by routinization, wherein legal representation is made routinely available. Finally government uses its processes to represent the emerging rights-holders.

Of course, for our discussion this is somewhat limiting, rights are more than legal expressions, they are nested in civilizational views of space, time and other. Thus while for some civilizations rights become so when governmentalized, in other maps, rights are part of a web of relationships between self, community and the larger collective, the state. This is especially so in collectivist societies. Rights are related to one's responsibilities, to one's dharma.

However, rights when defined strictly in Western individualistic terms are often unable to deal with issues of import from other civilizations. For example, indigenous access to land, ancestors, and gods/angels are all non-negotiable civilizational givens. At the same time, these too should not be seen in essentialist terms, that is, all civilizations are practice, they are potent life forces with operating mythologies. These mythologies can be used by leaders, most recently in Yugoslavia with Milosevic, to deny the human rights of other cultures. Civilizational traumas are used, then, by politics not for transcendence but for further exclusion. Trauma is piled on trauma and the linear progression of rights becomes lost. Rights

become not an asset for the oppressed but a stock of symbols for the state to use against others. Rights are used in a zero-sum competitive world.

In contrast is the case of Taiwan where a traditional system, Confucianism, has been modernised to include the democratic impulse. Asian values are not seen as fixed but as dynamic. Democracy can be reshaped to exist with non-Western values.[11]

VI INCLUSION

A rights discourse is essentially about inclusion and about built-in agreed-upon structures of peaceful mediation to resolve conflicting rights. By now it should be quite clear that what is under discussion is not the future of technology, but the future of power.

Denial of the rights of robots—since they are considered other, as not sentient, and thus not part of our consideration—becomes an exemplar of how we treat other humans, plants, animals and civilizations. Like children, the environment and future generations, robots do not have adequate representation (and thus are considered rightless). Like children, the environment and future generations, robots are considered less alive, less important, and thus are considered rightless. Since they are so different, why should they be given rights? This is made more so by a worldview which is rationalistic and reductionist, which resists emergence in technology. In contrast are Buddhist views, for example, which see all as persons, and not as things. Shamanistic perspectives as well can imagine the spirit entering technology, thus allowing it to become, while not more human, certainly part of what it means to be human.

Robots call us to consider culture and civilization not as fixed but as dynamic, as growing in response to other cultures and civilizations, to technological dynamism. Responses to dramatic changes in technologies and values can lead to societal disintegration, to a cultural schizophrenia, can be directly creative as with Toynbee's minority, or can be resistance-based, and thus create a new culture.[12]

VII TRANSFORMATIONS IN EPISTEME[13]

The rights of robots is only one emerging issue that promises to change how we see ourselves and others. Genetics, multiculturalism, the women's movement, postmodernism, information and communication technologies as well promise to alter how we see nature, truth, reality and self. There are four levels to this epistemic transformation of the future of humanity, perhaps well summed up by the following poem:[14]

It's only a paper moon
 Floating over a cardboard sea.
 But it wouldn't be make-believe
 If you believed in me.

1 *Nature*

The first is: transformations in what we think is the natural or Nature.[15] This is occurring from the confluence of numerous trends, forces, and theories. First, genetics and the possibility that with the advent of the artificial womb, women and men as biological beings will be secondary to the process of creation. The link between sexual behaviour and reproduction will be torn asunder.[16] But it is not just genetics which changes how we see the natural, theoretical positions arguing for the social construction of nature also undo the primacy of the natural world. Nature is not seen as the uncontested category, rather humans create natures based on their own scientific, political and cultural dispositions. We "nature" the world. Nature is what you make it. There is no longer any state of nature. Feminists have certainly added to this debate, pointing out that they have been constructed by men as natural with men artefactual. By being conflated with nature, as innocent, they have had their humanity denied to them and tamed, exploited, and tortured just as nature has. As nature changes its social meaning, so will the idea of natural rights. Arguments that rights are political not universal or natural, that is, that rights must be fought for also undo the idea of a basic nature. Thus, nature as eternal, as outside of human construct, has come under threat from a variety of places: genetics, the social construction argument, and the rights discourse.

2 *Truth*

Related to the end of nature are transformations in what we think is the Truth. Religious truth has focused on the one Truth. All other nominations of the real pale in front of the eternal. Modernity has transformed religious truth to allegiance to the nation-state with science and technology as its handmaiden. However, thinkers from Marx, Nietzsche, to Foucault from the West, as well as feminists and Third World scholars such as Edward Said have contested the unproblematic nature of truth. Truth is considered class-based, gender-based, culture-based, personality-based. Knowledge is now considered particular, its arrangement based on the guiding episteme. We often do not communicate well since our worlds are so different, indeed, it is amazing we manage to understand each other at all.

