

## ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY, SOCIALLY AND ECOLOGICALLY

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### **1. The greater whole**

Are we people (still) aware that we belong to a greater whole? A molecule of water ever already was perhaps in the body of Adolph Hitler. A molecule of air has may be already been breathed by some dictator on the other end of the world or by one we love so much. Or by a friend in India. We are united not only with our family, but also in a special way with mankind and other creatures in this world. Especially through water and air. Through the biosphere itself. Whether we like it or not. The water and air what are absorbed by our body belong to an essential physiological system.

Amazingly more and more since, we became industrialised and people do want more and more welfare. We are influencing one another more and more. But not only humankind.

So the world wide '*free-market*' influence make people living more and more superficial by TV-advertising for instance, finding everything so evident, without thinking or questioning their values. One could say that most youth is raised for a great deal by advertising. Advertising ("reklám") everywhere is a splendid form of brainwashing. One evening there is up to one hour of 'brainwashing' by TV advertising. Didn't Adolph Hitler write in "Mein Kampf", what you say is not important, but we have to repeat it, because then the people will believe it? This was also a mean for making up a totalitarian system. Well the world of the so-called free market seems not being interested that much in the concern of the world has a whole. The free market is 'playing' for most countries only when it is in their benefit. The strongest example we can find is in the exponent of the so-called 'free market'. The USA has more or less 60 embargoes against other countries. The most known example is that against Cuba for several decennia.

Are we standing still by the wholeness of things? Most people do live and think fragmented. A typical example is bearing headlights during daytime, while the sun is shining.

*Small case study1:*

Isn't this a shameless example of a collective too egocentric and selfish western culture?

1. Isn't it ecological stupidity? Has no one made a calculation what the impact on nature is, by doing so?
2. Electric lamps are in a car with so very low efficiency, it is more or less 5%. 95% lost in heat. Meaning that for burning a lamp, for 1 liter of fuel, only 5 cl is used for the light of the lamp. And 95 cl are spoiled.
3. Poor people have even not any lamp! Using two lamps of 50W in the front of the car. While 1000 000 000 even have not electric connection. And not even a electric lamp of 50W
4. Those who do not see well should not drive cars. Do they? (That is already the case with pilots in airplanes!)

One argues that it is for safety. Is that so? The Netherlands is one of the countries with the least accidents by cars. And no lights on the roads, which is the case in Belgium; most roads are 'enlighted'. No lights on the cars in the Netherlands but with the lowest rate of accidents. Two main reasons of car accidents: too high speed & too short distance between cars is the reason according to a new study.

Wouldn't it be a better solution to decrease speed of cars for safety, so: 1. less accidents 2. less consumption, 3. less noise, not to disturb the well-being of people.

(Manufactures of lamps can really be glad with using lamps even when the sun is shining brightly. After some hours, they have to be renewed.)

An exquisite example of anthropocentrism: self-destructing in the long run. An example of non-religious behaviour. Religion understood in the original definition: relied to the whole of being, to the universe. (It can be either theistic or not.) Will the sun being 'offended'? In the bible, Jesus says at a certain point: "They have eyes and do not see".

*Conclusion:* This small case study shows that most people are thinking fragmented. (Hopefully some are thinking.) Under the idea of ‘more safety on the road,’ one loses out of sight all other consequences. Integrative thinking is lost. Or has it still to come in the future?

## 2. Concentration

The more people concentrated on one-place makes problems increase extremely much more than linear. (Or c. q. overpopulated.) It gets proportions as never before. The more people we are in a country the more the importance the wholeness of reality becomes. If we were less people, the coherence of things is less important.

The free-market thinks in a *short-term*. Isn't it a too egocentric system, thinking only in terms of ‘now’? I would like to call it *collective egocentrism*. Ecological thinking is thinking in *long-terms*. Therefore, we have to look for other values and the evident values of the so-called free-market should be questioned.

In this perspective, we also come to the philosophical term: alienation. The term in connection with natural elements and processes, but also in connection with the social network. The more welfare there came the more *collective egocentrism* came in industrialized countries, now very much reinforced by the so called ‘free market’. Hospitality seems to disappear more and more as welfare is coming, in industrialized countries.

## 3. Globalization and democratization

But an industrialised society also has social consequences. And self-governance only can be achieved with new values different from the individual financial benefit. Thus, we have to move to the general interest instead of the promotion of the *possessive individualism*. Going back somehow to the ethical principal of Jeremy Bentham, “the greatest happiness of the greatest number”. Since we are belonging to a whole – this biosphere – there is a global need of changing values. In the possessive individualism, it seems everything can be bought: cars, women, persons, properties, the earth...

