

The book review below comes from the following blog:

ange-ta

The day will come when earth will beseech for her life. She will be crying with tears of blood! You will have the opportunity to help her or to let her die. When she dies you will die too. (John Hollow Horn, Oglala Lakota, 1932)

Sunday, 17 July 2011

[The call of the desert](#)

The concept of History and its significance for us, has emerged from the evolutionary process of our relation with Nature. For the ancient world the place of man in history was synonymous with his place in Nature, a place of acceptance of the need and necessity and of the fate and destiny postulated by being in the cosmos. (1)

In 638 A.D. Patriarch Sophronius surrenders the Sacred City to the Arabs. It is a portentous date for the change of the geopolitical map of the territory. Christianity steps back and Islam falls on the conquered peoples like a godly lightning. The spread of Arabs and of Islam is a torrent that the organized Byzantine Empire will keep confronting while bleeding from that time up to its final fall in 1453, to the Ottoman Turks. And let's not forget that this bleeding of the Greeks is aggravated by the West which in 1204 will deal the lethal blow against us! Greece withstood over 1000 years of attacks from North, East and West. Its final fall in 1453 was effected under the indifferent eyes of the West. In its turn, the "brilliant" West that is just starting to wake up with the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, will dash with the most violent dimension known to History up to that time, to the new world which it will plunder relentlessly and barbarously. The fabulous riches which it will snatch from the new lands will give it life until today. Today, with USA as the prevailing power, the world's image is dark, tomorrow is indeterminate, and the planet seems to be breathing its last. Greenhouse effect, terrorism and war are the three words that describe the situation.

It is in this historical setting that the book of Nicholas Biniaris "The call of the desert" is moving.



"The call of the desert" is an unbelievable thriller about Islam, Israel, the USA Empire, the EU of no opinions and initiatives, about mute Greece and about a true Arabic Spring, setting under doubt the planetary establishment but also the very survival of humanity.

A revolution in Saudi Arabia places into danger oil's flow and thus West's economy.

In Washington or in the New Ruling World Capital panic prevails. The representative of EU travels urgently to the New Ruling World Capital to convene with the president, taking along with him a Greek philosopher and historian, Dimitris Akritas, with view to his acting as the unpredictable factor, whose brain and conscience have not been corrupted by power.

Dimitris Akritas parallels the situation with the era of Herakleios during the reign of whom the sacred City fell occupied and the Arabs entered the stage of History. In minimum time they will reach Spain having previously subjugated Persia, Iraq, Syria and Egypt. Being an old close friend of both the president of EU and the president of USA he takes on the diplomatic negotiations with the revolutionaries-terrorists according to the western terminology – upon the command of the president, BUT of also the oil establishment, whose only interest is the continuation of the flow of oil

Dimitris Akritas is the "beautiful soul" of Hegel *that cannot bear the split between nature and History and feels nostalgic for the return of man to the imperturbable wholeness of ancient Greece.* (2) Only this "beautiful Psyche" realizes the tragic condition of the 21st century in which greed sets on fire even the last tie of humanity with the places which constitute its ancient cradle and which have become today the tragic theater of its History. Armed then with his historical knowledge about the Arabs, Islam and the historically eternal places, and also with his deep faith in the unity of Nature and History, which has been ruptured since Renaissance, like a new Lawrence

of Arabia, as he calls himself in self-sarcasm, Dimitris will come out from his encounter with the revolutionaries with 100% success for both. That is both for the West and for the revolutionaries.

And while philosophy seems to win for the moment, History will continue her course toward the grey west.

Because as Hegel says: Philosophy is not going anymore to hail a new Sunrise on the world.

Because philosophy always comes too late, like the owl of Athena that flies only when the night falls.(3)

Thus, despite the diplomatic success of Dimitris, Israel that has fallen into a state of hysteria will lose control and will start a mini nuclear war.

The personages of the novel are not separated in good and bad. For the first time in a thriller of this level, all the persons are good. Zionists, agents, CIA, FBI, Greek Secret Services, state leaders, ambassadors, secretaries, all (with the exception of some intriguing careerists) have good intentions. What pushes them to act as they act is the system that has gotten the upper hand.

And under this perspective, the book is pessimistic, because despite the fact that the personality of the president of USA is not intransigent and he supports the positions of Dimitris, while he has full awareness of the total destruction that will be brought about by generalized or even by small local war, which he wants to avoid, he does not manage to stop neither Israel that starts first the dropping of a nuclear bomb nor Pakistan that follows. The system acts autonomously.

Dimitris, although he is the person that will exclusively handle the crisis, will not want some exchange for himself. But within the general panic he will negotiate with a few words the integrity of Greece and of Cyprus! These two he will achieve!

A very good book that is breathlessly read despite its 645 pages.

1. Excerpt from the book, p.523

2. G. Karabelias from the presentation of the book "Hegel" by K. Papaioannou .

3. by K. Papaioannou "Hegel" p. 52

Notes:

1. Let us add to the above review that the book's 645 pages were not written in the months between Arab Spring and its edition (a record time for 645 pages it would be!) but were written eight years before it (which is a record too, but in something different!). In relation to why such books can't help to prevent or intervene in events in more timely ways we can only say that it seems that the above remarks by Hegel, underlined by the reviewer, do not only concern the fact that philosophers usually make post-dictions rather than predictions but also the fact that due to factors related to both human nature and the situation in which man finds himself, such predictions never become believable until belief is created by fact; as Oedipus had put it, one cannot avoid hot coals by just seeing them in his way, one has to first step on them...

2. Maybe later some context will arise where we will see regions of philosophy that formed interests of the thinker above before some of the events between 1999 and 2011 led him to books like the above...

Now let's move to a (well known?) thinker's reaction-intervention to other, both older and ongoing, crises and to the relevance of such efforts.

Is Mumford's "The City in History" relevant after more than 40 years?

"...Modern man's only alternative is to emerge once more into the light and have the courage, not to escape to the moon, but to return to his human center—and to master the bellicose compulsions and irrationalities he shares with his rulers and mentors. He must not only unlearn the art of war, but acquire and master, as never before, the arts of life."

Lewis Mumford ("The City in History")

In 1938 Mumford wrote "The Culture of Cities" many parts of which he included or extended in "The City in History" in 1961. One of these parts, with a different title, was the chapter "Brief Outline of Hell" which many critics considered, as he himself writes in 1961, "unduly pessimistic, indeed perversely exaggerated and morbidly unrealistic". And he continues: "Many were sure then that no dangers worse than chronic unemployment threatened the Western World; and above all they were certain that war and the total destruction of cities were both highly improbable..." in 1961, years after "the large scale-destruction of Warsaw in 1939 and that of the center of Rotterdam in 1940, the total destruction in five years of vaster urban areas and the extermination of large populations from London to Tokyo, from Hamburg to Hiroshima, the killing of millions of people-six million Jews alone- by Germans in their suburban extermination camps, by starvation and cremation..." this chapter seemed to have lost its relevance in the way predictions that were fulfilled but could not stop anything, lose it. We know that Mumford wished the following could become applicable as a writing on his tombstone "Herein lies a fool who would be happy if he learned that none of the predictions he so reluctantly made came true". We know that as the greatest threat to life on the planet he considered, as he was writing in the '50's, the "post historic man"* who would try to intervene in the biological evolution, too, and would do it with optimization criteria inspired by the laws of free market, and we know that as the only margin for optimism he considered the emergence, from "the race between destruction and education" in which humanity finds itself, of a new kind of universalized man, not the globally homogenized construct of electronic media that are sustained, through advertisement, by the competition of different brands of similar products that are equally useless. We already see companies promoting genetically modified food trying to beat, following the laws of free market, not only each other but also nature itself; and achieving as a result the undoing, in a few years, of equilibria that nature had stabilized through the experimentations of millions of years. And we also see "rulers and mentors" thwarting, through undisguised and extravagant destructiveness, wishful thoughts of analysts unable to see not half a century but not even half a year ahead. Upshot? Is the work of Lewis Mumford relevant in an essential way at this moment? That is, can its reading inspire some idea worth trying out with respect to the efforts, that we are all seeking, to prevent worse things that possibly are still not inevitable? Or the only thing still to do with the ideas, of even such a man, is what is essential only in the so called "days of innocence" (which every now and then not only seem lost but also seem as if, possibly, never having really existed). In those days, OK, it feels substantial to enjoy the work of any Mumford, e.g. about the city, with regard to how many details he discovered in the course of its writing, how carefully and painstakingly he substantiated them from which exotic sources, how original or even revolutionary in comparison with other researchers he had been, in how beautiful and pedagogic ways he presented his findings, how much food for further thought and how many sparks for further inspirations and sequels he gave etc. (And in particular, for this work, on the city, what would constitute success would not be academic recognition but, of course, the application of some proposal of his or of people he presented, to city planning) But in our days? Days like those of '38 in which Mumford in USA was writing "Brief Outline of Hell" and about which Sikelianos in Greece was writing, correspondingly, "the threat this time is that life can roll back to the pre-ontological abyss"? In what ways should we read

*A term coined by R. Seidenberg which we'll see Mumford use in its original context later.

Mumford in days for which A. Xenophanes of "The Perfect State. The night of the reptiles" finishes his book writing "The only hope I have that we are not entering an everlasting and very dark night is that my analysis is wrong despite my not being able myself to find where I am making a mistake". Mumford himself helps us in this by saying in which spirit he himself wrote this book of his (the fact that he wrote it in 1961 does not change anything since at that time he , with "the reluctant predictions of his analysis which he would be happy to see not coming true", did not only live "the days of innocence" like most of us in Western conditions, but also lived , through his concerns, the hell of today, as well; and he had already lived the previous hell (not only as he had outlined it before it took place but in reality : like an overseas spectator through seeing the second World War and Hiroshima; and in his immediate circle through the death of his son in one of the last battles of the war)), OK, he writes: *"Now, if the total picture were as grim as that I have painted in the present chapter, there would be no excuse for writing this book, or rather, it would be just as irrational a contribution as the many other irrationalities and futilities I have touched on . If I have duly emphasized the disintegrations of the metropolitan stage, it has been for but one reason: only those who are aware of them will be capable of directing our collective energies into more constructive processes. It was not the die-hard Romans of the fifth century A.D., still boasting of Rome's achievements and looking forward to another thousand years of them, who understood what the situation required : on the contrary, it was those who rejected the Roman premises and set their lives on a new foundation who built up a new civilization that in the end surpassed Rome's best achievements, even in engineering and government. And so today : those who work within the metropolitan myth, treating its cancerous tumors as normal manifestations of growth, will continue to apply poultices, salves, advertising incantations, public relations, magic, and quack mechanical remedies until the patient dies before their own failing eyes".* OK, in his book, Mumford means all this in the context of the monstrously gigantic megacities, not of the issues upsetting us today. As quack mechanical remedies he considers solutions like slum demolition , model housing, civic architectural embellishment, suburban extension, urban renewal etc. But , on the one hand, the issues are not only analogous at places but also mutually overlapping indeed; on the other hand , our passions for the issues of today's TV news must not make us forget that the problems Mumford analyzes belong to today, too, since they have not been solved and since, as we will see, his book also refers to city planning proposals which will be opportune in a valuable and indispensable kind of way for a long time to come. Lastly, one of the many components of his book and of the way in which it is written, not only transfers to our days but is also significant in the most pressing and urgent way at this moment. The book is written as to also function like a collective psychoanalysis of the collective man in the present moment of civilization with the help of a collective psychoanalyst and most lucid and wise mirror. Mumford does not base his final optimism on a wishful analogy with Rome but on things he does see and which he points out to us : these are the good points of the monstrously gigantic megacity whose bad points and their consequences in short and long runs of time he has analyzed throughout the whole book with a profundity of the most rigorous logic and with a sarcasm of the most humane lucidity. These good points, by being situated towards the end of the book , also function as a catharsis to de-depress us , but we cannot just mention them right off because they are of the kind also presupposing the previous analysis. So, for us to realize that the catharsis is believable as real and not just wishful , we too have to leave those good points for the end of our summary, a summary which , by the way, we allow to be very imperfect since no presentation of such a book can aspire to any degree of perfection.

Mumford , as a precedent of city and village, does not even consider the villages , colonies and architectural works of castors (which has drawn the attention of the "philosophical writings" of Marx's youth) but already the somewhat more permanent settlements groups of fish or birds make to secure food . As one of the first needs that differentiate the existing practical activities of human groups from those of animal groups, he considers the concern, checked in all paleolithic findings, to create a cemetery in all settlements. Man's respect for the dead makes the necropolis a nucleus of every living city, already since that time but also up to the closer times when the traveler entering Egyptian ,

Greek and Roman cities would first meet the dead ancestors of the inhabitants, and maybe also the remote mythical and deified founders of the city, before meeting the inhabitants themselves. Another repeating feature, already since paleolithic times, is the cave which, frequently, was found at the end of a difficult road and concentrated the artistic expression of its time and also attracted as a magnet, like sourcesprings and glades attracted too, the dwellers from around in regular intervals for rites, and was, as it seems, the ancestor of the pyramids, the ziggurats, the Mithraic caves and the Christian crypts, and also of the astronomical observatories, of the theater and of the university. Thus, part of the history of the city, according to Mumford, is that even before the city's creation, immediately after the human mind became liberated from immediate animal needs, it played freely with the whole spectrum of existence and began to leave its trace in caves, trees and sourcesprings. In the mesolithic period, maybe 15,000 years ago, man begins to store food, learning to salt it and smoke it, and is released from the hunter's everyday starvation anxiety, this releasing for him both time and energy for erotic activities and it may even be that a sexual revolution preceded the agricultural revolution that was led, in the neolithic age, by the woman, as is rather well known. The village became for the young a collective nest where they could play and be fed for extended periods of time, and the stored food supplies created a feeling of security for the adult too. Without this feeling and without the foresight and planning that were then cultivated, maybe the creation of city would not have become possible. The presence of woman became felt everywhere in the village and the similarities with her protective enclosures presented either by granary and oven etc. or, later, by the wall and the moat etc. do not need the belated speculation by psychoanalysis to be noticed, it suffices for that to know that e.g. in Egyptian hieroglyphics "home" and "city" also represent "mother" and that, in the somewhat more primitive constructions, houses, rooms and tombs have round shapes. Phallus and vulva, sometimes symbolically as obelisks and enclosures and sometimes quite literally, have a constant presence in the village. Also, fences protect from lions and tigers the children playing during the day and the domestic animals during the night. *"The village, in the midst of its garden plots and fields, formed a new kind of settlement: a permanent association of families and neighbors, of birds and animals, of houses and storage pits and barns, all rooted in the ancestral soil, in which each generation formed the compost for the next. The daily round was centered in food and sex: the sustenance and reproduction of life... Village life is embedded in the primary association of birth and place, blood and soil. Each member is a whole human being, performing all the functions appropriate to each phase of life, from birth to death, in alliance with natural forces that he venerates and submits to... Before the city came into existence, the village had brought forth the neighbor: he who lives near at hand, within calling distance, sharing the crises of life, watching over the dying, weeping sympathetically for the dead, rejoicing at a marriage feast or a childbirth. Neighbors hurry to your aid, as Hesiod reminds us, while even kinsmen "dawdle over their gear" ... What we call morality began in the mores, the life-conserving customs, of the village. When these primary bonds dissolve, when the intimate visible community ceases to be a watchful, identifiable, deeply concerned group, then the "We" becomes a buzzing swarm of "I's", and secondary ties and allegiances become too feeble to halt the disintegration of the urban community. Only now that village ways are rapidly disappearing throughout the world can we estimate all that the city owes to them for the vital energy and loving nurture that made possible man's further development."*