Language is central in this shift, as it is seen not as a neutral mediator of ideas but as opaque, as participating, indeed, in constituting that which it refers to.[17] It is not so much that we speak languages, but that languages create our identities. We language the world and language constitutes what it is that it is possible for us to see.

Multiculturalism has argued that our images of time, space, and history, of text are based on our linguistic dispositions. Even the library, once considered a neutral institution, is now seen as political. Certainly Muslims, Hawai'ians, Aborigines, Tantrics, and many others, would not construct knowledge along the lines of science, social science, arts and humanities. Aborigines might divide a library—if they were to accede to that built metaphor—as divided by sacred spaces, genealogy and dreamtime. Hawai'ians prefer the model of *aina* (land), the Gods, and genealogy (links with the ever present ancestors). Not just is objectivity under threat, but we are increasingly living in a world where our subjectivity has been historicized and culturized. The search is for models that can include the multiplicities that we are—layers of reality, spheres with cores and peripheries.

In any case, the belief in one truth held traditionally by religious fundamentalists and now by scientists is under assault. Can we move towards an ecology of mind, where many ways of knowing, where truth as claimed by differing traditions is honoured, dialogued? That is, once truth has been decentred, and all perspectives are allowed, what then? Can we create a global project that unites yet

respects multiplicities? Can we create a world in the context of an ecology of rights—interpenetrating rights, their expansion enhancing each other?[18] Or are there non-negotiable fundamentals that do not allow agreement but still might allow small practical steps taken together leading to a better world—many peace processes?[19]

3 *Reality*

Central to the end of the grand narratives is a rethinking of what we consider as Real. Our view of the real is being shaped partly by technology, specifically virtual technology and its promise. Cyberspace has become a contender for the metaphor, for the future of reality. By donning a helmet, we can enter worlds wherein the link between traditional, or natural physical reality and cyber/virtual reality are blurred. Will you be you? Will I be me? As we travel these worlds, will we lose our sense of an integrated self? Where is the reality principle in these new technologies? What of human suffering and misery? How will traditional Asian systems that are more collectivist in identity deal with the individuality of virtuality? Can virtuality become more group based, or will it destabilise Asian identities?

The real is what can be created by desire. Whereas for Buddhists, the task has been to extinguish desire, for the West, the project is to totally fulfill desire, reality is what you want it to be. Desire is truth.

The environment as a place of rest, as beauty, as a source of inspiration, as a living entity of itself, then becomes secondary. Whereas philosophers have deconstructed it, cybnauts have captured and miniaturised it. Why do we still need to protect wildlife when it can be virtually rendered, we can now meaningfully ask? Since we will not be able to perceive the difference between the natural and the technological, wouldn't it be better to use the environment for development then? The virtual environment, let us remember, comes without insect bites, without bush fires, without fear. It comes without imperfections. The rights of minorities will likely become less important since all different perspectives can be kept alive virtually, thus not stopping progress.

Paradoxically, as the real becomes increasingly metered and sold, as reality ceases to be embedded in spiritual and sacred space, becoming instead commercial real estate space, others have begun to

argue that the ideational is returning, that the pendulum is shifting again. Echoing Sorokin's idea of the need for a balance between the sensate and the ideational, Willis Harmon argues that the physical world is only one layer of reality. The spiritual world is another. What is needed is a balance, a move towards global mind change. Rupert Sheldrake with his idea of morphogenetic fields, Sarkar with his ideas of microvita (providing the conscious software to the hardware of the atom), Teilhard de Chardin with his idea of a noosphere, all point to the notion that we are connected at a deeper layer, perhaps at the level of Gaia. Lynn Margulis takes this to the cellular level reminding us that it is cooperation that succeeds at this minute level. Materialism as the global organising principle is under threat from post-rational spiritual perspectives, the new physics, and macrohistorians[20] who believe the historical pendulum is about to shift again.

Reality is thus changing. The old view of reality as only religious or the modern view of the real as physical are under threat from the postmodern view that reality is technologically created and from the ecological view which sees the real as relational, an ecology of consciousness, where there is no one point, but all selves are interactively needed.

4 *Self*

The final level of deep transformation is in what we think is Man. Whether we are reminded of Foucault[21] arguing that man is a recent, a modern category, and that his image will disappear like an etching on sand, about to be wiped away by the tide, or if we focus on the emergence of the women's movement as a nudge to man as centre, man as the centre of the world is universally contested. While the enlightenment removed the male God, it kept the male man. The emerging worldview of robots—what Marvin Minsky of MIT calls "mind-children"—cyborgs, virtual realities, cellular automata, the worldwideweb, microvita as well as the dramatic number of individuals who believe in angels, all point to the end of Man as the central defining category.