Consequently, it is necessary that people can be informed objectively and has the necessary competence on this point of the evolution. It demands time to realise a *real democratic globalisation*, where new and renewed values are tuned

as much as possible in harmony with nature.<sup>1</sup> That means that not all-existing culture can remain, one needs to strive to a *sustainable culture*. This is only possible when ecological aspects are taken into account (or anthropocentrism will end life of many species, what is already going on in high speed).

That means that *not any globalisation*, but a *certain globalisation*, according to the above principle which is profoundly different from the ‘*pseudo-democracies*’ to be found all over the world, has to come. It means that people will be informed and have the ability to get to the best information to be obtained for the time being on this stage of evolution. And this will still take time. Most probably it ends in ‘life long learning’ (whether we like it or not).

Things still become more complex as soon as individuals are not seen as persons, what is still very much the case in Asia, where the individual is most of the time subordinate to a bigger system especially in China and Japan. Not as self-thinking persons with a ‘Self’. That means the Human Rights Declaration is not that universal, because of the different images of man within different people or states.

Most people do not know what they really want. Meaning: what the Self really wants. The Self also can crash into the values of the ancestors, where the meaning of the values is lost, or is useless by the increase of scientific knowledge. That does not mean that what is imposed by advertising and many TV programs and stations, which are many times nothing but *preaching selfishness*, is the solution.

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<sup>1</sup> Somebody argued that we could not use this word ‘nature’ any longer. Because it is a very loaded word, so she preferred to use: “biological system”, hence it seemed that I am not up-to-date. Not using the word *nature* is difficult. It is a problematic category for centuries. But is that a reason to abandon the word? And it is extremely difficult to use new concepts. What is wrong with many words? They seem to be some “dirty”. As there are these days: ‘religion, solidarity, state, art’, (using the word ‘culture’ instead of ‘art’) although this word ‘nature’ has a tradition for centuries. Some consistency in the language is needed or can we otherwise still speak about a *language*? • Look for the concept of: “nature” In GUIDO-HENRI DE COUVREUR, *Meer Rendement. Een menswaardige visie op een merkwaardig bestel. [More efficiency. A human vision on a remarkable social order.]* Mondo, pp. 212. This concept is on many places to see. So, isn’t it better to give the words a renaissance instead of offering them? It is not only the word ‘nature’ that is in trouble. The word ‘religion’ – in a philosophical way – is in the same case. But can someone give an acceptable word for the same thing? Many tried for many years but...it was not successful.

One is not coming to deeper values but it remains so superficial. Questions are coming, such as:

Do I connect to what today's society shows as the norm?

Do I think in the same direction?

Are my breasts of the good size?

Do I have a more expansive car than my neighbour?

Am I wearing the right outfit? Etc.

This all is linked to welfare not well-being.

The stronger, mostly all advertising is doing an appeal on people who are not thankful, rather being unsatisfied. Insatiable. That is what the 'free market' needs. As a result, people will buy, thinking they will be satisfied, but that is not the purpose of the financials thinking of the boards of the factories. They try to make to shareholders satisfied with more financial profit. The price for this is sometimes very high: social disorder, ecological disaster, noise, unhealthy jobs etc.

Although technique and welfare brought many a more agreeable life, it is not all gold that shines. To share in solidarity building up welfare with other countries is not very common. Belgium was according to the Human Development Index of UNDP, on the 5<sup>th</sup> place of the world sometime. But on the other hand it was on the 120 ranks according to the Davos Report, for pollution of water, soil and air. And almost 25% of all trees are ill by the 'contribution' of the bio-industry, traffic, heating buildings...

In Europe there are both tendencies on the one end the big energy companies that want to become bigger and bigger all over the world. And on the other hand, there is a tendency that people make a cooperative to produce energy in a sustainable way. It is quite clear that in the future there is needed more democratic control on all big money streams. (Now they become like the underflow streams in oceans they escape almost from democratic control.)

In the future, we also have to be aware that people are many times, talking of 'economic benefit' but what is really meant is 'financial benefit' what can be completely the opposite. Of course, all the terms we need are reflecting our culture. But all these terms risk to reflect and used in indecent uncarefully thinking as well.

Now the values almost always based on benefits and in this order:

*financial*: main purpose for many people; what can “I gain from this?”

*economic*: that can be, but not sure many industries give in the last not any economic benefit.

*ecological*: this is taken into account more and more, but for many this is only included if it is profitable even for financial purposes.

In the future, there will be no future if we do think in this hierarchy, in this order. The only way to realise the greatest happiness of the greatest number more or less, is to shift this value order, better to turn around the order, otherwise our anthropocentrism will lead to the destruction of many species any way. But not only that, it will be unliveable for all creatures.

Subsequently, the order in the future rather should be thinking in:

- 1. Ecological**
- 2. Economic**
- 3. Financial**

terms.

#### **4. Democratic Citizenship... a difficult concept?**

Since human beings, do belong extremely to social beings just as wolves, dogs, monkeys ... they are living in some social structure as well. The question is how to structurize a society and how to govern this society. As far as we know there is a difference with other mammalians. The big difference is the ethical component. Ethical high standing human beings are not submerged in the biological level.