And running a little ahead in the story, we must remark that according to Mumford one of the most outstanding reasons why *"the Greek city, and Athens particularly, became a symbol for what was truly human and ran in two centuries through stages of evolution through which other cities had not run in millennia... and created a human ideal in which being human was more divine than being a god of the past"*, the reason for that was that the Greeks found the size up to which a city can continue to be a village. But let us return to the history of the city in temporal order: The paleolithic phase, with man as a hunter in the protagonist's role, was not replaced by the neolithic-agricultural phase, with woman in the protagonist's role, overnight. (Even now, on weekends, so many people become engaged in the paleolithic

occupation of fishing, a tendency that would be even stronger at those times). The adventurous hunter man who had become used to risking had no reason to lay down his arms, on the contrary he used them, e.g. to protect his fellow villagers or their cattle from being attacked by savage beasts that would never become domesticated, yet it would not be infrequent that his fellow villagers would need protection, from his attacks on them, but this protection they would not find. Regarding when the existence of war begins, the examination of various conjectures (of course there are no monuments dating from that time) tends to conclude that the first conflicts were not between different communities but within the interior of each of them and ended with the prevalence of the “noble” over their “peasants”. Thus the protector lives in the elevated, inaccessible and, by now, guarded citadel of the village (and the inaccessible shrine of the village sometimes has its own wall against its own, supernatural, enemies, and sometimes it is within the citadel, like the roles of the leader and the priest too sometimes are differentiated, sometimes they support each other and sometimes coincide. In the task of coercing others the two roles usually collaborate in ways that gradually help the scale of the imposition to take off). But the feats of the muscular strength and courage of such a protector-hero are not limited to the confrontation of wild animals but extend to the confrontation of dangers from the physical environment, through carrying out tasks more demanding than e.g. simple and usual cultivation. Also, his decisiveness and his imposition help at moments at which the council of elders would take too long to face an urgent situation (elders because in the times when only an oral transmission of experience was possible one became wise only by getting old and accumulating lots of experience). We already see clearly some latent possibilities that could, with the creation of towns, emerge and further themselves; e.g. an extended physical destruction, like a flood destroying cultivations, could only be confronted with works necessitating the collaboration of many villages and with the continuous work of people (who would identify with their superhuman protector in feeling heroes when they would give their all, if only to avoid the whip of their supervisor). In general, excruciatingly painstaking works are assumed that no small community would ever start, the aesthetics of the ceramics and sculptures is not equal to that of the paintings in the caves of the paleolithic hunters, but the pains necessary for hunting now extend to the handling of all the natural environment. The evolutionary changes leave no traces, only later crystallizations suggest what could have happened, the monuments show images from the unconscious that accompany the magnification of the human ego, the superhuman hero-idol we saw crystallizes as Gilgamesh and Hercules. In a few millennia we reach 3,000 B.C., witnessing (there are proofs for that) the simultaneous appearance of grain cultivation, the plow, the potter’s wheel, the sailboat, the draw loom, copper metallurgy, abstract mathematics, exact astronomical observation, the calendar, writing... We will better understand the nature of the change if we compare it to the change we are now living: *“We live in fact in an exploding universe of mechanical and electronic invention whose parts are moving at a rapid pace ever further and further away from their human center, and from any rational, autonomous human purposes. This technological explosion has produced a similar explosion of the city itself: the city has burst open and scattered its complex organs and organizations over the entire landscape. The walled urban container indeed has not merely been broken open: it has also been largely demagnetized, with the result that we are witnessing a sort of devolution of urban power into a state of randomness and unpredictability. In short, our civilization is running out of control overwhelmed by its own resources and opportunities, as well as its superabundant fecundity. The totalitarian states that seek ruthlessly to impose control are as much the victim of their clumsy brakes as the seemingly freer economies coasting downhill are at the mercy of the runaway vehicles. Just the opposite happened with the first great expansion of civilization: instead of an explosion of power, there was rather an implosion. The many diverse elements of the community hitherto scattered over a great valley system and occasionally into regions far beyond, were mobilized and packed together under pressure, behind the massive walls of the city. Even the gigantic forces of nature were brought under conscious human direction: tens of thousands of men moved into action as one machine under centralized command building irrigation ditches, canals, urban mounds, ziggurats, temples, palaces, pyramids, on a scale hitherto*

inconceivable. As an immediate outcome of the new power mythology, the machine itself had been invented: long invisible to archaeologists because the substance of which it was composed-human bodies- had been dismantled and decomposed. The city was the container that brought about this implosion, and through its very form held together the new forces, intensified their internal reactions, and raised the whole level of achievement. This implosion happened at the very moment that the area of intercourse was greatly enlarged, through raidings and tradings, through seizures and commandeering, through migrations and enslavements, through tax-gatherings and the wholesale conscription of labor. Under pressure of one master institution, that of kingship, a multitude of diverse social particles, long separate and self-centered, if not mutually antagonistic, were brought together in a concentrated urban area. As with a gas, the very pressure of the molecules within that limited space produced more social collisions and interactions within a generation than would have occurred in many centuries if still isolated in their native habitats without boundaries, or to put it in more organic terms, little communal village cells, undifferentiated and uncomplicated, every part performing equally every function, turned into complex structures organized on an axiate principle, with differentiated tissues and specialized organs, and with one part, the central nervous system, thinking for and directing the whole. What made this concentration and mobilization of power possible? What gave it the special form it took in the city, with a central and political nucleus, the citadel, dominating the entire social structure and giving centralized direction to activities that had once been dispersed and undirected, or at least locally self governed? What I am going to suggest as the key development here had already been presaged, at a much earlier stage, by the apparent evolution of the protective hunter into the tribute-gathering chief: a figure repeatedly attested in similar developments in many later cycles of civilization. Suddenly this figure assumed superhuman proportions: all his powers and prerogatives became immensely magnified, while those of his subjects, who no longer had a will of their own or could claim any life apart from that of the ruler, were correspondingly diminished. Now I would hardly be bold enough to advance this explanation if one of the most brilliant of modern archaeologists, the late Henri Frankfort, had not provided most of the necessary data, and unconsciously foreshadowed if not foreseen this conclusion.....I suggest that one of the attributes of the ancient Egyptian god, Ptah, ...-that he founded cities- is the special and all but universal function of the kings. In the urban implosion, the king stands at the center: he is the polar magnet that draws to the heart of the city and brings under the control of the palace and temple all the new forces of civilization. Sometimes the king founded new cities; sometimes he transformed old country towns that had long been a-building, placing them under the authorities of his governors: in either case his rule made a decisive change in their form and contents...In the final creation of the city, the "little city", the citadel, towered above the village and overwhelmed the humble village ways. No mere enlargement of its parts could turn the village into the new urban image; for the city was a new symbolic world, representing not only a people, but a whole cosmos and its gods".

Before going on to the history of the city in temporal order, let's also go to the last paragraph of the book, this really helps, and Mumford himself, before even starting the book, in the prologue, mentions things from that end, maybe because he knows that it would help us in our understanding if we knew what he was driving at. So let's see the first paragraph of the prologue and, after the dots, let's see the last paragraph of the whole book and, if it sounds to us overly poetic to inspire tangible optimism, let's keep in mind that we keep saving for the end the tangible optimism of Mumford because it is based on the analysis still to be carried out, and out of which we have only seen the beginning of the beginning. So: "This book opens with a city that was, symbolically, a world; it closes with a world that has become, in many practical aspects, a city. In following through this development I have attempted to deal with the forms and the functions of the city, and with the purposes that have emerged from it; and I have demonstrated, I trust, that the city will have an even more significant part to play in the future than it has played in the past, if once the original disabilities that have accompanied it through history are sloughed off.....The city first took form as the home of a god; a place where eternal values were represented and divine

possibilities revealed. Though the symbols have changed the realities behind remain. We know now, as never before, that the undisclosed potentialities of life reach far beyond the proud algebraics of contemporary science; and their promises for the further transformations of man are as enchanting as they are inexhaustible. Without the religious perspectives fostered by the city, it is doubtful if more than a small part of man's capacities for living and learning could have developed. Man grows in the image of his gods, and up to the measure they have set. The mixture of divinity, power and personality that brought the ancient city into existence must be weighed out anew in terms of the ideology and the culture of our own time, and poured into fresh civic, regional, and planetary molds. In order to defeat the insensate forces that now threaten civilization from within, we must transcend the original frustrations and negations that have dogged the city throughout its history. Otherwise the sterile gods of power, unrestrained by organic limits or human goals, will remake man in their own faceless image and bring human history to an end. The final mission of the city is to further man's conscious participation in the cosmic and the historic process. Through its own complex and enduring structure, the city vastly augments man's ability to interpret these processes and take an active formative part in them, so that every phase of the drama it stages shall have, to the highest degree possible, the illumination of consciousness, the stamp of purpose, the color of love. That magnification of all the dimensions of life, through emotional communion, rational communication, technological mastery, and above all, dramatic representation, has been the supreme office of the city in history. And it remains the chief reason for the city's continued existence". It is also worth here seeing the last phrase of "The Myth of the Machine" which he wrote some years later, where, among other things, he saw the machine in history from the time of the megamachine made of human bodies up to the time of the writing of that book (or rather, because of the possibility for happy end which he traced in that book, too, let's wish he saw the history not only up to now but also for many future years)

"On the terms imposed by technocratic society, there is no hope for mankind except by "going with" its plans for accelerated technological progress, even though man's vital organs will all be cannibalized in order to prolong the megamachine's meaningless existence. But for those of us who have thrown off the myth of the machine, the next move is ours: for the gates of the technocratic prison will open automatically, despite their rusty ancient hinges, as soon as we choose to walk out".

Before we return to the history of the city in temporal order, it's worth also seeing the, not poetic but practical, last but one paragraph of Mumford's book, if not for any other reason at least to also add to our, positive or negative, first impressions as to where he's driving at, the, be it oversuspicious, question of whether he's simply a daydreamer, and then see if his analysis will confirm this mistrust or will prove it unnecessary. It is not unusual nor unreasonable for a reader to take glances at the last pages of a book as he is reading the first ones, especially if it's thick. It's in this way we've read this book of Mumford's and it's in this way we are presenting it. The only "made up" thing is the mistrust we pretend we're having in him: we would indeed suspect, during our first back-and-forth leafings through the present book of his, that he might be a blissfully naïve daydreamer, but it is not the first book by him we've read so this mistrust was not really there. So let's go to his last but one paragraph and to a photo of his (to also see the body language with which he said the things we'll immediately see, and with which he expounded the analysis we'll see in the sequel):

"As of today, this resurgence of reproductive activity might be partly explained as a deep instinctual answer to the premature death of scores of millions of people throughout the planet. But even more possibly, it may be the unconscious reaction to the likelihood of an annihilating outburst of nuclear genocide on a planetary scale. As such, every new baby is a blind desperate vote for survival: people who find themselves unable to register an effective political protest against extermination do so by a biological act. In countries where state aid is lacking, young parents often accept a severe privation of goods and an absence of leisure, rather than accept privation of life by forgoing children... (Note: This also reminds Palestinian mothers shouting to TV cameras "We'll bear more children to become human bombs")...The automatic response of every species threatened with extirpation takes the form

of excessive reproduction. This is a fundamental observation of ecology. No profit-oriented, pleasure-dominated economy can cope with such demands: no power-dominated economy can permanently suppress them. Should the same attitude spread toward the organs of education, art , and culture, man's super-biological means of reproduction, it would alter the entire human prospect : for public service would take precedence over private profit , and public funds would be available for the building and rebuilding of villages, neighborhoods, cities , and regions, on more generous lines than the aristocracies were ever able to afford for themselves. Such a change would restore the discipline and the delight of the garden to every aspect of life; and it might do more to balance the birth rate, by its concern with the quality of life , than any other collective measure. As we have seen , the city has undergone many changes during the last five thousand years; and further changes are doubtless in store. But the innovations that beckon urgently are not in the extension and perfection of physical equipment: still less in multiplying automatic electronic devices for dispersing into formless sub-urban dust the remaining organs of culture. Just the contrary: significant improvements will come only through applying art and thought to the city's central human concerns, with a fresh dedication to the cosmic and ecological processes that enfold all being . We must restore to the city the maternal, life-nurturing functions, the autonomous activities, the symbiotic associations, that have long been neglected or suppressed. For the city should be an organ of love; and the best economy of cities is the care and culture of men."



Lewis Mumford

*For a 177-pages-long such excerpt from Mumford's books (starting with the ones above) google with Mumford thinker-for-all-seasons for our season
Let's move to some excerpts about education from several educators (including Mumford as an educator too)*

Relevant thinktanks/forums/agoras or useless “debate societies”?

“...You ask what happened at the Baghdad museum, OK, the TV played many times the scene with the guy running away with a vase and some people thought thousands of vases had been stolen, but it was the same vase, how many vases can Iraq have?...You ask if I myself went to Iraq to sell weapons to Saddam. Well, I don’t remember....You ask me what I say to the people in this room who were taken out because they shouted things defaming me. I say to them that I believe in Free Speech... You ask me if what we have is victory. To answer this I’d have to first see statistics which would show if the rate we kill terrorists exceeds the rate at which they show up...”

Donald Rumsfeld

“A more practical proposal is to help to change the culture of the domestic society enough so that what should be now done could at least be made a subject of discussion”

Noam Chomsky

“...children do have to be prepared for the economic world--but the invasion of the public school by mercantile values has deeply demoralized teachers. I’ve been in classrooms where the teacher has to write a so-called mission statement that says, “The mission of this school is to sharpen the competitive edge of America in the global marketplace.”

Jonathan Kozol and Mathew Fishbane

“If you want to rule address yourself to the idiot, they’re the majority...I would never entrust the state with my education”

Mark Twain

“Always obey your conscience, even if the state allows you not to... Dare to take your ideas seriously, because it is them that will shape you”

Albert Einstein

“...(you seem to believe)...that there is a moral difference between setting out to destroy as many civilians as possible and killing civilian unintentionally and reluctantly in pursuit of a military objective... Evidently, a crucial case is omitted, which is far more depraved than massacring civilians intentionally. Namely, knowing that you are massacring them but not doing so intentionally because you don’t regard them as worthy of concern. That is, you don’t even care enough about them to intend to kill them. Thus when I walk down the street, if I stop to think about it I know I’ll probably kill lots of ants, but I don’t intend to kill them, because in my mind they do not even rise to the level where it matters. There are many such examples. To take one of the very minor ones, when Clinton bombed ...the al-Shifa pharmaceutical facility in Sudan, he and the other perpetrators surely knew that the bombing would kill civilians (tens of thousands, apparently). But Clinton and associates did not intend to kill them... because by the standards of Western liberal humanitarian racism, they are no more significant than ants. Same in the case of tens of millions of others”

Noam Chomsky

(For another instance of the above google “Some matter more, David Edwards, July 25, Znet”)

“...This is not a prophecy: it is a factual description of what is already happening before our eyes, with murderous confrontations and infantile tantrums taking the place of rational demands and cooperative efforts. Yes: the physical structure of the power system was never more closely articulated: but its human supports were never more frail, more morally indecisive, more vulnerable to attack. How long, those who are now awake must ask themselves, how long can the physical structure of an advanced technology hold together when all its human foundations are crumbling away? All this has happened so suddenly that many people are hardly aware that it has happened at all: yet during the last generation the very bottom has dropped out of our life; the human institutions and moral convictions that have taken thousands of years to achieve even a minimal efficacy have disappeared before our eyes: so completely that the next generation will scarcely believe they ever existed”

Lewis Mumford
(in Vietnam years)

“-But, in this case, the results of the Army Research Office’s mission statement in harvesting scholarly work for better weapons design, it’s professors, scholars, researchers, scientific designers, etc., who have these choices to focus serious intellectual effort and to be so used for such ends, and who aren’t acting necessarily from direct orders but are acting more out of freewill.

-It's freewill, but don't forget that there's a general intellectual culture that raises no objection to this. Let's take the Iraq war. There's libraries of material arguing about the war, debating it, asking 'What should we do?', this and that, and the other thing. Now, try to find a sentence somewhere that says that 'carrying out a war of aggression is the supreme international crime, which differs from other war crimes in that it encompasses all the evil that follows' (paraphrasing from Nuremberg). Try to find that somewhere. —I mean, you can find it. I've written about it, and you can find a couple other dozen people who have written about it in the world. But is it part of the intellectual culture? Can you find it in a newspaper, or in a journal; in Congress; any public discourse; anything that's part of the general exchange of knowledge and ideas? I mean, do students study it in school? Do they have courses where they teach students that 'to carry out a war of aggression is the supreme international crime which encompasses all the evil that follows'?

So, for example, if sectarian warfare is a horrible atrocity, as it is, who's responsible? By the principles of Nuremberg, Bush, Rumsfeld, Cheney, Wolfowitz, Rice—they're responsible for sectarian warfare because they carried out the supreme international crime which encompasses all the evil that follows. Try and find somebody who points that out. You can't. Because our dominant intellectual culture accepts as legitimate our crushing anybody we like. And take Iran. Both political parties—and practically the whole press—accept it as legitimate and, in fact, honorable, that 'all options are on the table', presumably including nuclear weapons, to quote Hilary Clinton and everyone else. 'All options are on the table' means we threaten war. Well, there's something called the U.N. Charter, which outlaws 'the threat or use of force' in international affairs. Does anybody care? Actually, I saw one op-ed somewhere by Ray Takeyh, an Iran specialist close to the government, who pointed out that threats are serious violations of international law. But that's so rare that when you find it it's like finding a diamond in a pile of hay or something. It's not part of the culture. We're allowed to threaten anyone we want—and to attack anyone we want. And, when a person grows up and acts in a culture like that, they're culpable in a sense, but the culpability is much broader. I was just reading a couple days ago a review of a new book by Steven Miles, a medical doctor and bioethicist, who ran through 35,000 pages of documents he got from the Freedom of Information Act on the torture in Abu Ghraib. And the question that concerned him is, 'What were the doctors doing during all of this?' All through those torture sessions there were doctors, nurses, behavioral scientists and others who were organizing them. What were they doing when this torture was going on? Well, you go through the detailed record and it turns out that they were designing and improving it. Just like Nazi doctors.

