

CHAPTER XIII

THE HOPE FOR PHILOSOPHY IN A GLOBAL AGE

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The features of a common perspective vital for future philosophy are expressed symbolically as the emergence of a “bright new worldview.” In contrast to the cynical consequences of Aldous Huxley’s notion of a “brave new world,” this attempt seeks to find a way to integrate these ideas into a conscious vision. To see the world as wonderful is not to flee from its horrors and pains, but to hope that a further evolution of humanity is possible upon the condition that we initially view it positively. This point focuses upon the constitutional roles of the seer and of vision.

The effort to concentrate philosophers throughout the world on contemporary global issues has generated a basic ground for the possible emergence of a new paradigm. Claims that such work is eclectic may in fact be connected to a narrow perspective insofar as it might well be possible to view these ideas as pieces in a global puzzle if a broader perspective is adopted. An intuition concerning which parts of the puzzle are already in place could lead one to recognize the potential improvements associated with the quest for a “bright new worldview” instead of ignoring it or criticizing it as a vain undertaking.

“The world is now unifying itself from the local contraries to one globalized culture in order to create a new philosophy of humanity. We are no longer semi-human but human, and are initiating a creative philosophy for all of humanity in its present technologically cohesive situation.”² However, organizing the ideas of different authors into a meaningful and cohesive philosophy or worldview is not a painless venture. Different ideas disperse in many directions, and merging them together into a properly formulated text is a challenging editorial task. This is accompanied by the obvious risk that the result might be immature or diverge from the intentions of the author involved.

Regardless of the insights of postmodern thought, many principles of rationality remain uncontested, and a worldview assumes a level of precise discourse as a precondition for communication. There is also the dilemma concerning the acceptability of treating other people’s texts as raw material, whatever their future philosophical purpose may be, insofar as the creation of a collage is not as widely accepted in respect to printed texts as it is in the visual arts. The requirement of seriousness is still in force, although it makes us repeat not only procedures and rules, but also ideas that have been expressed many times before. As we seek to express ideas in an authentic fashion and thereby be original, we often actually reaffirm the

“identities” of our own little egos. We speak of similar things, but fail to reach the agreement necessary for the development of shared values, general aims, and universal interests. Each one brings into their expressions not only their own passions and ideals, but also their weaknesses and illusions. We do not facilitate mutual enrichment and perfection merely through the multiplication of concepts and representations. Consequently, the accumulation of humanistic knowledge remains problematic, while philosophies emerge as hermetically-sealed, speculative creations that, except for hermeneutic fertility, fail to keep up with changes in reality and therefore become – or remain – inoperative.

In the spirit of the debate initiated in the cyber-sphere concerning “copyleft vs. copyright,”³ the implications of the right to change “software” freely in order to make it more adapted to the needs of its users, under the sole condition that it remains open for further change, have not been sufficiently explored. This is clearly not accidental since the potential revolutionary nature of such freedom destroys established proprietary relations and subverts routine patterns of power. Philosophers have been called upon to face this issue, at least at the level of ideas. Being aware of the importance of fundamental changes, philosophers should indicate what they in fact are and, by the same token, perhaps help them come true. McLean has described this historical *spiritus movens* in the following words: “The aspiration of freedom has electrified hearts, evoked great sacrifices and defined human progress in our age.”⁴

In accordance with a “present socio-economic paradigm,”⁵ which is “the imperative of political and cultural freedoms” and “the force of the postmodern mentality,” humanity should overcome “strategies of self-interest and control” while transcending the ruling concept of the modern world “as an order of possessions” in order to reach “a spiritual disposition” without which it “is impossible to visualize an inclusive human horizon.”⁶ When we relate these words to ourselves, however, we easily encounter an important problem. Because of the ubiquitous need of the human ego to be and, at a more subtle level, to be right, it is difficult to overcome manifestations of human nature as transformations of the will to power. We do not need to search far in order to become aware that underlying the principles and symbolic structures of our societies are “linguistic games” that are “essentially power games.” We only need to look sincerely within ourselves for evidence of this.