We are thus witnessing transformations coming through the new technologies, through the worldviews of non-Western civilisations, through the women's movement, and through spiritual and Gaian perspectives. All these taken together point to the

possibility but not certainty of a new world shaping. Let us say this in different words. We are witnessing the end of modernity. What this means is that we are in the process of changes in Patriarchy (I am male); Individualism (I win therefore I am); Materialism (I shop therefore I am); Dualism (I think therefore I am); scientific dogmatism (I experiment therefore I know better or I have no values thus I am right); Nationalism (I hate the other therefore I am); and humanism (humans are the measure of all things). This is however a long term process and part of the undoing of capitalism. All these connect to create a new world, which is potentially the grandest shift in human history. We are in the midst of galloping time, plastic time, in which the system is unstable and thus can dramatically transform.

What this means is many things. First, my friends the robots will probably be happy in this artificial world being created. Second, civilizations will survive especially those that can quickly adapt. Cultures, of course, will not be lost but miniaturized, virtualized. Third, that the struggles for human rights, environmental rights, refugee rights, to mention a few, will pale compared to the dislocations in front of us. As important as fighting for the rainforest will be greening genetics. As important as rights for children will be the right to sexually reproduce. As important as rights for refugees will be rights for the identity-less. As important as struggles for allowing the voice of all, will be a struggle against postmodernism, which has embraced all, even evil, making all relativistic, and thus all the same, denying a layered approach to rights and values.

VIII EAST ASIAN FUTURES

What will be the futures of East Asian cultures and systems of knowledge in this dramatically to be transformed world. First, the East Asian responses to modernity, to the problem of the West, have been dynamic. Japan, for example, has reinvented itself at the level of technology but managed to maintain its unique cultural heritage. Thus, it has at the surface level been transformed, and in many ways has become more Western than the West, that is, continuing the Western world-capitalist project. At the same time, Japan has held onto its Confucian/Buddhist and Zen/Daoist elements, having been able to selectively choose aspects of Westernisation that fits its cultural overlay.

Kinhide Mushakoji argues that the traditional two poles of Japanese society (and East Asian society as well) of Confucianism (formal/hierarchical) and Daoist/Zen (informal, networks, mystical) are with postmodernism about to shift to the Daoist pole.[22] This model at essence will be self-organizing, that is, chaotic (ordered disorder). Indeed, the postmodern challenge of language as constituting the self is very much a Zen perspective. The plastic nature of self that genetics and robotics create again fits well in the Zen overlay. However, while Zen has always maintained the natural/unnatural dichotomy[23] (with all other dichotomies open to transgression), it is the final structure of thought that postmodernism evaporates. Moreover, multiculturalism and the women's movement pose challenges to Confucian societies that traditional 'every person in their class' ideology will not be able to manage so easily.

The Singapore model, in particular, will be under question. Singapore has been equally keen to adopt Western financial practices and technological impetus but has stalled cultural democracy keeping Singapore a managed state. It will resist chaotic tendencies with more management, with more control. Indeed, it could become a type of social museum, the perfect modernist site in a chaotic world of genetic, robotics, the internet and deep multiculturalism.

South Korea has added Christianity and Westernization to its triple heritage of Shamanism (Daoism), Confucianism and Buddhism. It has managed to keep its public sphere male and Confucian with its private sphere female and shamanistic. However, the changes to come challenge that division.

Fortunately, this future is not inevitable. These trends can play themselves out in varied ways. There is room to manoeuvre still. Among others, Anwar Ibrahim in his *The Asian Renaissance*[24] believes that Asians can meet these challenges. He believes Asians and their leaders have developed the capacity to challenge the lure of jingoism, of culture being used for political capital, for immediate political gain. Ibrahim argues that cultural jingoism, while understandably a reaction to Western dominance, cannot redeem, cannot liberate, rather it is the fodder of narrow tribalists, nationalists and fundamentalists. A renaissance is about a reawakening of the universal and not about using the category of 'Asian' for authoritarian and totalitarian means, for erasing the individual in the guise of the Asian collective. Anwar Ibrahim reminds us that even in the family-oriented Confucian tradition, the self and community are

seen as equally important—the wise person develops his moral self, articulating it for self-perfection and the greater good. Economic productivity, he argues, can coexist with cultural development. An Asian renaissance based on a true multiculturalism—unity in democratic diversity can provide a path to a new future for Asia and the world. Importantly, he asserts that “As Asia gains wealth and power, it must search its deepest conscience. It should not assume the role of the new executioner to reply the old history of oppression and injustice.”[25]

IX SCENARIOS OF THE FUTURE

In addition to Ibrahim’s vision of civilizations in dialogue, of a reborn Asia, I offer the following general scenarios as possibilities.