Robert Jay Lifton did a big study on Nazi doctors. He points out in connection with the Nazi doctors that, in a way, it's not those individual doctors who had the final guilt, it was a culture and a society which accepted torture and criminal activities as legitimate. The same is true with the tortures at Abu Ghraib. I mean, just to focus on them as if they're somehow terrible people is just a serious mistake. They're coming out of a culture that regards this as legitimate. Maybe there are some excesses you don't really do but torture in interrogation is considered legitimate. There's a big debate now on, 'Who's an enemy combatant?'; a big technical debate. Suppose we invade another country and we capture somebody who's defending the country against our invasion: what do you mean to call them an 'enemy combatant'? If some country invaded the United States and let's say you were captured throwing a rock at one of the soldiers, would it be legitimate to send you to the equivalent of Guantanamo, and then have a debate about whether you're a 'lawful' or 'unlawful' combatant? The whole discussion is kind of, like, off in outer space somewhere. But, in a culture which accepts that we own and rule the world, it's reasonable. But, also, we should go back to the roots of the intellectual or moral culture, not just to the individuals directly involved.

-As you mentioned before, whether students are taught serious moral principles: At my school, the University of Arizona, there are courses in bioethics—required ones, in fact, to hard scientific undergraduates (I took one, out of interest)—which mostly just discuss scenarios in terms of 'slippery slopes' and hypothetical questions within certain bounds, and still none at all in the social sciences or humanities. Do you think there should be? Would that be beneficial?

-If they were honest, yes. If they're honest they'd be talking about what we're talking about, and doing case studies. There's no point pontificating about high minded principles. That's easy. Nazi doctors could do that, too. Let's take a look at the cases and ask how the principles apply—to Vietnam; to El Salvador; to Iraq; to Palestine—just run through the cases and see how the principles apply to our own actions. That's what is of prime importance, and what is least discussed.

-As a note to end on, there seems to be some very serious aberrations and defects in our society and our level of culture. How, in your view, might they be corrected and a new level of culture be established, say, one in which torture isn't accepted? (After all, slavery and child labor were each accepted for a long period of time and now are not.)

-Your examples give the answer to the question, the only answer that has ever been known. Slavery and child labor didn't become unacceptable by magic. It took hard, dedicated, courageous work by lots of people. The same is true of torture, which was once completely routine. If I remember correctly, the renowned Norwegian criminologist Nils Christie wrote somewhere that prisons began to proliferate in Norway in the early 19th century. They weren't much needed before, when the punishment for robbery could be driving a stake through the hand of the accused. Now it's perhaps the most civilized country on earth. There has been a gradual codification of constraints against torture, and they have had some effect, though only limited, even before the Bush regression to savagery. Alfred McCoy's work reviews that ugly history. Still, there is improvement, and there can be more if enough people are willing to undertake the efforts that led to large-scale rejection of slavery and child labor—still far from complete.....

-I think at this point it may do well for us to go over a bit the beginnings and evolution of the ideological currents which now prevail throughout modern social intellectual life in the U.S. Essentially, from where may we trace the development of this strong coterie of technical experts in the schools, and elsewhere, sometimes having been referred to as a 'bought' or 'secular priesthood'?...(And) given the, albeit, self-proclaimed notion that this new class is entitled to decision-making, how close are they to actual policy, then?

...(And) my feeling is that they're nowhere near as powerful as they think they are. So, when, say, John Kenneth Galbraith wrote about the technocratic elite which is taking over the running of society—or when McNamara wrote about it, or others—there's a lot of illusion there. Meaning, they can gain positions of authority and decision-making when they act in the interests of those who really own and run the society. You can have people that are just as competent, or more competent, and who have conceptions of social and economic order that run counter to, say, corporate power, and they're not going to be in the planning sectors. So, to get into those planning sectors you first of all have to conform to the interests of the real concentrations of power. And, again, there are a lot of illusions about this—in the media, too. Tom Wicker is a famous example, one of the 'left commentators' of the New York Times. He would get very angry when critics would tell him he's conforming to power interests and that he's keeping within the doctrinal framework of the media, which goes back to their corporate structure and so on. And he would answer, very angrily—and correctly—that nobody tells him what to say. He writes anything he wants,—which is absolutely true. But if he wasn't writing the things he did he wouldn't have a column in the New York Times. That's the kind of thing that is very hard to perceive. People do not want—or often are not able—to perceive that they are conforming to external authority. They feel themselves to be very free—and indeed they are—as long as they conform. But power lies elsewhere. That's as old as history in the modern period. It's often very explicit. Adam Smith, for example, discussing England, quite interestingly pointed out that the merchants and manufacturers—the economic forces of his day—are the 'principal architects of policy', and they make sure that their own interests are 'most peculiarly attended to', no matter how grievous the effect on others, including the people in England. And that's a good principle of statecraft, and social and economic planning, which runs pretty much to the present. When you get people with management and decision-making skills, they can enter into that system and they can make the actual decisions—within a framework that's set within the real concentrations of power. And now it's not the merchants and manufacturers of Adam Smith's day, it's the multinational corporations, financial institutions, and so on. But, stray too far beyond their concerns and you won't be the decision-maker. It's not a mechanical phenomenon, but it's overwhelmingly true that the people who make it to decision-making positions (that is, what they think of as decision-making positions) are those who conform to the basic framework of the people who fundamentally own and run the society. That's why you have a certain choice of technocratic managers and not some other choice of people equally or better capable of carrying out policies but have different ideas.....

-How crucial is it, in your view, that students particularly consider and understand...the function in society of the highly technocratic social order of the academic community?

-How important it is, to an individual, depends on what that individual's goals in life are. If the goals are to enrich yourself, gain privilege, do technically interesting work—in brief, if the goals are self-satisfaction—then these questions are of no particular relevance. If you care about the consequences of your actions, what's happening in the world, what the future will be like for your grandchildren and so on, then they're very crucial. So, it's a question of what choices people make.

-What makes students a natural audience to speak to? And do you think it's worth 'speaking truth' to the professional scholarship as well or differently? Are there any short- or long-term possibilities here?

-I'm always uneasy about the concept of "speaking truth," as if we somehow know the truth and only have to enlighten others who have not risen to our elevated level. The search for truth is a cooperative, unending endeavor. We can, and should, engage in it to the extent we can and encourage others to do

so as well, seeking to free ourselves from constraints imposed by coercive institutions, dogma, irrationality, excessive conformity and lack of initiative and imagination, and numerous other obstacles. As for possibilities, they are limited only by will and choice. Students are at a stage of their lives where these choices are most urgent and compelling, and when they also enjoy unusual, if not unique, freedom and opportunity to explore the choices available, to evaluate them, and to pursue them. -In your view, what is it about the privileges within university education and academic scholarship which as you assert in some of the things you've written, correlate with them a greater responsibility for catastrophic atrocities such as the Vietnam War or those in the Middle East in which the United States is now involved?

-Well, there are really some moral truisms. One of them is that opportunity confers responsibility. If you have very limited opportunities, then you have limited responsibility for what you do. If you have substantial opportunity you have greater responsibility for what you do. I mean, that's kind of elementary, I don't know how it can be discussed. And the people who we call 'intellectuals' are just those who happen to have substantial opportunity. They have privilege, they have resources, they have training. In our society, they have a high degree of freedom—not a hundred percent, but quite a lot—and that gives them a range of choices that they can pursue with a fair degree of freedom, and that hence simply confers responsibility for the predictable consequences of the choices they make..."

Schivone-Chomsky

(...About the skipped parts (mainly discussing whether the Nuremberg judges applied double standards like today's) the reader can google "Chomsky, Schivone, War and responsibility, August 16 2007")

"...they are the prey of compulsive fears and corrupt fantasies whose ultimate outcome may be universal annihilation and extermination; and the more they devote themselves to adapting their urban environment to this possibility [of nuclear war], the more surely they will bring on the unrestricted collective genocide many of them have justified in their minds as the necessary price of preserving "freedom" and "civilization". The masters of the underground citadel are committed to a "war" they cannot bring to an end, with weapons they cannot control, for purposes that they cannot accomplish. The ["nuke protected"] underground city threatens in consequence to become the burial crypt of our incinerated civilization. Modern man's only alternative is to emerge once more into the light and have the courage, not to escape to the moon, but to return to his human center—and to master the bellicose compulsions and irrationalities he shares with his rulers and mentors. He must not only unlearn the art of war, but acquire and master, as never before, the arts of life..."

Lewis Mumford
(in cold war years)

"...In the face of the threat that history may roll back to the abyss of the Arrhythmic, the Amorphous and the preontological, nobody can avoid assuming responsibility. Those poets who feel born on the pulse of the Universe have the additional responsibility to make Poetry take on her own horrible responsibility of breaking the causal deterministic sequence of events after first coming to know her own mystical origin in the infinity, the inner freedom and the biological God deep inside us, and from there draw strength to lift again the universal symbols of cosmic continuity of man with his similars and with the Universe, the symbols that are able to disperse his historical pseudoproblems and deliver man from all arbitrary myths of our age, scientific myths, mechanical myths, political myths, economic myths, artificial artistic myths, etc etc—that, through also exerting immense violence, have displaced man from the center of his responsibly creative self where is found the source of his freedom and have led to the dismemberment of the erotic core of man's experience of the world and have disintegrated society into heaps of unburied corpses—and place him again at the center of Life and of duration from where the world, placed at the center of our consciousness and not at the periphery, will bring down walls and open up horizons, not altogether imaginary, that have been waiting, since the beginning of time, to line up in perspective in front of us"

Angelos Sikelianos
(a little before the 2nd World War)

"...For those of us who have thrown off the myth of the machine, the next move is ours: for the gates of the technocratic prison will open automatically, despite their rusty ancient hinges, as soon as we choose to walk out... Modern man's only alternative is to emerge once more into the light and to have the courage not to escape to the moon, but to return to his own human center and to master the bellicose compulsions and irrationalities he shares with his rulers and mentors. He must not only unlearn the art of war, but acquire and master, as never before, the arts of life... For those of us who have thrown off the myth of the machine, the next move is ours: for the gates of the technocratic prison will open automatically, despite their rusty ancient hinges, as soon as we choose to walk out... We

know now, as never before, that undisclosed potentialities of life reach far beyond the proud algebraics of contemporary science; and their promises for the further transformations of man are as enchanting as they are inexhaustible...Man grows in the image of his gods, and up to the measure they have set. The mixture of divinity, power and personality that brought the ancient city into existence must be weighed out anew in terms of the ideology and the culture of our own time, and poured into fresh civic, regional, and planetary molds. In order to defeat the insensate forces that now threaten civilization from within, we must transcend the original frustrations and negations that have dogged the city throughout its history. Otherwise the sterile gods of power, unrestrained by organic limits or human goals, will remake man in their own faceless image and bring human history to an end”

Lewis Mumford
(in cold war years)

“...If we consider earth as a big living organism and the human species as a minimal part of its cells, we will realize, with fright, that the capitalist system has mutated the humans into cancer cells that are recklessly seesawing the branch on which we all are sitting. The prudent do realize that the planet is ailing. The earth is ill! Gravely ill! At one moment it’s burning with fever, at the next moment it is run through by shivers. Half of the earth is burning with wildfires, the other half is drowning with floods. The ones responsible, enjoying the cool of their air-conditioning, are talking about remorseless arsonists, about unheard of heat waves, about extreme phenomena of climate change, successfully faced due to timely actions of the governments. I close my eyes and dig into my mind to remember some of the coordinated actions of the governments having passed over my neck. Here they are:...(1...2...3...4...5...6...)... Maybe there’s more, OK. Imagine yourself a fireman looking, amidst so many fires and so many coordinated actions, to also locate and arrest the arsonists. Little mother earth, forgive us. I wish you come out a winner out of all this ugly adventure of your health. I wish to be sure that your chemotherapy will be successful. It’s only that, well, it’s only that I won’t be alive to see your lovely little hair grow back up and cover the sores we opened on your body”

Lazaros Gakilazos, officer of a fire brigade,
(in a letter to a newspaper he wrote after one of the last years’ wildfires in Greece)

“As of today, this resurgence of reproductive activity might be partly explained as a deep instinctual answer to the premature death of scores of millions of people throughout the planet. But even more possibly, it may be the unconscious reaction to the likelihood of an annihilating outburst of nuclear genocide on a planetary scale. As such, every new baby is a blind desperate vote for survival: people who find themselves unable to register an effective political protest against extermination do so by a biological act. In countries where state aid is lacking, young parents often accept a severe privation of goods and an absence of leisure, rather than accept privation of life by forgoing children...”

Lewis Mumford
(a little after the 2nd World War)



Thought forum

*“We should all try to live within our means even if we have to borrow to do so”
(Borrowed from a borrower who borrowed it from a borrower who...from ...from ...)*

Right now humanity finds itself on a race between universal education and universal destruction
Lewis Mumford (in the early ’50s)

One of the upshots that the discussion in the above forum leaves us with: Men with lucid common sense, honesty and concern, like the fireman above, are much closer in thinking, feeling and vision, and much easier to interact and meaningfully collaborate with men with uncommon sense, like Mumford, than with lesser intellectuals; and vice versa. This is one more reason for free direct education in the form of free direct communication of the public with excerpts of such megathinkers.

Hernán Espinoza's "Testimonio":

Testament:

I am not a writer, so no pretension of coming out with a literate piece, is remotely preset in my mind. These paragraphs contain mainly my opinion of what is happening in the world during the first decade of the 21 century, in itself a pretentious statement, and obviously would be full of all the biases and faults of personal opinions, then, if you are a critical reader you can stop here. But, should you find yourself entertaining questions that could be asked in the future, as : How come people didn't do something about stopping what was happening then? Did o they know what was happening? If they were people like us, what prevented them from acting? Then you may like to continue reading a bit longer. By the way, those questions don't pretend to be "original", unusual or of interest just for now, during my generations they have been asked more than once, the example that comes easier to mind, is with regard to the German people under the Nazi regime. It took years to understand that not all the Germans were in favor of the extermination of the Jewish, some were indifferent indeed, some were intimidated, but there was also an underground resistance which fought and acted with much courage, yet for more than half a century Germany has lived the guilt by association's infamy. The difference with what may be happening in the future is that while the holocaust was a terrible thing, what we are now afraid of, is a new period of species extinction, or at least disappearance of more of civilization gains.

By inexperience I have started with a disclaimer, and then try to discourage the unlikely but possible reader from continuing reading, so why I am writing this? I think it is because of having in mind a very special audience, to whom I want to send a secret message begging their forgiveness.

With a large group of elders of my generation, I am afraid there will be not much for enjoying life, or even to live with, for my grandchildren, now of ages spanning from 7 months to 7 years old.

They are 5 for now with one more to come if things work out for my daughter, during the next year. These precious human beings, besides being the most beautiful creatures I have ever seen, are "only special" because they are my family, but in fact, they are in the same predicament with millions of other children, if nothing is done to correct the current trends of climate changes. Scientist with extensive studies have demonstrated a clear possibility of reaching a point of no return in climate change in the next 4 decades.

By natural law we have to make room for the generations to come and no one can know how thing will turn out in the future, yet one can always try to predict things to come by working with what has happened in the past.

Placing those propositions together, one could, with significant certainty, worry that life, or at least civilization as is known to us up to now, may no longer be the same for the next generation.

By then, we will be gone and in no position to give an account of our responsibility for such things to have happened.

I am 75 years old and by statistical values alone I only have 5 or 7 more years to go, therefore such worries are crucial for me, because certainly I don't have a good chance to see if the changes needed to stop the catastrophic events science is predicting, are in fact taking place or not, before I go.

I have called this paragraphs my Testament instead of my Testimony, perhaps unconsciously thinking in my native language and the proximity of me passing away (Testamento= Last Will)

Feelings that I have nothing material worthy to leave for my family, at least I can leave a piece of my mind, in these disorganized thoughts. Or better perhaps, it is just an attempt of bearing witness (testimony) of what is evolving.

What follows is not other of my usual disclaimers or in any way excuse for my lack of knowledge, the world function and situation as led currently by the USA, are so complex that no living mind, with perhaps the exception of a few persons with extraordinary brains endowment, much training and great integrity, can comprehend them, Noam Chomsky and a few exceptional poets come to my mind.

What difference does it make that the biggest mess we human have made, is understood in its totality if such is possible? Not much I think, the small actions of many -the ants' work my late sister in law Paquita used to refer to, thinking in one of Sandino proclamations, are what could possibly change the self destructive course we are in for.

I mention these things only because confronted with the complexity of the problem, we, the ones in the lower rank of the intellectual scale, invariably get overwhelmed and our reaction is to be silent, but to be silent is to condone, which equals to be accomplice, and so to be guilty by association.