At the beginning of the new millennium, when “the exaltation of scientific-technological devices,” of “hypertext, cybernetics and epistemology, leaves us blinded by the footlights,” philosophers are once again confronted with “the challenge of the metaphysical dimension.”⁷ An awareness is growing that “the decision in metaphysics concerning the nature of reality and the corresponding decision in epistemology determines our understanding of the nature and meaning of freedom and indeed of human life. The results of the exclusions made by the empiricists are devastating for human life and meaning: there can be no sense of human

nature and hence no freedom of self-perfection; there can be no sense of human existence and hence no natural freedom of self-determination.”⁸

That directs us towards a superior evaluation of philosophy. “The link of man to philosophy makes of this discipline, at the same time, knowledge, attitude and, above all, passionate testimony to life, and finally a path towards truth.”⁹ Moreover, we are tempted to create a philosophy for today’s global age. “Philosophy must now take an independent role, trying to state its own identity, aiming to collaborate with all branches of human knowledge to promote peace and human welfare... It has the ambition of bringing all human knowledge and experience into one perspective and explains all human interest under one perspective: global philosophy or philosophy of globalization.”¹⁰ Since the magnetism of philosophy is strong, the danger is that we are inclined to forget that “love” for the “love for wisdom” (philosophy) is not self-sufficient. We must also be attentive to the lessons of history, which are supposed to have taught us that the age of speculation should end, and that the world should enter the age of an operative spirituality so that we not be given over to obscurity.

There is evidently great hope that a genuine metaphysical quest can be recovered. However, there is no guarantee that distancing ourselves from reductionist scientific exactness, taken as “a symptom of the spiritual weariness of Reason that emptied knowledge of meaning,” would reward us with “reflective conscience” and “existential commitment.” But there is faith, and longing is present in many cases, such as in the words: “Desacralized knowledge has made man spiritually homeless, he has become a stranger to himself... As one man put it,... ‘A purely scientific civilization destitute of ideals and values, devoid of the humanizing and mellowing influence of religion, philosophy and art, would be as cruel for the soul as the pre-scientific civilization was for the body.’... The greatest need of this age is a great prophet who can accept the facts of science and at the same time give inspiration to fill the great spiritual void.”¹¹

Keeping in mind that the sphere of philosophy is less characterized by calls to wait for a prophet than by efforts on the part of philosophers to locate the *telos* of humanity, it is fruitful to consider the following argument. “If there be truth to the commonplace that the first millennium was focused upon God and the second upon man, then this beginning of the third millennium should be the opportunity to unite both... True progress must be... implemented by the development of human dignity, creativity and responsibility; and it must be centered upon what is ethically good and aesthetically moving because inspired by the Spirit. Precisely in these terms new and exciting ways open to a life with meaning and value for all.”¹² It is very important that this basically Hegelian approach be enriched by a sense of the particular. Consequently, “...the concern is to look not only for what is essential, necessary and universal, but especially for what is existential and unique in the free and creative exercise of life.”¹³

Hegelian provenance is also present in Dei’s “philosophy of postmodern *Aufheben*.” Together with E. Hobsbawm, Dei emphasizes the

apparent failure of all modernity programs that deal with the issues of humankind. His philosophy, however, which is “anchored in a living metaphysics,” was not primarily directed to personal improvement, regardless of his proposal that philosophy be “an openness to truth, not the possession and legitimization of one truth above the other.” The key to this is “to discover that we confront not problems, but questions of meaning.” And the goal is “...a leap in consciousness... In this way the dystopic experience of modernity reflected in postmodern culture can be thought of as the human possibility of a free decision to exist in the world according to an identity which is not one of appropriation, grasping or consumption.”

A comprehension of questions related to identity on the individual level may permit a better understanding of their general and universal principles related to the consciousness of the whole. Globalization would thus “lack its own identity” without “giving priority to a planetary conscience.” Relying on “the mechanisms of supremacy” that exclude the other, “the so-called phenomenon of globalization” “may continue as a tragic imitation of instrumental reason... anchored in the fragmentation and isolation of populations and human beings.” If that type of “instrumental reason can find in globalization its universal meaning, this universality... is a universality without identity.”¹⁴

But the complement of this gloomy view of globalization is a cheerful version that presumes *Aufheben* as well as the rise of global consciousness. This comprises “today’s challenge to achieve a comprehensive vision whose integration is not at the expense of the components, but their enhancement and full appreciation.” This process transcends particular concerns “not to deny them, but to respond to them from a more inclusive vantage point.” “This is the heart of the issue of globalization and cultural identities.... If a global outlook be evolved in which unity is promoted by diversity, then the progress of world unification could be, not at the cost of the multiple cultures, but through their deployment and interaction.”¹⁵