Therefore the terms democratic and citizenship must be rethought. According to the brochure: Basic concepts and core competencies for education for democratic citizenship<sup>2</sup> that says “The citizen has rights and duties in a democratic society”<sup>3</sup>. Citizenship seems to be filled in many countries, but

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<sup>2</sup> FRANÇOIS AUDIGIER, *Basic concepts and core competencies for education for democratic citizenship*, Council of Europe publication, Strasbourg 26<sup>th</sup> of June 2000, DGIV/EDU/CIT (2000) 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17.

anyhow since time has changed, we also have to fill it in other way than before. Citizenship presupposes as far as I can see it in the future, many other things than we did last hundred of years. As well as the duties as the rights are concerned. So we will have to fill in again what it means to be a citizen.

## 5. All cultures are built on technique

One of these duties from today on is the protection of the eco-system, the nature. Why is this new? Because we became more and more an ‘individualistic society’ where collective egocentrism is very high and at a welfare level as never before for so many people. But there is more, all today’s societies, at least in industrialized countries, are depending on energy. We are spoiling energy as never before, polluting, and destroying natural resources. So we can see that our culture also has to be a renewable matter in both senses.

In Europe there are strong tendencies for energy companies to gain more and more power, even on world level. In opposition with this we perceive raising co-operatives with main goal to promote and execute sustainable development and as such a tendency to a small scale. *Decentralization* of the energy market and as such more possibilities to decide what people really want. It is clear that there is a need of *controlling* the energy producers in a *democratic way*. The more, an industrialized country is completely depending on energy conversion. A painful example we saw in California some time ago in wintertime. Where people were without electricity 14 days thanks to competition and the ‘wild free market’.

Some wise people came to see, only renewable energy and taking care for materials can give a reasonable solution to stop this going down spiral. This is a possibility to get many people out of the prison-culture of the industrialized societies.

The new citizenship has so much to do with ecological thinking, responsibility of the citizen, with a real democracy that only can be chosen after a lot of information, is to be reached and known, otherwise it has also to do with *pseudo-democracy*.

### *Small case study 2:*

Examples of pseudo-democracies: USA, where a president, is chosen more by the amount of money, based rather on advertisement (“reklám”) than on common sense and rational decision. Those with no big money have not any chance. Less than 50% voted him, on 40% of the population that only came to vote from the possible voters.

*Small case study 3:*

India is another example that gives to think. India where the caste system is officially forbidden but still remains and a more or less 50% of the people can read and write. How can it being a participation in this 'subcontinent' India, the so called biggest democracy of the world. It really depends than how the term 'democracy' is filled in. Some people do reject that the practice of casts (= sorts) is still there. Let us look at the following.

What to think of this: Let us go back to the UN-conference against, discrimination, in Durban, South Africa. Although the cast system is legally forbidden since a 50 years there are still today in India 160 000 000 ( $\pm 15\%$ ) 'Untouchables'. The so-called 'dalits' who are living separate from other casts. Many temples and places are even not today allowed for dalits. That is not that some of them are not educated, not washed, or anything, but they belong to the 'lower class' by birth. The gods have decided like that, they are 'unclean'. (Like most 'god-services' – wrongly called religions – they are rather existing for structurizing a society and keep the privileges of the privileged ones).

Beside Mahatma Ghandi, there was an 'untouchable' in India, a 'dalit', "dr. Ambedkar" – known as such – who was already long ago convinced that nothing would change if there could not come education for the dalits. Evidently a system that functions for social structuring the society for many centuries, how can it change in one generation, or two?

It seems that this existing of casts makes still that there are, according to estimation of human rights organisations, there are 33 000 cast crimes a day. Is that the reason the Indian delegation in Durban did not want to talk about the dalits? But they could not avoid that, hence, from that point of view the conference was a success.

But before we arrive at a more 'real' democracy we need some more tools. One of them is a supra-national language in order to all people can communicate at the same status with one another, without needing to 'believe' all lies that are sent in the ether by many regimes. It should be a supra-natural language. A language that is not an ethnic language, but easy to learn by almost everyone, what is not the case with English and Spanish for instance. A second element why this supra-national language<sup>4</sup> is needed so much is, because the chance for

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<sup>4</sup> Such a language could be *Esperanto*, recognized by EU and UNESCO, UN. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* can be found in Esperanto on the following site:  
<http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/navigate/alpha.htm#E>



peace increases a lot. If people, not governments are making out so many policies, most of the time people are not wanting war...

Live is communication. Meaning information going in both directions, by definition. So 'reklám' never can be seen as communication. It is standing for a lower being evolution and being less consciousness, the thing that is opposite for a further and better evolution of mankind.