I better confess right away, that my brain's functions may be as low or lower than the functions of the brain, of who we believe bears a lot of responsibility for the crescendo crisis we are witnessing, with the current president.....

Our thanks are due to the Z-Space department of ZNet for being the way I got to know Hernán Espinoza with whom we became lifelong and brotherly friends.

“The next move is ours: the gates of the technocratic prison will open...as soon as we choose to walk out
L.Mumford

Stanislav Petrov — World Hero

He averted a catastrophe that could have shaken the foundation of the Earth for many centuries to come —and the future of humanity forever . . .

In 1983 in Russia, there was a man who would have been considered an enemy by the people of America. But as it turned out, he would become for them and for the world an unknown hero — perhaps the greatest hero of all time. Because of military secrecy, and political and international differences, most of the world has not heard of this man. He is Stanislav Petrov. The extraordinary incident leading to his heroism occurred near Moscow, in the former Soviet Union, just past midnight, Sept. 26, 1983. Because of time-zone differences, it was still Sept. 25 in America, a Sunday afternoon. During the Cold War at this time, the United States and the Soviet Union were bitter adversaries. These two world powers did not trust each other, and this distrust led to a dangerous consequence: They built thousands of nuclear weapons to be used against each other if a war should ever break out between them. If there ever were such a war, these nations would very likely devastate each other and much of the world many times over, resulting in the deaths of perhaps hundreds of millions of people.

It was Lieutenant Colonel Stanislav Petrov’s duty to use computers and satellites to warn the Soviet Union if there were ever a nuclear missile attack by the United States. In the event of such an attack, the Soviet Union’s strategy was to launch an immediate all-out nuclear weapons counterattack against the United States.

On this particular day, something went wrong. Suddenly the computer alarms sounded, warning that an American missile was heading toward the Soviet Union. Lt. Col. Petrov reasoned that a computer error had occurred, since the United States was not likely to launch just one missile if it were attacking the Soviet Union — it would launch many. Besides, there had been questions in the past about the reliability of the satellite system being used. So he dismissed the warning as a false alarm, concluding that no missile had actually been launched by the United States.

But then, just a short time later, the situation turned very serious. Now the computer system was indicating a second missile had been launched by the United States and was approaching the Soviet Union. Then it showed a third missile being launched, and then a fourth and a fifth. The sound of the alarms was deafening. In front of Lt. Col. Petrov the word “Start” was flashing in bright lettering, presumably the instruction indicating the Soviet Union must begin launching a massive counterstrike against the United States.

Even though Lt. Col. Petrov had a gnawing feeling the computer system was wrong, he had no way of knowing for sure. He had nothing else to go by. The Soviet Union’s land radar was not capable of detecting any missiles beyond the horizon, information that by then would be too late to be useful. And worse, he had only a few minutes to decide what to tell the Soviet leadership. He made his final decision: He would trust his intuition and declare it a false alarm. If he were wrong, he realized nuclear missiles from the United States would soon begin raining down on the Soviet Union. He waited. The minutes and seconds passed. Everything remained quiet — no missiles and no destruction. His decision had been right. Stanislav Petrov had prevented a worldwide nuclear war. He was a hero. Those around him congratulated him for his superb judgment. But he had disobeyed military procedure by defying the computer warnings. And because of this, he later underwent intense questioning by his superiors about his actions during this nerve-racking ordeal. Perhaps because he had ignored the warnings, he was no longer considered a reliable military officer. Presumably in the military it is understood that orders and procedures are to be carried out unflinchingly, without question. In the end, the Soviet military did not reward or honor Stanislav Petrov for his actions. It did not punish him either. But his once promising military career had come to an end. He was reassigned to a less sensitive position and soon was retired from the military. He went on to live his life in Russia as a pensioner. Because of Stanislav Petrov’s actions that day in 1983, the Earth was spared what could have become the most devastating tragedy in the history of humanity. Stanislav Petrov has said he does not regard himself as a hero for what he did that day. But in terms of the incalculable number of lives saved, and the overall health of the planet Earth, he undeniably is one of the greatest heroes of all time.

There is yet something else unsettling about this incident. Stanislav Petrov was not originally scheduled to be on duty that night. Had he not been there, it is possible a different commanding officer would not have questioned the computer alarms, tragically leading the world into a nuclear holocaust. As it turned out, this incident ended fortunately for America and for the world. But unfortunately for Stanislav Petrov, it ruined his career and his health, and it deprived him of his peace of mind. This is one debt the world will never be able to repay.

"The next move is ours: the gates of the technocratic prison will open...as soon as we choose to walk out
L.Mumford

A Soldier's Story

Vietnam vet George Mizo and his mission to help the victims of war

At the International Committee meeting in Hanoi last week, the Veterans Association of Vietnam announced that there are now 120 children living at the Friendship Village. Also, last week, Micheele Mason, Jeff Schutts, the Hatfield Group and some other local Vancouver activists created the Canadian non-profit for the Vietnam Friendship Village Project and have joined the International Committee to try and raise this year's operating costs at the village. For more information about about the Vietnam Friendship Village Project Canada visit the Cypress Park Productions Inc. web site at www.cypress-park.ca.

In 1967, an American soldier named George Mizo went off to fight in Vietnam. More than two decades later, he embarked on a new mission: to undo some of the harm caused by his country's war in Southeast Asia. The Friendship Village, a documentary making its world premiere on VisionTV Thursday, Nov. 14 at 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. ET, tells the story of Mizo's journey from war hero to peace activist. The hour-long film focuses on his efforts to help found a village for Vietnamese children and adults suffering from illnesses related to Agent Orange. The son of a Native American father, George Mizo grew up believing the best of his country, and felt duty-bound to enlist for service in Vietnam. He would later be decorated for his valour on the front lines. But Mizo's experiences also caused him to question his assumptions. "We were killing the very people and destroying the very country I thought we were coming over to protect," he told Vancouver filmmaker Michelle Mason. Badly wounded at Que Son in January 1968, Mizo discovered later that his entire platoon had been wiped out in combat. He returned home filled with anger, which he poured into protest against the war. As the years passed, his commitment to the peace movement increased. In the 1980s, he joined with other Vietnam veterans in speaking out against U.S. policy in Central America.

The seeds of the Friendship Village project were planted soon after. During the war, American forces sprayed more than 70 million litres of the defoliant Agent Orange on the jungles of southern Vietnam. Today, vast areas remain contaminated with dioxin, a component of the herbicide. The Vietnamese believe this toxic compound to be responsible for more than a million birth defects. (A Vancouver firm, Hatfield Consultants, is heavily involved in researching the impact of Agent Orange in Vietnam.) In 1992, Mizo and a group of other veterans from the U.S., Vietnam, Australia, France, Germany, Great Britain and Japan began work on the Friendship Village, a residential facility for victims of Agent Orange. Among his colleagues on the project: Sr. Lt-General Tran Van Quang, the same man who planned and led the Vietnamese assault at Que Son.

A place of reconciliation and healing, Friendship Village now serves more than 70 residents.

Fundraising for new construction, rehabilitation equipment and ongoing care continues. As Mizo says in the film, this remarkable project is proof that "we can make a difference – each and every one of us." George Mizo died in March of this year. He was 56.

"There is this natural safety mechanism—call it a violence immune system—that is present in human beings. The average human being is profoundly uninterested in killing others and the military has had to confront this for millennia." / David. Grossman

(From Jerry Brown's book about 18 interviews taken by him in his radio hour "We the people", the book is titled "Dialogues" and its chapter on Grossman is titled "**The Myth of a Killing Instinct**".)

The next move is ours: the gates of the ... prison will open as soon as we choose to walk out... Lewis Mumford
How many doors must a man walk out before you call him a man... Bob Dylan

Another soldier's story: **Alexandros Panagoulis'** (in junta's court martial in 1968 in Greece)

"...In one sense I was happy my bomb missed his car by one meter. I'm not a killer, I'm a fighter. And to fight against a junta doesn't mean to kill its leader who is just a puppet buffoon played by foreign interests, nor to kill some of its quite replaceable policemen or soldiers, whom I would not stand the remorse to kill. To fight a junta means to disarm it, and disarming it means that a great number of soldiers will disobey their orders, and somebody telling them to do so means he proves to them that it is humanly possible to stand the consequences... I deserted your army to serve my country, as I do serve it everyday in the torture chamber; you deserted your country by not deserting an army that receives orders against its country and its people. Alas to a nation not giving birth to a tyrannicide when giving birth to a tyrant."

"The next move is ours: the gates of the technocratic prison will open...as soon as we choose to walk out
L.Mumford

Regaining My Humanity . Still another soldier's story: **Camilo Mejia's**

March 2004, 28-year-old Sgt. Camilo Mejia turned himself in to the U.S. military and filed an application for conscientious objector status. On May 21, he was sentenced to one year in prison for refusing to return to fight in Iraq. He was released from prison on Feb. 15, 2005.

I was deployed to Iraq in April 2003 and returned home for a two-week leave in October. Going home gave me the opportunity to put my thoughts in order and to listen to what my conscience had to say. People would ask me about my war experiences and answering them took me back to all the horrors – the firefights, the ambushes, the time I saw a young Iraqi dragged by his shoulders through a pool of his own blood or an innocent man decapitated by our machine-gun fire. The time I saw a soldier broken down inside because he killed a child, or an old man on his knees, crying with his arms raised to the sky, perhaps asking God why we had taken the lifeless body of his son.

I thought of the suffering of a people whose country was in ruins and who were further humiliated by the raids, patrols and curfews of an occupying army.

And I realized that none of the reasons we were told about why we were in Iraq turned out to be true. There were no weapons of mass destruction. There was no link between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda. We weren't helping the Iraqi people and the Iraqi people didn't want us there. We weren't preventing terrorism or making Americans safer. I couldn't find a single good reason for having been there, for having shot at people and been shot at.

Coming home gave me the clarity to see the line between military duty and moral obligation. I realized that I was part of a war that I believed was immoral and criminal, a war of aggression, a war of imperial domination. I realized that acting upon my principles became incompatible with my role in the military, and I decided that I could not return to Iraq.

By putting my weapon down, I chose to reassert myself as a human being. I have not deserted the military nor been disloyal to the men and women of the military. I have not been disloyal to a country. I have only been loyal to my principles.

When I turned myself in, with all my fears and doubts, it did it not only for myself. I did it for the people of Iraq, even for those who fired upon me – they were just on the other side of a battleground where war itself was the only enemy. I did it for the Iraqi children, who are victims of mines and depleted uranium. I did it for the thousands of unknown civilians killed in war. My time in prison is a small price compared to the price Iraqis and Americans have paid with their lives. Mine is a small price compared to the price humanity has paid for war.

Many have called me a coward, others have called me a hero. I believe I can be found somewhere in the middle. To those who have called me a hero, I say that I don't believe in heroes, but I believe that ordinary people can do extraordinary things.

To those who have called me a coward I say that they are wrong, and that without knowing it, they are also right. They are wrong when they think that I left the war for fear of being killed. I admit that fear was there, but there was also the fear of killing innocent people, the fear of putting myself in a position where to survive means to kill, there was the fear of losing my soul in the process of saving my body, the fear of losing myself to my daughter, to the people who love me, to the man I used to be, the man I wanted to be. I was afraid of waking up one morning to realize my humanity had abandoned me.

I say without any pride that I did my job as a soldier. I commanded an infantry squad in combat and we never failed to accomplish our mission. But those who called me a coward, without knowing it, are also right. I was a coward not for leaving the war, but for having been a part of it in the first place. Refusing and resisting this war was my moral duty, a moral duty that called me to take a principled action. I failed to fulfill my moral duty as a human being and instead I chose to fulfill my duty as a soldier. All because I was afraid. I was terrified; I did not want to stand up to the government and the army – I was afraid of punishment and humiliation. I went to war because at the moment I was a coward, and for that I apologize to my soldiers for not being the type of leader I should have been.

I also apologize to the Iraqi people. To them I say I am sorry for the curfews, for the raids, for the killings. May they find it in their hearts to forgive me.

One of the reasons I did not refuse the war from the beginning was that I was afraid of losing my freedom. Today, as I sit behind bars I realize that there are many types of freedom, and that in spite of my confinement I remain free in many important ways. What good is freedom if we are afraid to follow our conscience? What good is freedom if we are not able to live with our own actions? I am confined to a prison but I feel, today more than ever, connected to all humanity. Behind these bars I sit a free man because I listened to a higher power, the voice of my conscience.

More soldiers' stories:

Google: Israel: "Refuseniks" Say They Won't Attack Civilians IRIN News 09 August 2006
"AWOL War Resister Sergeant to Turn Himself in Today by David Swanson
AfterDowningStreet.org 11 August 2006"

"...a point made in Steiner's book is that as it finally turned out the act of establishing a geographic Israel and not continuing its utopic existence in the "abstract city" sense ("etherialized city" as Mumford would call it) in which it had survived spiritually, culturally, humanly for millennia and had made these same aspects of its God (plus His abstractness) live and propagate among the other civilizations it came into contact with, and was both loved and hated by them for that, and was in closer proximity to its God through that love and that hate too, OK, it seems that the way this etherialized city and etherialized historical/metaphysical function tried to materialize in geography, even with the good reason of avoiding another holocaust, most probably pulverized all it had ever stood for and terminated whatever it still had to offer; this is no attitude like "a good Jew is a dead or crippled martyr Jew or a poor little protection needing Jew etc". It is an insight which applies equally and even more precisely in the analysis of how the etherialized city of early Christians became a city of sadists, inquisitors, crusaders, invaders, slave traders, conquistadores, holocaust accomplices, pious Mafiosi and pious nukers and Islamophobics when the celestial City of Early Christians materialized geographically, politically, institutionally etc"

Greek book review (by C. Yiannaras) of a book by Steiner recounted by memory by the present writer (J.A.)

Let's now remember that it was a Jewish wise man whose utopic ideas (literally u-topic, in the sense we've just seen), in a time he called "eclipse of God", were speaking of helpers of God and not of fatalists saying "God help us". Helpers of God do exist in today's Israel, let's see some not so very much older news:

1. Google: Gush Shalom activist Uri Avnery to act as human shield for Arafat
by Gush Shalom • *Monday September 15, 2003 at 11:46 PM*

Even Israelis oppose this insanity

2:Naboth had a Vineyard

Had they been there last Saturday at sunset, most Israelis would not have believed their eyes

In the middle of Havarah, a small village south of Nablus, 63 Israelis, men and women, young and old, were standing together with dozens of Palestinian villagers. Jews and Arabs talked together, drank juice offered by the hosts, exchanged addresses and phone numbers. The local children were wearing stickers brought by the guests, showing the flags of Israel and Palestine. Nobody bore arms.

All of them looked happy, and with reason: they had just finished a hard day's work at olive picking. They had been together under the trees. They were together when the settlers opened fire.

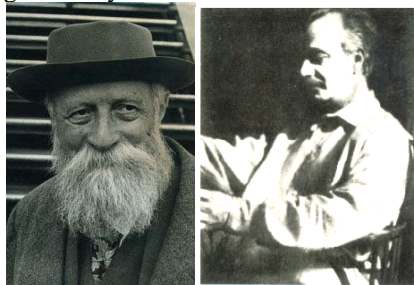
All this happened deep inside Palestinian territory, after two years of violent confrontation. A feast of Israeli-Palestinian fraternization in the middle of the bloody attacks. A human experience. A political act. A symbolic event. Since biblical times the olive tree has been the symbol of this country. It has sustained the peasants for many generations - Canaanites, Israelites, Arabs. Throughout the year, the peasant works in the grove that has been handed down from father to son, treats the trees, cleans the ground. During the few weeks of harvest, the whole family picks the olives - men and women, old people and children. The olives must be picked in time and brought to the olive press, where the golden liquid is extracted - olive oil. These are days of rejoicing. A whole family can live now on ten olive trees. Without them, they cannot exist. The harsher the occupation becomes, the more it prevents movement and denies livelihood, the more the villagers become dependent on the olive trees. Therefore the actions of the settlers are so dastardly. They try to prevent the harvesting, to steal the fruit or to burn the groves. Their actions remind one of one of the wickedest deeds described in the Bible, for eternal shame: the story of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21.):

"Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house, and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it, or, if it seems good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee..." The rest of the story is well known: Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, produced false witnesses, Naboth was stoned to death, Ahab got the vineyard. In the end, the dogs licked the blood of both Ahab and Jezebel. But compared to today's settlers, the wicked Jezebel was a model of righteousness. The settlers take possession of the villagers'

olive groves without even offering payment or alternatives. They just shoot. One Palestinian boy was shot and killed by them while picking olives, hundreds of others were driven out. Almost every Palestinian village has olive groves that border on some settlement or “outpost”, and that is now controlled by the settlers. When the owners approach to clean the ground or pick the olives, the settlers shoot at them “in coordination with the army”. The simple pretext: when the villagers pick olives near a settlement, they can see what happens there and threaten it. A monstrous perversion, indeed: putting a settlement in the middle of a dense population of Palestinians and forbidding them to work their land, because it is close to the settlement. In some cases the settlers were not satisfied with shooting, but invaded the groves physically, drove away the villagers and stole the olives they had picked. The prophets of Israel would have been shocked. Daylight robbery. And the army keeps silent. The intentions of the settlers are more evil than those of Ahab and Jezebel. They want to turn the life of the villagers into hell, in order to force them to leave. That is what’s called “voluntary transfer”, or, in simple language, ethnic cleansing. For decent Israelis, the conclusion is clear: they get up to help the villagers to pick the olives, before they rot on the trees or are stolen. They form a “human shield” against the settlers. During the last few weeks, hundreds of Israelis have done just that.