Discovering insight into questions of global thinking in the philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa, McLean revives ancient principles of the mind that have been forgotten in modernity, principles that view diversity as promoting, not negating, unity. By means of a detailed analysis of Cusa’s philosophy, which culminates in the power of intellection joined with imagination, McLean clearly shows the disadvantage of modern discursive reasoning and “knowledge constructed on the basis of multiple limited beings understood as opposed one to another”, which “proceeds essentially in terms of parts... without taking account of the overall unity.” He points out that in Cusa’s global view not only is the realization of each required for the realization of the whole, but that “the reverse is also true, namely, it is by acting with others and indeed in the service of others or for their good that one reaches one’s full realization.”¹⁶ And since knowledge as such “is directed toward an ordered reality – ours and that of the entire globe – the

central questions are not merely epistemological, but ontological and ethical...¹⁷

Without a doubt, ethics involves the most actual question today, namely, that of “the meaning of the human dimension in a globalized world.” Ghislaine Florival argues that “issues of the human person which underlie ethical responsibility” are in principle “tied to a practical anthropology which enfolds from the center of action.”¹⁸ “Therefore, ethics can no longer be only a theoretical science, a reflection either *a priori* on the essence of action or *a posteriori* on acquired human experience, but must begin to carry out work on new matters, yet unexplored, which have an immediate impact on the life of individuals, cosmic possibilities, the protection of peoples, or socio-cultural life.”¹⁹

These words clarify the values that underlie analysis since the “Radical transformation of individual and social life raises new ethical questions [about] becoming conscious of the philosophical urgency of redefining all in terms of a destiny which now has come to be shared universally.”²⁰ As B. Kirti thus reminds us, “the time of change calls... for a change of value base. The appropriate value base must respond to the characteristic needs of globalization. Globalization means... that we must learn how to live in the globalized world as our ancestors lived in a village. Surely we need an appropriate philosophy...”²¹ Insofar as Kirti views philosophy as the source of a globalized culture, he proposes a “contemporary paradigm” that would lead to responsibility, collaboration, trust, mutual understanding, and peace. “Only by deliberately engaging in breaking down the walls of distrust can we open the way to the trust on which friendship is based. History has brought us to the brink of a ‘high-tech’ global society... The pressing task is to learn how to collaborate with sincerity.” The way to such collaboration passes through “both a *kenosis* and a *metanoia*. *Kenosis* means emptying oneself of the ‘old man.’... This emptied self can then be filled up through a *metanoia* to open the eyes to a new way of seeing: the contemporary way or paradigm. With this new outlook, we can become a ‘new man’ that sets no limits on love.”²²

Kirti views these considerations as giving rise to “a serious program of education for preparing humanity for the culture of the global village.” But, if “education” is to become operative, it must go beyond the level of words and their interpretations. In so doing, it will become an issue of personal self-discipline rather than intellectual education directed to future global humanity. We, of course, should neglect no aspect of the world as we to compose an order for the human collective. But the “metaphysical question of choosing a new way... must refer explicitly to the tremendous task of reformulating the symbolic universe that has sustained the history of humanity up to this day.”²³ We might thereby hope to find a way in which to “prevent global solutions” that “aim unilaterally at the benefit of developed states” and of plutocracies. This indeed depends on human concern for “the dimension of totality” that fuses solutions of scientific rationality with the “reasonableness”²⁴ of human reason. This

holds true for virtually every domain, but particularly for the socio-political sphere.

“Science and democracy have been the watchwords of modern history. ... But wherever there are two the problem of their unity and harmony becomes central to the realization and value of both. So it is at the present moment that we are in search of an adequate context which will enable both science and human freedom to be realized under the title of democracy in our day. If this can be found, it will enable scientific capabilities truly to implement a humane and free life and our democracy to become, not a well-ordered tyranny of the majority, but a context for personal and social realization.”²⁵ That “adequate context” might very well be found in the “bright new worldview,” and the worldview we are searching for might very well provide the appropriate context for the future “self-perfection” of the individual and society. And perhaps even for the global order.

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NOTES

- ¹ <http://www.crvp.org>
- ² Imamichi 2001.
- ³ <http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/philosophy.html>
- ⁴ McLean 1996.
- ⁵ Dei 2001.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ McLean 1996.
- ⁹ Dei 2001.
- ¹⁰ Bunchua 2001.
- ¹¹ *Proceedings of the Eighth Session of the Pakistan Philosophical Congress*. See also Siddiqui 1998.
- ¹² McLean 1999.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Dei 2001.
- ¹⁵ McLean 2001.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Florival 2001.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Bunchua 2001.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Dei 2001.
- ²⁴ Shen 1995.

²⁵ McLean 1996.

²⁶ Ibid.

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