1 Artificial Society

The first scenario is the Artificial Society. This would be the end of environmentalism, humanism and the cultural view of rights. It would lead to the technologization of the self. The goal would be full unemployment with technology working so that humans could rest and play. But more than artificial it is about the end of the distinction of technology and artificial such that we would no longer have a category called Nature. It is with postmodernity that all is possible and history is packed in virtual museums, eternally available but never realisable. In the first stage of this scenario, rights would be framed around the tensions between humans and technologies, between humans and their genetic offspring (with humans as the missing link[26]). Concretely, these would include the right to procreate, the right to disconnect from the net, the right to not travel. Eventually human/machine and technology/nature distinctions would disappear, as would the idea of rights.

2 *Communicative-Inclusive Society*

The second scenario is the Communicative-Inclusive Society. This is deep spiritual ecology, with rights of all, and the self as cosmic. Technology is considered part of humanity's expansion but at issue is power and control, who owns and what values are used to design technology. Equally central is the metaphysics of life: desire as channelled expression, as creativity, creating new forms of expression as opposed to filling a fundamental emptiness. Essentially this is a communicative society, where communication between humans, plants, trees, animals, angels, and technology are all considered legitimate. The central project is a dialogue between civilisations, nature and the divine through which a good society (and not the perfect society of linear developmentalism) can be created. A good society embraces its contradictions; a liberal democracy in search of a perfect, contradiction-free society attempts to eliminate them. Globalism would come to mean not just the right of capital mobility but labor mobility. It would also mean the creation of a planetary civilization with a world government consisting of houses for corporations, social movements, individuals and nations.

3 *Business as Usual or Incrementalism*

The third scenario is Business as Usual or Incrementalism. It is appropriation of the Other through the idea of the melting pot, or shallow multiculturalism. Dominant issues are daily power issues, for example, in Australia of the Republic versus Monarchy argument. New technologies provide impetus for the expansion of capital, giving capitalism fresh air. Technologies are considered culturally and gendered neutral tools. As the gun lobby says, "people kill people, not guns". Communication is merely used for instrumental purposes not for reaching shared goals. The environment is a resource to be used for growth. Rights would remain individualistic with the structural causes of poverty and the cultural basis of reality ignored.

4 *Societal Collapse*

The last scenario is Societal Collapse. The position is that man has gone too far, that Earth will strike back with earthquakes and tsunamis. Globalism has created a system out of control, only stock

market collapse through perhaps cybocurrency fraud leading to a softer slower pace of life can rend things in balance again. The most likely immediate future is a global depression and the timing will be myth related, that is, at the end of the millennium. Rights would go to the physically strongest and not just the richest or the mentally agile. Life would be “nasty, brutish, and short”.

X MAKING THE RIGHTS DECISION

What the future will be like we cannot say. We do know that grand macrohistorical forces cannot be easily changed, but bifurcation is possible. At the edge of chaos lies transformation, wherein by finding the strange attractors of change, concerted efforts by the few can dramatically change all our futures.

Let us imagine a different future than that which we are heading toward. Let us through our responses help create it. Remembering the dilemma of Yang Chu, who weeping at the crossroads, said, “Isn’t it here that you take a half step wrong and wake up a thousand miles astray?”[27] Let us take a half a step in the right direction and be part of a global awakening, be part of the progressive expansion of rights.

As we do let us not forget our friends the robots—that is those who are so different from us that we automatically conclude they should be rightless—let us ensure that as we progress forward—given the limitations of macrohistorical forces—we take everyone with us.

Comments from the discussion:

On the rights of robots:

Basil Fernando replied by suggesting that the rights concept must be broader. Frank Brennan commented that he would like to maintain the threefold division of reality into human beings, spirits and those things we create. Inayatullah accepted the necessity of maintaining some distinction but wanted to keep some idea of layered reality. Fernando noted that man creates robots and robots create man so they may have a place in rights discourse. Les Malezer noted that indigenous peoples have no difficulty in recognising the rights of rocks and inanimate objects, so perhaps cars and

TV can be accepted too but they will not change our fundamental values. For aborigines there is no wholly 'other'.

Ross Daniels wondered what sort of vision we are creating for the future. He remarked on the pollution of Taipei, which is typical of all cities in the region. So far, he noted, the human rights debate in Asia has been on the defensive. So, he asked, are there ways in which the rich tapestry of Asian religions and cultures can be brought into the debate? In what directions can the human rights debate move forward?

Notes:

- [1] Phil McNally and Sohail Inayatullah, "The Rights of Robots: Technology, Law and Culture in the 21st Century," *World Peace Through Law Center: Law and Technology* (Winter, 1987); in *Futures* (Vol 20, No. 2, 1988), 119-136; and, in *Whole Earth Review* (No.59, Summer 1988), rewritten in Sohail Inayatullah and Paul Wildman, eds. *Futures Studies*, Brisbane, Prosperity Press, 1988) (CD-ROM).
- [2] Christopher Stone, *Should Tree Have Standing: Towards Legal Rights for Natural Objects*, Los Altos, California: William A. Kaufman, 1974
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