Last Saturday, 260 Israelis answered the calls of the various peace organizations (Gush Shalom, Ta’ayush, The Women’s Coalition, a sector of Peace Now and others.) They were divided between the villages that were in the greatest danger. My lot was to come to Havarah, a village lying in a valley between two high mountains. Its olive groves are dispersed on the steep slopes of the mountains, which are covered with rocks and stinging bushes. It was quite an effort just to get there. Here and there somebody fell down and was scratched. But all arrived. Around dozens of trees, groups of pickers, Israelis and Palestinians, started to work. The owners of the trees took advantage of the presence of the Israelis and worked quickly. Going against accepted practice, they hit the branches with sticks in order to get the fruit to fall on the green plastic sheets that were spread on the ground. Bad for the tree, but much quicker. Time was short. Everybody was working feverishly, holding the fruit-laden branches and filling buckets and sacks or gathering from the ground. Each olive was precious. Sportsmen and sportswomen climbed into the trees, filling hats and bags. The groups that reached the top of the mountain found themselves opposite the settlers of Yitzhar, a well-known nest of fanatics, dressed in their Sabbath clothes - black trousers, white shirts - and holding their guns. They threatened the pickers, shot into the air and at the ground (one of the Israeli pickers was hit by a clump of earth). The shots echoed between the mountains. Forty minutes later the soldiers appeared, and, after hugging the settlers, demanded that the pickers leave the area. They explained that the settlers were right when they opened fire, because the pickers were endangering the settlement. The pickers continued their work obstinately, defended by the Israeli “human shield”. But gradually they were pushed down the slope, closely followed by the settlers, with the soldiers in between.

In the other groves, the work continued without interruption. While it was going on, cigarettes were exchanged, conversations started, first haltingly, than more vividly, in spite of language difficulties. Some of the villagers spoke Hebrew and told about the places in Tel-Aviv where they had worked. Before darkness fell, the sheets were gathered and folded, people put the heavy, full sacks on their shoulders or on donkeys, and started the descent from the steep slopes, from terrace to terrace. The local boys leapt easily, the elderly and the guests moved more cautiously, holding on to bushes and supporting each other. Many happy people were there. Those who had faced down the hooligans were happy because they had not fled. The Israeli pickers were happy because they had combined a political demonstration with a useful act. The Palestinians were happy because they had saved at least part of their harvest. They were carrying the heavy bags on their shoulders. At the foot of the mountain, the sacks were put on donkeys and ancient cars that looked as if they were about to fall apart at any moment. In the end, an emotional farewell: hundreds of Palestinians, men, women and children, waved enthusiastically at the departing Israelis, in the village square, the alleys and from the windows - a whole village. The happy earnings of a day’s work.



Buber versus Gibran
The non-clash of civilizations

Addendum of July 26 2008:

Besides being an addition to the list of both simple and inspired, and sometimes utmostly hard to implement, practical proposals we saw in this file, the sequel is also a continuation of the pages 14, 15 of the previous file, on the nature and core of relevance that higher education really has.



Noam Chomsky Interviewed by Vincent Navarro

July 25, 2008 By **Noam Chomsky**

Source: [Progressive Summer University of Catalonia \(UPEC\)](#)

[Noam Chomsky's ZSpace Page](#)

[Join ZSpace](#)

Interviewed by Vincent Navarro. at M.I.T., Cambridge, Massachusetts, on May 13, 2008. Vincent Navarro is Professor of Public Policy at the Pompeu Fabra University, and The Johns Hopkins University.

Vincent Navarro: Thank you so much for welcoming us here.

Noam Chomsky: Delighted to have a chance to talk to you.

VN: We are here on behalf of the Summer Progressive University of Catalonia. As I told you before the interview, the University's intention is to recover the history of Catalonia, recalling the time during the thirties when workers and academics would get together in the summer to discuss matters of interest to them. This was, of course, forbidden during the Franco dictatorship. When the left-wing parties regained the government of Catalonia in 2003, they renewed this commitment to restarting the Summer Progressive University. We would have liked you to give the inaugural address for this reopening. I'm sorry you couldn't make it. We hope you will come to visit us there some day.

NC: I hope so.

.....

VN: Thank you. I had promised not to take too much of your time. Just one last question, a personal one. A lot of people in the world thank you so much for the work you do, but where do you get your strength? How do you carry on? Here you are, in the center of the Empire, speaking quite clearly to the powerful forces and being silenced, ostracized, marginalized. Meanwhile, all over the world, people admire you, read your work, find it extremely helpful.

NC: I don't feel marginalized in the United States. When I get home tonight I will spend five hours answering e-mail, and probably several dozen letters will be invitations.

VN: I meant marginalized by the power structures.

NC: I don't care about the power structures, that's not where I live. If I wasn't their enemy I'd think something was wrong. That's why I have that picture of the magazine cover [The American Prospect] I described earlier so prominently displayed.

VN: It's the best way to indicate you're doing the right thing.

NC: Yes, that I'm doing the right thing. It's partly that. But what keeps me working is things that are illustrated by some of those photographs over there [pointing]. One shows the worst labor massacre, probably in history. In Chile, a century ago, in Iquique, miners worked the mines under indescribable

conditions. They and their families marched about thirty kilometers to the town to ask for a slight increase in wages. The British mine owners welcomed them, showed them into a schoolyard, allowed them to begin their meeting, and then brought in soldiers and machine-gunned them all: men, women, children. Nobody knows how many were killed - you don't count the number of people that we kill - maybe thousands. It was a century before there was any commemoration of this. That [shown in the photograph] is a small monument, which I saw last year; it was put up by young people who are just beginning to break out of the iron grip of the dictatorship. It's not just Pinochet. Chile has a bitter history of state violence and repression. But now they're breaking out. So, yes, the atrocity took place, and now they begin to pay attention to it.

That one over there [pointing] is - you know what it is, of course - a painting given to me by a Jesuit priest. On one side, Archbishop Romero, who was assassinated in 1980. In front of him, six leading intellectuals, Jesuit priests, who had their brains blown out in 1989 by U.S.-run terrorist forces who had already compiled a hideous record of massacre of the usual victims. And the Angel of Death, standing over them. That event captures Reagan - not the cheerful uncle. That's the reality of the 1980s. I just put it there to remind myself of the real world. But it's been an interesting "Rorschach" test. Almost no one from the United States knows what it is; because we're responsible for the massacre, we don't know. People from Europe, maybe 10% know what it is. From South America, I'd say, everyone knows what it is. Until recently. By now, young people often don't know because they, too, are having history driven out of their heads. History and reality are too dangerous. On the other hand, they're now coming back. The Iquique commemoration was mostly initiated by young people, rising up, wanting to recover the past, recover idealism, and do something about it. So that's enough, I would say, more than enough, to keep me going.

VN: Thank you. It has been great. You have a standing invitation to come to Barcelona and Catalonia. Thank you on behalf of millions of people.

Google also with:

ZNet
What We Know
On The Universals Of Language And Rights

Biolinguistics and the Human Capacity
Noam Chomsky
Delivered at [MTA, Budapest](#), May 17, 2004

Brief Review of the Work of Professor Noam Chomsky
September 14, 2007 By Moss Roberts

"Exterminate all the Brutes":
Gaza 2009
January 20, 2009 **By Noam Chomsky**

Now who from "behind the mirror", as one of the expressions for "behind the iron curtain" goes, would be better company to Chomsky than the "dissident-for-all-ages for our age" Alexander Solzhenitsyn?

Text of Address by

Alexander Solzhenitsyn

at Harvard Class Day Afternoon Exercises,

Thursday, June 8, 1978

I am sincerely happy to be here with you on this occasion and to become personally acquainted with this old and most prestigious University. My congratulations and very best wishes to all of today's graduates.

Harvard's motto is "Veritas." Many of you have already found out and others will find out in the course of their lives that truth eludes us if we do not concentrate with total attention on its pursuit. And even while it eludes us, the illusion still lingers of knowing it and leads to many misunderstandings. Also, truth is seldom pleasant; it is almost invariably bitter. There is some bitterness in my speech today, too. But I want to stress that it comes not from an adversary but from a friend.

Three years ago in the United States I said certain things which at that time appeared unacceptable. Today, however, many people agree with what I then said...

A World Split Apart

by Alexander Solzhenitsyn

The split in today's world is perceptible even to a hasty glance. Any of our contemporaries readily identifies two world powers, each of them already capable of entirely destroying the other. However, understanding of the split often is limited to this political conception, to the illusion that danger may be abolished through successful diplomatic negotiations or by achieving a balance of armed forces. The truth is that the split is a much profounder and a more alienating one, that the rifts are more than one can see at first glance. This deep manifold split bears the danger of manifold disaster for all of us, in accordance with the ancient truth that a Kingdom -- in this case, our Earth -- divided against itself cannot stand.

Contemporary Worlds

There is the concept of the Third World: thus, we already have three worlds. Undoubtedly, however, the number is even greater; we are just too far away to see. Any ancient deeply rooted autonomous culture, especially if it is spread on a wide part of the earth's surface, constitutes an autonomous world, full of riddles and surprises to Western thinking. As a minimum, we must include in this category China, India, the Muslim world and Africa, if indeed we accept the approximation of viewing the latter two as compact units. For one thousand years Russia has belonged to such a category, although Western thinking systematically committed the mistake of denying its autonomous character and therefore never understood it, just as today the West does not understand Russia in communist captivity. It may be that in the past years Japan has increasingly become a distant part of the West, I am no judge here; but as to Israel, for instance, it seems to me that it stands apart from the Western world in that its state system is fundamentally linked to religion.

How short a time ago, relatively, the small new European world was easily seizing colonies everywhere, not only without anticipating any real resistance, but also usually despising any possible values in the conquered peoples' approach to life. On the face of it, it was an overwhelming success, there were no geographic frontiers to it. Western society expanded in a triumph of human independence and power. And all of a sudden in the twentieth century came the discovery of its fragility and friability. We now see that the conquests proved to be short lived and precarious, and this in turn points to defects in the Western view of the world which led to these conquests. Relations with the former colonial world now have turned into their opposite and the Western world often goes to extremes of obsequiousness, but it is difficult yet to estimate the total size of the bill which former

colonial countries will present to the West, and it is difficult to predict whether the surrender not only of its last colonies, but of everything it owns will be sufficient for the West to foot the bill.

Convergence

But the blindness of superiority continues in spite of all and upholds the belief that vast regions everywhere on our planet should develop and mature to the level of present day Western systems which in theory are the best and in practice the most attractive. There is this belief that all those other worlds are only being temporarily prevented by wicked governments or by heavy crises or by their own barbarity or incomprehension from taking the way of Western pluralistic democracy and from adopting the Western way of life. Countries are judged on the merit of their progress in this direction. However, it is a conception which developed out of Western incomprehension of the essence of other worlds, out of the mistake of measuring them all with a Western yardstick. The real picture of our planet's development is quite different.

Anguish about our divided world gave birth to the theory of convergence between leading Western countries and the Soviet Union. It is a soothing theory which overlooks the fact that these worlds are not at all developing into similarity; neither one can be transformed into the other without the use of violence. Besides, convergence inevitably means acceptance of the other side's defects, too, and this is hardly desirable.

If I were today addressing an audience in my country, examining the overall pattern of the world's rifts I would have concentrated on the East's calamities. But since my forced exile in the West has now lasted four years and since my audience is a Western one, I think it may be of greater interest to concentrate on certain aspects of the West in our days, such as I see them.

A Decline in Courage [. . .]

may be the most striking feature which an outside observer notices in the West in our days. The Western world has lost its civil courage, both as a whole and separately, in each country, each government, each political party and of course in the United Nations. Such a decline in courage is particularly noticeable among the ruling groups and the intellectual elite, causing an impression of loss of courage by the entire society. Of course there are many courageous individuals but they have no determining influence on public life. Political and intellectual bureaucrats show depression, passivity and perplexity in their actions and in their statements and even more so in theoretical reflections to explain how realistic, reasonable as well as intellectually and even morally warranted it is to base state policies on weakness and cowardice. And decline in courage is ironically emphasized by occasional explosions of anger and inflexibility on the part of the same bureaucrats when dealing with weak governments and weak countries, not supported by anyone, or with currents which cannot offer any resistance. But they get tongue-tied and paralyzed when they deal with powerful governments and threatening forces, with aggressors and international terrorists.

Should one point out that from ancient times decline in courage has been considered the beginning of the end?

Well-Being

When the modern Western States were created, the following principle was proclaimed: governments are meant to serve man, and man lives to be free to pursue happiness. (See, for example, the American Declaration). Now at last during past decades technical and social progress has permitted the realization of such aspirations: the welfare state. Every citizen has been granted the desired freedom and material goods in such quantity and of such quality as to guarantee in theory the achievement of happiness, in the morally inferior sense which has come into being during those same decades. In the process, however, one psychological detail has been overlooked: the constant desire to have still more things and a still better life and the struggle to obtain them imprints many Western faces with worry and even depression, though it is customary to conceal such feelings. Active and tense competition permeates all human thoughts without opening a way to free spiritual development. The individual's independence from many types of state pressure has been guaranteed; the majority of people have been

granted well-being to an extent their fathers and grandfathers could not even dream about; it has become possible to raise young people according to these ideals, leading them to physical splendor, happiness, possession of material goods, money and leisure, to an almost unlimited freedom of enjoyment. So who should now renounce all this, why and for what should one risk one's precious life in defense of common values, and particularly in such nebulous cases when the security of one's nation must be defended in a distant country?

Even biology knows that habitual extreme safety and well-being are not advantageous for a living organism. Today, well-being in the life of Western society has begun to reveal its pernicious mask.

Legalistic Life

Western society has given itself the organization best suited to its purposes, based, I would say, on the letter of the law. The limits of human rights and righteousness are determined by a system of laws; such limits are very broad. People in the West have acquired considerable skill in using, interpreting and manipulating law, even though laws tend to be too complicated for an average person to understand without the help of an expert. Any conflict is solved according to the letter of the law and this is considered to be the supreme solution. If one is right from a legal point of view, nothing more is required, nobody may mention that one could still not be entirely right, and urge self-restraint, a willingness to renounce such legal rights, sacrifice and selfless risk: it would sound simply absurd. One almost never sees voluntary self-restraint. Everybody operates at the extreme limit of those legal frames. An oil company is legally blameless when it purchases an invention of a new type of energy in order to prevent its use. A food product manufacturer is legally blameless when he poisons his produce to make it last longer: after all, people are free not to buy it.

I have spent all my life under a communist regime and I will tell you that a society without any objective legal scale is a terrible one indeed. But a society with no other scale but the legal one is not quite worthy of man either. A society which is based on the letter of the law and never reaches any higher is taking very scarce advantage of the high level of human possibilities. The letter of the law is too cold and formal to have a beneficial influence on society. Whenever the tissue of life is woven of legalistic relations, there is an atmosphere of moral mediocrity, paralyzing man's noblest impulses.

And it will be simply impossible to stand through the trials of this threatening century with only the support of a legalistic structure.

The Direction of Freedom

In today's Western society, the inequality has been revealed of freedom for good deeds and freedom for evil deeds. A statesman who wants to achieve something important and highly constructive for his country has to move cautiously and even timidly; there are thousands of hasty and irresponsible critics around him, parliament and the press keep rebuffing him. As he moves ahead, he has to prove that every single step of his is well-founded and absolutely flawless. Actually an outstanding and particularly gifted person who has unusual and unexpected initiatives in mind hardly gets a chance to assert himself; from the very beginning, dozens of traps will be set out for him. Thus mediocrity triumphs with the excuse of restrictions imposed by democracy.

It is feasible and easy everywhere to undermine administrative power and, in fact, it has been drastically weakened in all Western countries. The defense of individual rights has reached such extremes as to make society as a whole defenseless against certain individuals. It is time, in the West, to defend not so much human rights as human obligations.

Destructive and irresponsible freedom has been granted boundless space. Society appears to have little defense against the abyss of human decadence, such as, for example, misuse of liberty for moral violence against young people, motion pictures full of pornography, crime and horror. It is considered to be part of freedom and theoretically counter-balanced by the young people's right not to look or not to accept. Life organized legalistically has thus shown its inability to defend itself against the corrosion of evil.

And what shall we say about the dark realm of criminality as such? Legal frames (especially in the United States) are broad enough to encourage not only individual freedom but also certain individual crimes. The culprit can go unpunished or obtain undeserved leniency with the support of thousands of public defenders. When a government starts an earnest fight against terrorism, public opinion immediately accuses it of violating the terrorists' civil rights. There are many such cases.

Such a tilt of freedom in the direction of evil has come about gradually but it was evidently born primarily out of a humanistic and benevolent concept according to which there is no evil inherent to human nature; the world belongs to mankind and all the defects of life are caused by wrong social systems which must be corrected. Strangely enough, though the best social conditions have been achieved in the West, there still is criminality and there even is considerably more of it than in the pauper and lawless Soviet society. (There is a huge number of prisoners in our camps which are termed criminals, but most of them never committed any crime; they merely tried to defend themselves against a lawless state resorting to means outside of a legal framework).

The Direction of the Press

The press too, of course, enjoys the widest freedom. (I shall be using the word press to include all media). But what sort of use does it make of this freedom?

Here again, the main concern is not to infringe the letter of the law. There is no moral responsibility for deformation or disproportion. What sort of responsibility does a journalist have to his readers, or to history? If they have misled public opinion or the government by inaccurate information or wrong conclusions, do we know of any cases of public recognition and rectification of such mistakes by the same journalist or the same newspaper? No, it does not happen, because it would damage sales. A nation may be the victim of such a mistake, but the journalist always gets away with it. One may safely assume that he will start writing the opposite with renewed self-assurance.

Because instant and credible information has to be given, it becomes necessary to resort to guesswork, rumors and suppositions to fill in the voids, and none of them will ever be rectified, they will stay on in the readers' memory. How many hasty, immature, superficial and misleading judgments are expressed every day, confusing readers, without any verification. The press can both simulate public opinion and miseducate it. Thus we may see terrorists heroized, or secret matters, pertaining to one's nation's defense, publicly revealed, or we may witness shameless intrusion on the privacy of well-known people under the slogan: "everyone is entitled to know everything." But this is a false slogan, characteristic of a false era: people also have the right not to know, and it is a much more valuable one. The right not to have their divine souls stuffed with gossip, nonsense, vain talk. A person who works and leads a meaningful life does not need this excessive burdening flow of information.

Hastiness and superficiality are the psychic disease of the 20th century and more than anywhere else this disease is reflected in the press. In-depth analysis of a problem is anathema to the press. It stops at sensational formulas.

Such as it is, however, the press has become the greatest power within the Western countries, more powerful than the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. One would then like to ask: by what law has it been elected and to whom is it responsible? In the communist East a journalist is frankly appointed as a state official. But who has granted Western journalists their power, for how long a time and with what prerogatives?

There is yet another surprise for someone coming from the East where the press is rigorously unified: one gradually discovers a common trend of preferences within the Western press as a whole. It is a fashion; there are generally accepted patterns of judgment and there may be common corporate interests, the sum effect being not competition but unification. Enormous freedom exists for the press, but not for the readership because newspapers mostly give enough stress and emphasis to those opinions which do not too openly contradict their own and the general trend.

A Fashion in Thinking

Without any censorship, in the West fashionable trends of thought and ideas are carefully separated from those which are not fashionable; nothing is forbidden, but what is not fashionable will hardly ever find its way into periodicals or books or be heard in colleges. Legally your researchers are free, but they are conditioned by the fashion of the day. There is no open violence such as in the East; however, a selection dictated by fashion and the need to match mass standards frequently prevent independent-minded people from giving their contribution to public life. There is a dangerous tendency to form a herd, shutting off successful development. I have received letters in America from highly intelligent persons, maybe a teacher in a faraway small college who could do much for the renewal and salvation of his country, but his country cannot hear him because the media are not interested in him. This gives birth to strong mass prejudices, blindness, which is most dangerous in our dynamic era. There is, for instance, a self-deluding interpretation of the contemporary world situation. It works as a sort of petrified armor around people's minds. Human voices from 17 countries of Eastern Europe and Eastern Asia cannot pierce it. It will only be broken by the pitiless crowbar of events.

I have mentioned a few trends of Western life which surprise and shock a new arrival to this world. The purpose and scope of this speech will not allow me to continue such a review, to look into the influence of these Western characteristics on important aspects on [the] nation's life, such as elementary education, advanced education in [?...]

Socialism

It is almost universally recognized that the West shows all the world a way to successful economic development, even though in the past years it has been strongly disturbed by chaotic inflation. However, many people living in the West are dissatisfied with their own society. They despise it or accuse it of not being up to the level of maturity attained by mankind. A number of such critics turn to socialism, which is a false and dangerous current.

I hope that no one present will suspect me of offering my personal criticism of the Western system to present socialism as an alternative. Having experienced applied socialism in a country where the alternative has been realized, I certainly will not speak for it. The well-known Soviet mathematician Shafarevich, a member of the Soviet Academy of Science, has written a brilliant book under the title *Socialism*; it is a profound analysis showing that socialism of any type and shade leads to a total destruction of the human spirit and to a leveling of mankind into death. Shafarevich's book was published in France almost two years ago and so far no one has been found to refute it. It will shortly be published in English in the United States.

Not a Model

But should someone ask me whether I would indicate the West such as it is today as a model to my country, frankly I would have to answer negatively. No, I could not recommend your society in its present state as an ideal for the transformation of ours. Through intense suffering our country has now achieved a spiritual development of such intensity that the Western system in its present state of spiritual exhaustion does not look attractive. Even those characteristics of your life which I have just mentioned are extremely saddening.

A fact which cannot be disputed is the weakening of human beings in the West while in the East they are becoming firmer and stronger. Six decades for our people and three decades for the people of Eastern Europe; during that time we have been through a spiritual training far in advance of Western experience. Life's complexity and mortal weight have produced stronger, deeper and more interesting characters than those produced by standardized Western well-being. Therefore if our society were to be transformed into yours, it would mean an improvement in certain aspects, but also a change for the worse on some particularly significant scores. It is true, no doubt, that a society cannot remain in an abyss of lawlessness, as is the case in our country. But it is also demeaning for it to elect such mechanical legalistic smoothness as you have. After the suffering of decades of violence and oppression, the human soul longs for things higher, warmer and purer than those offered by today's

mass living habits, introduced by the revolting invasion of publicity, by TV stupor and by intolerable music.

All this is visible to observers from all the worlds of our planet. The Western way of life is less and less likely to become the leading model.

There are meaningful warnings that history gives a threatened or perishing society. Such are, for instance, the decadence of art, or a lack of great statesmen. There are open and evident warnings, too. The center of your democracy and of your culture is left without electric power for a few hours only, and all of a sudden crowds of American citizens start looting and creating havoc. The smooth surface film must be very thin, then, the social system quite unstable and unhealthy.

But the fight for our planet, physical and spiritual, a fight of cosmic proportions, is not a vague matter of the future; it has already started. The forces of Evil have begun their decisive offensive, you can feel their pressure, and yet your screens and publications are full of prescribed smiles and raised glasses. What is the joy about?

Shortsightedness

Very well known representatives of your society, such as George Kennan, say: we cannot apply moral criteria to politics. Thus we mix good and evil, right and wrong and make space for the absolute triumph of absolute Evil in the world. On the contrary, only moral criteria can help the West against communism's well planned world strategy. There are no other criteria. Practical or occasional considerations of any kind will inevitably be swept away by strategy. After a certain level of the problem has been reached, legalistic thinking induces paralysis; it prevents one from seeing the size and meaning of events.

In spite of the abundance of information, or maybe because of it, the West has difficulties in understanding reality such as it is. There have been naive predictions by some American experts who believed that Angola would become the Soviet Union's Vietnam or that Cuban expeditions in Africa would best be stopped by special U.S. courtesy to Cuba. Kennan's advice to his own country -- to begin unilateral disarmament -- belongs to the same category. If you only knew how the youngest of the Moscow Old Square [1] officials laugh at your political wizards! As to Fidel Castro, he frankly scorns the United States, sending his troops to distant adventures from his country right next to yours.

However, the most cruel mistake occurred with the failure to understand the Vietnam war. Some people sincerely wanted all wars to stop just as soon as possible; others believed that there should be room for national, or communist, self-determination in Vietnam, or in Cambodia, as we see today with particular clarity. But members of the U.S. anti-war movement wound up being involved in the betrayal of Far Eastern nations, in a genocide and in the suffering today imposed on 30 million people there. Do those convinced pacifists hear the moans coming from there? Do they understand their responsibility today? Or do they prefer not to hear? The American Intelligentsia lost its [nerve] and as a consequence thereof danger has come much closer to the United States. But there is no awareness of this. Your shortsighted politicians who signed the hasty Vietnam capitulation seemingly gave America a carefree breathing pause; however, a hundredfold Vietnam now looms over you. That small Vietnam had been a warning and an occasion to mobilize the nation's courage. But if a full-fledged America suffered a real defeat from a small communist half-country, how can the West hope to stand firm in the future?

I have had occasion already to say that in the 20th century democracy has not won any major war without help and protection from a powerful continental ally whose philosophy and ideology it did not question. In World War II against Hitler, instead of winning that war with its own forces, which would certainly have been sufficient, Western democracy grew and cultivated another enemy who would prove worse and more powerful yet, as Hitler never had so many resources and so many people, nor did he offer any attractive ideas, or have such a large number of supporters in the West -- a potential fifth column -- as the Soviet Union. At present, some Western voices already have spoken of obtaining protection from a third power against aggression in the next world conflict, if there is one; in this case the shield would be China. But I would not wish such an outcome to any country in the world. First of

all, it is again a doomed alliance with Evil; also, it would grant the United States a respite, but when at a later date China with its billion people would turn around armed with American weapons, America itself would fall prey to a genocide similar to the one perpetrated in Cambodia in our days.

Loss of Willpower

And yet -- no weapons, no matter how powerful, can help the West until it overcomes its loss of willpower. In a state of psychological weakness, weapons become a burden for the capitulating side. To defend oneself, one must also be ready to die; there is little such readiness in a society raised in the cult of material well-being. Nothing is left, then, but concessions, attempts to gain time and betrayal. Thus at the shameful Belgrade conference free Western diplomats in their weakness surrendered the line where enslaved members of Helsinki Watchgroups are sacrificing their lives.

Western thinking has become conservative: the world situation should stay as it is at any cost, there should be no changes. This debilitating dream of a status quo is the symptom of a society which has come to the end of its development. But one must be blind in order not to see that oceans no longer belong to the West, while land under its domination keeps shrinking. The two so-called world wars (they were by far not on a world scale, not yet) have meant internal self-destruction of the small, progressive West which has thus prepared its own end. The next war (which does not have to be an atomic one and I do not believe it will) may well bury Western civilization forever.

Facing such a danger, with such historical values in your past, at such a high level of realization of freedom and apparently of devotion to freedom, how is it possible to lose to such an extent the will to defend oneself?

Humanism and Its Consequences

How has this unfavorable relation of forces come about? How did the West decline from its triumphal march to its present sickness? Have there been fatal turns and losses of direction in its development? It does not seem so. The West kept advancing socially in accordance with its proclaimed intentions, with the help of brilliant technological progress. And all of a sudden it found itself in its present state of weakness.

This means that the mistake must be at the root, at the very basis of human thinking in the past centuries. I refer to the prevailing Western view of the world which was first born during the Renaissance and found its political expression from the period of the Enlightenment. It became the basis for government and social science and could be defined as rationalistic humanism or humanistic autonomy: the proclaimed and enforced autonomy of man from any higher force above him. It could also be called anthropocentricity, with man seen as the center of everything that exists.

The turn introduced by the Renaissance evidently was inevitable historically. The Middle Ages had come to a natural end by exhaustion, becoming an intolerable despotic repression of man's physical nature in favor of the spiritual one. Then, however, we turned our backs upon the Spirit and embraced all that is material with excessive and unwarranted zeal. This new way of thinking, which had imposed on us its guidance, did not admit the existence of intrinsic evil in man nor did it see any higher task than the attainment of happiness on earth. It based modern Western civilization on the dangerous trend to worship man and his material needs. Everything beyond physical well-being and accumulation of material goods, all other human requirements and characteristics of a subtler and higher nature, were left outside the area of attention of state and social systems, as if human life did not have any superior sense. That provided access for evil, of which in our days there is a free and constant flow. Merely freedom does not in the least solve all the problems of human life and it even adds a number of new ones.

However, in early democracies, as in American democracy at the time of its birth, all individual human rights were granted because man is God's creature. That is, freedom was given to the individual conditionally, in the assumption of his constant religious responsibility. Such was the heritage of the preceding thousand years. Two hundred or even fifty years ago, it would have seemed quite impossible, in America, that an individual could be granted boundless freedom simply for the

satisfaction of his instincts or whims. Subsequently, however, all such limitations were discarded everywhere in the West; a total liberation occurred from the moral heritage of Christian centuries with their great reserves of mercy and sacrifice. State systems were becoming increasingly and totally materialistic. The West ended up by truly enforcing human rights, sometimes even excessively, but man's sense of responsibility to God and society grew dimmer and dimmer. In the past decades, the legalistically selfish aspect of Western approach and thinking has reached its final dimension and the world wound up in a harsh spiritual crisis and a political impasse. All the glorified technological achievements of Progress, including the conquest of outer space, do not redeem the Twentieth century's moral poverty which no one could imagine even as late as in the Nineteenth Century.

An Unexpected Kinship

As humanism in its development became more and more materialistic, it made itself increasingly accessible to speculation and manipulation at first by socialism and then by communism. So that Karl Marx was able to say in 1844 that "communism is naturalized humanism."

This statement turned out not to be entirely senseless. One does see the same stones in the foundations of a despiritualized humanism and of any type of socialism: endless materialism; freedom from religion and religious responsibility, which under communist regimes reach the stage of anti-religious dictatorship; concentration on social structures with a seemingly scientific approach. (This is typical of the Enlightenment in the Eighteenth Century and of Marxism). Not by coincidence all of communism's meaningless pledges and oaths are about Man, with a capital M, and his earthly happiness. At first glance it seems an ugly parallel: common traits in the thinking and way of life of today's West and today's East? But such is the logic of materialistic development.

The interrelationship is such, too, that the current of materialism which is most to the left always ends up by being stronger, more attractive and victorious, because it is more consistent. Humanism without its Christian heritage cannot resist such competition. We watch this process in the past centuries and especially in the past decades, on a world scale as the situation becomes increasingly dramatic. Liberalism was inevitably displaced by radicalism, radicalism had to surrender to socialism and socialism could never resist communism. The communist regime in the East could stand and grow due to the enthusiastic support from an enormous number of Western intellectuals who felt a kinship and refused to see communism's crimes. When they no longer could do so, they tried to justify them. In our Eastern countries, communism has suffered a complete ideological defeat; it is zero and less than zero. But Western intellectuals still look at it with interest and with empathy, and this is precisely what makes it so immensely difficult for the West to withstand the East.

Before the Turn

I am not examining here the case of a world war disaster and the changes which it would produce in society. As long as we wake up every morning under a peaceful sun, we have to lead an everyday life. There is a disaster, however, which has already been under way for quite some time. I am referring to the calamity of a despiritualized and irreligious humanistic consciousness.

To such consciousness, man is the touchstone in judging and evaluating everything on earth. Imperfect man, who is never free of pride, self-interest, envy, vanity, and dozens of other defects. We are now experiencing the consequences of mistakes which had not been noticed at the beginning of the journey. On the way from the Renaissance to our days we have enriched our experience, but we have lost the concept of a Supreme Complete Entity which used to restrain our passions and our irresponsibility. We have placed too much hope in political and social reforms, only to find out that we were being deprived of our most precious possession: our spiritual life. In the East, it is destroyed by the dealings and machinations of the ruling party. In the West, commercial interests tend to suffocate it. This is the real crisis. The split in the world is less terrible than the similarity of the disease plaguing its main sections.

If humanism were right in declaring that man is born to be happy, he would not be born to die. Since his body is doomed to die, his task on earth evidently must be of a more spiritual nature. It cannot be unrestrained enjoyment of everyday life. It cannot be the search for the best ways to obtain material goods and then cheerfully get the most out of them. It has to be the fulfillment of a permanent, earnest

duty so that one's life journey may become an experience of moral growth, so that one may leave life a better human being than one started it. It is imperative to review the table of widespread human values. Its present incorrectness is astounding. It is not possible that assessment of the President's performance be reduced to the question of how much money one makes or of unlimited availability of gasoline. Only voluntary, inspired self-restraint can raise man above the world stream of materialism.

It would be retrogression to attach oneself today to the ossified formulas of the Enlightenment. Social dogmatism leaves us completely helpless in front of the trials of our times.

Even if we are spared destruction by war, our lives will have to change if we want to save life from self-destruction. We cannot avoid revising the fundamental definitions of human life and human society. Is it true that man is above everything? Is there no Superior Spirit above him? Is it right that man's life and society's activities have to be determined by material expansion in the first place? Is it permissible to promote such expansion to the detriment of our spiritual integrity?

If the world has not come to its end, it has approached a major turn in history, equal in importance to the turn from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. It will exact from us a spiritual upsurge, we shall have to rise to a new height of vision, to a new level of life where our physical nature will not be cursed as in the Middle Ages, but, even more importantly, our spiritual being will not be trampled upon as in the Modern era.

This ascension will be similar to climbing onto the next anthropologic stage. No one on earth has any other way left but -- upward.

Notes

[1] The Old Square in Moscow (Staraya Ploshchad') is the place where the [headquarters] of the Central Committee of the CPSU are located; it is the real name of what in the West is conventionally referred to as "the Kremlin."

Source: [Texts of Famous Speeches](#) at Harvard

Re-formatted in HTML by [The Augustine Club](#) at Columbia University, 1997

augustine@columbia.edu

Google also with:

What Do You Stand For?: An Appreciation of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Alexandr Solzhenitsyn
The Nobel Prize in Literature 1970
Nobel Lecture

SPIEGEL INTERVIEW WITH ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN

In an interview with SPIEGEL, prominent Russian writer and Nobel laureate Alexander Solzhenitsyn discusses Russia's turbulent history, Putin's version of democracy and his attitude to life and death.

Twenty years ago Russell Jacoby wrote “The Last Intellectuals”, of which a central point was that the solution of the making-a-living problem for intellectuals through becoming academics meant the end of their essential contact with the public in general, and the end of the role they could play in illuminating the public in special. In other words, to illuminate the public about anything or to be illuminated by the public about anything, to be a “public intellectual” as Jacoby put it, was not allowed under the conditions of academic propriety and peer review for tenure set by universities; and Jacoby convincingly argued on how this point explained why no Mumford-like intellectuals succeeded the Mumford-like* intellectuals of the previous generation. This point, unfortunately, does explain the numbness of the intellectuals twenty years later, i.e. now, a numbness explaining many of the very bad features of our days but it doesn’t explain why, fortunately, twenty years were not enough to make this numbness more effective and even worse, e.g. brainscape-mutilating and total. The answer is of course internet combined with optional paying, i.e. the solution to the problem, of direct contact between the public and the intellectuals, that was provided by sites in the internet sustained by optional contributions but not needing a fee to enter. And since, by indicative coincidence, Michael Albert and his friends started ZNet twenty years ago, we can consider the existence and role of all such sites as an explanation of how the chain and function of those intellectuals was never broken and Chomsky-like intellectuals**, plus Chomsky himself, continued to function. Let’s elaborate a little on that to apply its core and its moral to another similar context where it might be badly needed. If we got that point by Russell Jacoby right, in prewar years prices, payments, demand etc were such that one could live on book reviews and book writing (in the proverbial “genteel poverty” of the thinkers, of course) and in live contact with the public, both in the sense of mutual mind-feeding and in the sense of almost direct payment of a thinker by the public to live and think and give back substantial books, a process that helped thinkers keep functioning independently of conditions set by intermediaries of this relation, like bossing promoters, institutions etc, but later one could not function in this way and had to either enter the academia or (physically) die, and to enter the academia one had to publish or perish, and to publish one had to address peer specialists, not the public, and to meet their quotas for being effective and useful, not the public’s, i.e. to (metaphorically) die (in the sense of entering a closed group “writing articles for each other in order not to be considered as not expert-enough”, a self-feeding circularity which ultimately only helps in keeping some jobs in existence) and refrain from publicly expressing opinions as citizen rather than as specialist. Can the “ZNet way”, i.e. what we called above “the internet combined with optional paying, way” help return to the idyllic (=bookreview-freethought-bookwriting) days before the academia way? What can book writers do to be sustained (if e.g. they don’t happen to have had a training in a field that one can e.g. teach in a high school? (e.g. physics which, by the way, is the present author’s way to go by)) now that not only books but even book reviews need an editor? Open a site and ask every once in a while for donations to have free time to write more books? Even if this made sense, which it doesn’t, how would their site be known at all to begin with? OK, book reviews of people that the public doesn’t know by people that the public knows, would break this circle but wouldn’t earn anybody a living (and could also end in mutual paid blowjobs merely disorienting the public). How can one repeat, now too, whatever it was, in the past, that helped the public find, reach and sustain directly a live circle of thinkers reaching out to it? Maybe the only thing that has changed is the, now, pimp-like mediation of an editor (either of regular books or of electronic books), or the selfpimp-like intervention of pimpeditor-like criteria and goals and values of authors themselves. If the above external mediation and internal intervention were absent, things might be much closer to the idyllic days or even better. Namely:

One can write short, leaflet size, abstracts or samples of one’s books, include in a kit inside them a CD with the full version of his pages (with a number of photos or even music etc that no editors, now or in the past, could ever finance) and have them distributed in stands, and kiosks and consenting bookstores at charges of the order of pizza-delivery fee by offices of young bikers etc. The charge for the reader of the longest epic in this format would be not more, but maybe less, than comics and Mickey/Donald etc stories. To make payment really optional could be assured by writing on the back cover of these leaflets the site where one could download the whole thing (the CD) for free (in case the leaflet was distributed not in a bookstore but in a stand, in which the back cover might not be visible, the site’s name could be written on the front cover or on the stand itself if the kiosk agreed). Or one could distribute just the CD, at even lower price, either through bookstores or through music-CD

*We say “Mumford-like intellectuals” instead of just “Mumfords” in the plural because we believe that Mumford himself would still be unique and singular even if no end of the chain of intellectuals through absorption into universities had taken place.

**We say “Chomsky-like intellectuals” instead of just “Chomskies” in the plural because we believe that Chomsky himself is still unique and singular since, among other things, no weakening in his role as public intellectual took place through his being a regular academic too. For such additional extreme uniqueness a good expression about him might well be “Chomsky-for-all-seasons for our season”.

stores. One could also have book review magazines circulating in this format (since regular book-review magazines might want to include or exclude books distributed that way, but might be themselves much more expensive than the books they reviewed). Senior, well known, book reviewers sending readers to the sites of, initially, less well known authors, might be intellectuals that just hold in esteem the content of those books and the role of this content for the individual reader and for society's brainscape. But sites are kept at trivial cost, so why is the leaflet for a price needed at all? Well, some people have a bad feeling of being watched by invisible electronic big brothers when they download and some, both among the same and other, people do feel like rewarding/helping the writers and the distributors for their effort; also like rewarding/helping the editors too, if any of them show up to work under these rules. These rules are not anything new, they're the rules by which sidewalk performers (musicians, magicians, acrobats, actors,) pass around the hat: all bystanders watch the show, some pay; more than the ones who pay are affected by it (just like fewer than the people who do pay an expensive theater's ticket are affected by a play). So no complaint from anybody. Well, on sidewalk one pays according to how much he can afford and how much he liked what he watched, not in advance. But a comics is so cheap that one just has to say, in retrospect, that if he liked it very much he just buys more than one and gives the rest as gifts to friends (of course he can also give copies he himself makes of the CD he bought or he was given by somebody else for free). The plan just proposed, which if shared by many authors is of course a plan for "publisher suicide for the sake of free, or at least less expensive, and higher quality education for wide audiences", goes hand in hand with a proposal in the direction of making cheap book-shape laptops without a keyboard, with only page-change button, as easily useable as a book one leafs sitting in an armchair, i.e. laptops that are friendly to e.g. people of the non computer-friendly generation (and also are friendly to their pocket. Maybe "old timers" do not want to also buy technology they're not going to need if they only want to use a PC for reading CD's. Without reference to keyboard & modem wouldn't such reading be cheaper?) Also, one doesn't need to be an old timer to prefer to use less paper and to want to be more educated, less expensively, and by less profit-oriented authors and publishers. Also, rewritable CD's, for books and newspapers, are more easily recycled than paper. Overall, this is not a proposal for suicide to publishers, just a proposal for suicide of many functions of them. They can very well be reborn in new form and stay alive, we repeat. So the reading gadget proposal is a proposal to all editors and concerning all books. Technical upshot: A reading gadget can help towards the return of the idyllic days before "the end of the intellectuals" (almost) as much as the contents of the books to be cheaply read through it.

Acknowledgements:

R. Jacoby's "Social Amnesia" was given to me, decades ago, by Eleanna; and his "The Last Intellectuals" was given to me, some days ago, by Vasilis (the same friend whom I have thanked in other pages for giving me Mumford books). For their so illuminating reading suggestions, also timed so meaningfully, whether as criticism or encouragement or education, I have the warmest gratitude.

John Alevizos 2007

2011 PS1: Both the similarities and differences of the above functions with the ones performable by "Kindle" are obvious. Same goes about iPad. Also we hear DVD-readers' prices have gone down to below one tenth of laptops'. Also with a little help from one's friends who have a PC and an internet connection one can have pdf-s downloaded to, finally, a DVD readable on TV. Last but not least: We thank our friend Hernán of p.15 for not only telling us about Kindle but also gifting us one!!! .

Final Upshot: The above technicalities are now obsolete by way of being long known, so let's just concentrate on 1. finding what of substance does exist and must be propagated, not on how to propagate it 2. what is missing and we must find if we can, or propagate if we can locate someone who finds something substantial. But let's also give a brief and simple recapitulation of "genteel poverty", "beggar's fee" etc to take the chance to add what qualification might be needed with the crisis that did not exist in the above 2007 date:

...A site or blog can be free-of-charge as far as downloading is concerned but accept donations to help the blogger subsist (in genteel poverty) or at least have some free time to find things he considers substantial to the reader. The reader can think after some time if whatever points remain with him/her and still offer him/her something were due to the sources of the blog e.g. Theodorakis or Chomsky or ...and, after looking them up, he/she may send them, or their editors, or their orchestras etc a buck or euro or more. If they think they owe something to their expositor too, and if they also think that expositors should be entitled to such privileges, then they can send him what they feel pleasure to send (never so much that pleasure stops being pleasurable!). And in a time of crisis, if one thinks that the blogger just has the luxury to be spared difficulties on others' expenses like a parasite, then he/she should just not send the blogger anything at all even if he/she has some spare change....

One effort to answer
some of the questions of (Western only?) common sense
to the “Reimagining society project” that is hosted by Zcommunications

“No new revolutionary movement has any chance of success, and deserves none, unless it can develop an understanding of contemporary society and a vision of a future social order that is persuasive to a large majority of the population¹ ... Goals and organizational forms of any serious revolutionary left political project must take shape through active participation in popular struggle and social reconstruction. A genuine radical culture can be created only through the spiritual transformation of great masses of people, the essential feature of any social revolution that is to extend the possibilities of human creativity and freedom²... A.. practical proposal is to help to change the culture of the domestic society enough so that what should be now done could at least be made a subject of discussion³” Noam Chomsky

“Certainly, worship of the past
is not recovery of history but negation of history;
real history is not recovered
unless it enters a new life
in a new mould”
Lewis Mumford⁴

“...we would like to keep an open mind...
—by an open mind I do not mean an empty mind—
I mean that perhaps if we consider alternative theories
which do not seem a priori justified and we calculate
...we might discover that’s the way it really is”
Richard Feynman⁵

In many senses that are obvious, and many senses that will be commented in the sequel, the project of Re-imagining society has a potential role that could have major consequences in a way that begins to become possible and has never been possible so far; and it lacks some elements in ways that are so conspicuous, and so possible to fill in, that it tempts one to even phrase this as “part of the project’s strength lies in the honesty and naiveté of both what is in it and what’s missing”

Let’s start from questions that are very familiar, to at least people frequenting places like ZNet, sketch the familiar answers and proceed to the ones that are more central both to these people and to many outsiders: What’s the meaning of Re- in the project’s Re-imagining? That the project is about imagining a different society right from the start? Or that we (and who’s “we”?) have already imagined it in the past? Or both? And how about “-imagining”? To this last one, ZNet frequenters might bring to mind, as answers, things like Buber’s expression “imagining the real”, or the title of Spannos’ book “Real Utopia”, or Oscar Wilde’s line “A map of the world without Utopia on it, doesn’t deserve a second glance”, a line liked by Mumford who considered that the greatest examples of progress in human history were based on visions of alternative worlds that were worked out to find which deserved to be examples to move towards and which away from (and who also happened to, thus, see 1492 and 1917 as very similar both in the way they both made come true the old dream of trying to implement visions for society worked out by deep thinkers, and in the way they both unleashed an orgy of violence⁶, on the indigenous populations that made their new, and so resourceful, Eden less uninhabited, and on their dissidents, respectively). And why does Chomsky contribute to the project a 1970 article of his titled “Notes on Anarchism”? To give us academic background, be it for the not just academic reason of not losing time rediscovering the wheel? Or for reasons related to side effects related to violence just mentioned? Or for reasons like in Mumford’s excerpt among the mottos? Or to first give us background on what worked and what failed in all efforts, in the history so far, to displace, replace or circumvent the state and its side effects without also regenerating those side effects anew, and to and then give us food for thought to all think together whether they also applied to the proposals of the present project (e.g. Albert’s well known proposal (i.e. Parecon) to which we’re coming in a moment) or this time some new elements gave new hopes, or some new elements also gave new impasses? We’ll see parts of it functioning as answers, like also the parts of his 1969 book selected by Paul Street in his article for the Re-imagining project⁷ but now let’s just include Chomsky’s own ending paragraph: “It is not very difficult to rephrase these remarks so that they become appropriate to the imperial systems of 1970. The problem of “freeing man from the curse of economic exploitation and political and social enslavement” remains the problem of our time. As long as this is so, the doctrines and the revolutionary practice of libertarian socialism will serve as an inspiration and guide.”

To conclude the issue of Re- in the project's Reimagining , in Chomsky's "rephrasing", in Paul Street's "Recovering" (in the title of his article mentioned, see again note 7) let's just read again the two mottos right after Chomsky's to see the way someone versed in history as deeply as Mumford is turned to the present, and the way someone who is an innovator turned to new alternatives as much as Feynman sees what a mind non-empty of experience is. And to connect to the more central and more commonsense questions let's ask the question some pieces of which are frequently asked first in the comments by readers of the presentations of the alternative of participatory economics by Albert: "Suppose Parecon's answer can take excellent care, and for quite along time, of all the problems that all other economics systems so far have had so much trouble solving. This still answers only half of the real concern. The other half is: How will it enter legislation? How will big owners give up so much property and how will state's institutions give up so much power? Just by imagining what a good future Parecon will provide for all? Or by, hopefully, becoming jealous of the, thus, contagious, happiness through non-greedy prosperity of small firms around that might have started its application?"

So let's move to the next question, that is equally central, naïve and commonsensical, but is more frequently asked because it does not presuppose one's having already heard of a proposal such as Parecon or any other; and thus a question more frequently snubbed or ridiculed by analysts and activists who are fed up with the unreality of both parts of the expression "representative democracy". Here's one way to phrase it: "We live in a world of global ecological problems, multinational entities doing the decision making, and mechanisms where, even for local problems and decisions, institutions and parameters of grand or even global scales are appealed to, both for actual reasons and for reasons of concealment. Politicians are not more equipped to face such challenges than their voters and public dialog, or dialog within parliaments as reported by media, is hardly illuminating or conducive to progress. Appointed panels of experts enjoy only a tiny fraction of trust and so the question arises: Why isn't part of the broad, or even nationwide, briefing that the state and the media consider themselves obliged to offer to the public, some periodic presentation of the questions several panels would have for some politicians and for their expert aides, and out of which the public would choose some panels to represent them? (e.g. maybe the public would like to see the answers of Bush and Cheney or of Obama, and of their panels of specialists, to some questions proposed for asking by Monbiot, Stiglitz. Akerlof and Chomsky")...*Of course to this , too, applies the objection "And how would one pass legislation to make such public dialog mandatory to politicians and media?"*, but let's first complete the question: ...Presumably, these dialogs, if continued for some time, giving the public more background and training in thinking about issues that are relevant , or even urgent, would also make the voters more ready to recognize for their worth candidates proposing completely different ways to deal with crises and impasses; and would make people with such proposals more probable to think about proposing them for more immediate implementation and not for something more eventual for whenever may, just may, be a correct time. The final question: Why is this "parliamentary" road to be snubbed (e.g. as revisionist), not tried, doomed from the outset, skipped in favor of more drastic measures towards which we must not lose time in unnecessary experiments etc etc?". The usual and main, among rational, answers to it is that probably numbers don't come out right. The number of people educated in this or other similar ways would remain subcritical for what would be needed for any change. After all, interactiveness between education and action may have worked in ancient Athens, where people were given, for free, top courses in both political criticism and self-knowledge in the form of comedies and satires, and high drama about man's "beckoning potential selves whose imitation in moments of crisis would help him overpass the mediocrity of the safe and the habitual" (Mumford's phrase for the function of the tragedies' contribution to the self-knowledge of the citizens of Athens) but very crucial differences ruin any hopeful analogy: Besides the way in which size allowed immediate, rather than representative, democracy (a difference which, OK, there are people who do not consider prohibitive but try to work out ways for how the advent of the internet can undo) there is the following crucial difference spelled out in the by K. Papaioannou in France in the

'50s⁸: the weapons that the state would use in a war, if we except besieging machines, were just the sum total of the weapons the citizens kept at home (so there was no room for politicians' jokes like "let people demonstrate as much as they want, as long as they're paying their taxes". Of course we're not saying that if all citizens kept a rifle at home, democracy would become better! For one thing the state now can counter any group of them with weapons infinitely more powerful than the sum total of their rifles; for another, as realized already by Hegel who also wrote it, if not earlier, and as propagated by the film "The last samurai" featuring Tom Cruise, the advent of gunpowder equated thugs and bravehearts, since any of the former could kill any of the latter from a distance, so a democracy of one rifle per household would not exactly implement some noble analog of the interactive role of theatrocentric political education, but just Mad Max values or Columbine massacre barbarity).

To start moving to some answers, a more recent example would be very illuminating: Starting from some initial analysis and vision by Kropotkin, and to avoid some impasses in urban planning predicted by Geddes, Howard, in the beginnings of the 20th century worked out a plan for what was later called "greenbelt towns" (of around 30,000 people) and for the organization of small (one-digit) numbers of them into confederations. Some of those town were indeed started in England, and later elsewhere too, with very good consequences for the life and happiness of the people who lived in them. Their construction in US met very vehement opposition from the automobile industry, since one of their features (and *raison d'être*) was to cover almost all transportation needs through rapid and dense public transportation systems (Actually, some days ago, this July, the newspapers wrote about a proposal to build some more towns like that in England, in connection to the energy crisis⁹) Mumford, liking the idea a lot, and wanting to help it in his way, wrote, in the '60s, a book of more than 600 pages, "The City in History", placing the project in the broader or, more exactly, immense (but not labyrinthine) context of the history of towns since the times of the agricultural revolution and of the neolithic villages to the creation of the first huge Babylons and then Greek poleis, to the cities of the Roman and Medieval times, ...to the cities after the industrial revolution, and to the present L.A.s, New Yorks, and the conurbations; also in the context of the civilizations and cultures that lived in those towns and in the pathogenies and saving graces that have survived to our days and play a role in our current life and in determining our future; also in the context of his own overflowing spirituality, probably not unrelated to his quite rationally argued preference for realistic models inspired from biology, rather than for crude pseudoanalogs from physics in things like analyses of economics and city planning; and all that done in a language and format accessible to the layman, not needing any prerequisite whatsoever, but constituting itself an educational experience equivalent to many university courses, and providing the general reader with a background helping him to many other things that would otherwise need prerequisites in order to be read. As one might guess the point of mentioning this well known story in the present context too is to just say "imagine what boost in both thinking/clarity/inspiration/ideas and enthusiasm/morale it would be if Mumford lived and placed the project of "Reimagining society" in a wider context too, maybe himself feeling this was an even better suited plan to express all his vision. So? Should we say "Unfortunately he died in 1990 (not prematurely! He died at 95). No!!! This would both contradict his line we saw in the motto and a couple more of, quite easy to think and agree, truths that make us just say "Fortunately, no such remake is necessary". Here's why: 1. The context he placed that effort in is still functional¹⁰, 2. He wrote that more or less we've come to the end of the days where just one person, no matter how much of a homo universalis he might be, could analyze with all the parameters and from all the angles necessary the issues that are relevant in the current society; in his opinion, only a collective author could do that after some point. To the extent that the role of this collective author cannot be played by the collectivity automatically constituted by the collective project "Reimagining society" and by the plans for comments, discussions, future publications etc that are announced on its front page, maybe some more personalized coordinating entity should play a role, but until some person doing that shows how even better this could be done through his efforts, we consider that mere excerpts from Mumford's books are quite capable of functioning that way¹¹.

So let's see where we stand now: 1. We said enough to see what possibly effective thing, in a nutshell, could mean the phrase of, among many others Mumford too, "right now humanity finds itself in a race between universal education and universal destruction" 2. We have addressed people who do not snub the insistence to first at least try parliamentary roads to change, and only if they repeatedly fail, either give up or turn to more drastic measures, depending on their psychological constitution or the data of the time they will decide such things. 3. We have seen as a worthwhile analog of the ancient interactiveness between education and social intervention, or at least as a worthwhile trial for such analog, the way broad education for broad parts of the population would intervene through people recognizing among candidates some new, knowledgeable and trustworthy persons, running for positions of decision makers, and through such persons judging they do stand a chance if they ran for them (the case where this could lead to just "OK, the party's over" effect, or the effect "OK, free speech allowed only as long as it doesn't change a thing", being taken care, through so-to-speak the familiar joke "How would Obama make himself immune to the danger of being killed in case he tried some real change? He should have proposed Chomsky as vice president. Who would kill Obama to let decision making to Chomsky? And who could kill both of them in quick succession without risking make rise the question and the dilemma (and in a, possibly not subcritical anymore, number of people) of whether measures more drastic than parliamentary roads to change should be tried?. In idioms less comix-like and more ZNet-like this is the familiar line said by William Blum "If I were a US president and wanted to end terrorism in three days I would ask pardon of all nations US harmed on day 1, say Israel is not a state of US on day 2, stop arms production and with money saved pay reparations and compensations on day 3, and get assassinated on day 4". OK, this was quoting briefly and by memory, for the exact wording, and the reference see note 12)

4. In upshot we have outlined the pacifist anarchist's position "The analog of the weapons that ancient Athenians kept at home is the education that all can be given, for free, at home by top thinkers and top artists caring to help people dedicate their best self to saving their home planet and helping their fellow humans¹³ like in other times the best hearts and minds of each generation dedicated their best self to their home country and to their fellow citizens, or to efforts helping people broadly (like Pasteur's or Fleming's), or used, for any possible such effect on social purposes, the name they had acquired through art or through purist's research (e.g. Beethoven, or Einstein before ending up having his name entrapped in the effort to generate public consent for the bomb. We'll make a brief return to this)

At the beginning we hinted at some possibility that our age is ideal for such notions whereas no other age was. As one may have guessed this has the following two components (at least two): 1. Iraq on the one hand and the economic crisis on the other, even as recounted in regular mainstream media, have rendered unnecessary long academic preambles, rigorous proofs, brainstorm with background etc, to convince anybody that it is not ideological or psychological (even idiosyncratic and eccentric) predilections, or any other sources of biased opinions, that lead one to the suspicion that something is fishy with capitalism or the multinationals or the proposed and recycled decision makers, that it is not probable that all these factors are fine and yet the disasters happen just like bad weather (of good old times too. Before the climate change). 2. Our age has (relatively) affordable computers, internet and google (when Mumford was outlining their role in the hope he placed on universal education, he still had to be a little JulesVerne-like about it but now it's known to small kids); our age also has ZNet (irrespective of what hopes one places or does not place on Parecon, or of how the "Reimagining.."project will end up, who doesn't know how grateful we all should be to Albert and coworkers for even just ZNet?) ZNet, and antiwar.com and truthout.org and ... and... have also contributed to the following concept's being taken for granted as it should: there are education and information centers that give their services, for free, to all and whoever has the understanding, the pleasure and the means donates to keep them in existence (as much as one's means do not start conflicting with his pleasure. Just like one rewards musicians and minstrels on sidewalks and in subways); maybe I haven't looked in it hard enough to know if the following impression is true, but I feel that the well known point made, 20 years ago, about the eclipse of "public intellectuals" by Russell Jacoby in his "The Last

Intellectuals” must be also complemented by stating that the reason why that eclipse was not, finally, even darker was the advent of the ZNet-like mechanisms (we mention Jacoby’s point briefly in note 14 for someone who happens not to have heard it); finally our age starts to develop reading gadgets, that can be made even more affordable, and at the same time friendly to old timers who want to just read, with no keyboard or internet services, by just sticking a CD in a book-like object they can open on their thigh while sitting, something that (apart from the well known ecological advantages and disadvantages discussed in the press about it and apart from the possibly deleterious effects all electronic journalism can have on the seriousness of the information offered, as is currently so intensely discussed) can make education very cheap, since even things with prohibitive cost (e.g. with many colored photos) can, with no restriction, be given out, and reproduced, practically as cheaply as buying a void CD, placing a “public intellectual” and broad classes of persons seeking broad education into a new, and almost unmediated by usual market mechanisms, and also personal, relation of voluntary support/donation and voluntary service/gift (for dangers to quality see note 15)

We haven’t yet discussed the effect of format on making education more widely accessible; maybe it’s obvious, or expected, or indifferent, that the present author would opt for theatrical formats, not excluding the possibility others can prove that other formats are better, and of course, never excluding points made in formats not widely reader-friendly, yet more substantial than the points affordable by people who can afford idioms more widely accessible. The obvious way to harmonize the abilities inherent or cultivated in people from different walks of life is obviously of the form, e.g., “the one has the IQ and background to spell out a mechanism and its implications but can’t afford an idiom to say it to all but only to readers of rigorous essays, the other has the IQ and background to just afford to understand such points and gauge their importance when he sees the points ready made but can put them in idioms and formats closer to simpler minds, like himself. So they just collaborate, by one, or both, reading the other. (Obviously it’s the artist who sure mustn’t skip the contribution of the thinkers. The converse doesn’t need anything to be mandatory about it!) Before we give an example of how an e.g. Mumfordian point sounds on stage (through the playwright having reached a similar point (but through readings quite different from Mumford!)) let’s complete the discussion on the role of education through including some more thoughts made by Chomsky, on the one hand in the article “Notes on Anarchism” again and on the other hand in a 2007 interview to Schivone. We re-include his thoughts we saw in the motto to see once more the words “majority” and “spirituality”:

“No new revolutionary movement has any chance of success, and deserves none, unless it can develop an understanding of contemporary society and a vision of a future social order that is persuasive to a large majority of the population ... Goals and organizational forms of any serious revolutionary left political project must take shape through active participation in popular struggle and social reconstruction. A genuine radical culture can be created only through the spiritual transformation of great masses of people, the essential feature of any social revolution that is to extend the possibilities of human creativity and freedom...Given the highly conservative cast of our highly ideological society, it is not too surprising that the United States has been relatively untouched by these developments. But that too may change. The erosion of cold-war mythology at least makes it possible to raise these questions in fairly broad circles. If the present wave of repression can be beaten back, if the left can overcome its more suicidal tendencies and build upon what has been accomplished in the past decade, then the problem of how to organize industrial society on truly democratic lines, with democratic control in the workplace and in the community, should become a dominant intellectual issue for those who are alive to the problems of contemporary society, and, as a mass movement for libertarian socialism develops, speculation should proceed to action...A practical proposal is to help to change the culture of the domestic society enough so that what should be now done could at least be made a subject of discussion...There are really some moral truisms. One of them is that opportunity confers responsibility. If you have very limited opportunities, then you have limited responsibility for what you do. If you have substantial opportunity you have greater responsibility for what you do. I mean, that’s kind of elementary, I don’t know how it can be discussed. And the people who we call ‘intellectuals’ are just those who happen to have substantial opportunity. They have privilege, they have resources, they have training. In our society, they have a high degree of freedom—not a hundred percent, but quite a lot—and that gives them a range of choices that they can pursue with a fair degree of freedom, and that hence simply confers responsibility for the predictable consequences of the choices they make..” (For the last passage google “ZNet, Chomsky, Schivone, War and responsibility, August 16 2007” . Also discussed there, is whether the Nuremberg judges applied, for crimes of war, double standards like today’s)

So now let's outline an example of theatrical intervention or at least concurrence and/or parallelism to the course of events: one might bring to mind, parallel to both Bush-Cheney terms and to Obama's, Max Frisch's "Biderman and the arsonists" of the '60s where someone gets burned, even helping the arsonists to get the materials with which they set his house on fire, because he e.g. thinks they can't possibly be the arsonists mentioned in the evening news because in that case they would not let themselves be so obvious to him. Or one might bring to mind Zinn's "Marx in Soho" (which, by the way, right before I started the present page, a youth I met mentioned to me as a terrific example of how many groups of 300 at a time, in many towns in succession as a theater was traveling, had the feeling, among other feelings too of course, that they had read scores of interesting books which, otherwise, they would never have the chance, or even desire, to sit down and read). But we said that we wanted to show something that in a sense shows on stage something overlapping some ideas of Mumford's: Mumford considered that it was Hitler who had won the 2nd World War because who wins is not who survives physically at the end but he whose ideas and methods are finally adopted by, or imposed on, society. And since the atom bomb was used, and on civilians, and since some of Hitler's experts were given the choice to skip Nuremberg if they agreed to work for US intelligence and pass on to them some methods, therefore Hitler won. Mumford had also made the conjecture, which seems to be verified by news in the last 3-4 years, that the way the Russians had made an atom bomb in zero time after the war, was that Americans knew of only the Heisenberg group of atomic scientists, but maybe other scientists, possibly notified by them before they were put under surveillance, rushed to Russia to help make the bomb and end up with an equilibrium of terror at least, rather than with the one side's unreinable rule. (Those other physicists knew of the progress, and the progress was more that the one reported to Hitler because Heisenberg's group did not want to help him win. And they didn't want, either, the other side's scientists to give the bomb to any military whatsoever. But after they saw that they did give it, and that the US military did use it, and on civilians, they, or some of them, switched to the alternative plan just mentioned). Let's outline the well-known play "Copenhagen" that its first time around, in London, happened to be concurrent with NATO's "humanitarian bombings" in Yugoslavia in 1999 (for which Chomsky was writing at the time that they were the equivalent of the Mafioso of the neighborhood going around and breaking a couple of the arms he was twisting to give the message he was not joking when pushing, but at a scale describable as "the new state of things is that around the globe, above a height, an umbrella of arms has been installed and US is like a Jahve not always just, not even sane, and very often angry..." (quoted by memory, not verbatim, and lacking the precise reference in a newspaper)). It's not without importance to note that Michael Frayn, the playwright, is the same playwright who had written, more than 30 years ago, the famous hilarious comedy "Noises off". In our summary we won't be going back and forth between the characters, but one character will say, in one breath, all that she (and her husband) said in the play and then another character will say, in one breath, all that he answered her in the play (the characters are Bohr's wife, Bohr, and Bohr's ex student Heisenberg). Their discussion takes place in the heaven, in afterlife: "When I realized you came to Nazi occupied Denmark to fish your ex teacher's advice with Nazi escort I got so mad and even spooky that I stopped believing in human nature. You had father-to-son relation with your teacher, you wrote history together doing top rate work in physics, you enjoyed music together, you were playing with our baby son on your knees, you knew how grieved your teacher was because we had lost that son to an accident in which he drowned in front of his father's eyes, yet you did come to fish advice for Hitler's bomb.."

"My hope was that instead you would have said to my teacher "A person who played with the son he knows we lost, a person that did top rate work with you and had a father-to-son relation with you can't possibly have come to fish advice from you to help the Nazis who occupy our country. If these things were true I would stop believing in human nature. Something else must be going on" and then my teacher would have said "The question he asked me is an undergraduate's question. He would have solved that with closed eyes when he was in high school, at twenty he was doing Nobel prize level work. Either his mind gets blocked when he works for Hitler or something else is the case as you too say. So he must be giving a message which he phrases like a physics question to confuse the Nazi escort, he says that he plays cretin as head of the atom bomb project, so he is sabotaging it, so we must

escape to Los Alamos but not to help them to hand over the bomb to the US generals before he hands his bomb to Hitler's generals but in order to tell them there is no race with Hitler, and that this weapon should never be constructed". Yet neither of you got the message. You escaped under spy-film conditions to US and helped make the bomb there. The American atom bomb was not sabotaged like the German one was, by me who had not resigned because the next head of the project might be someone who would not want to sabotage it. And not only was the American bomb constructed but also used against human targets and not on a desert little island as a display of force and proof that the bomb did exist as physicists had proposed to Roosevelt in order to start the project using Einstein as their most authoritative and thus most convincing representative in that famous letter he wrote to Roosevelt from Princeton. And not only was it used against human targets but these targets were civilians; and were bombed after Japan's surrender. As also civilians were the more than one hundred thousand people Churchill had bombed in Germany after Germany's surrender. Yet it was me who later was considered a criminal, for collaborating with Hitler, and not with my overseas colleagues. And OK, I would not so much miss their handshake in physics conferences, nor would I so much miss the appreciation by my compatriots of my caliber as a physicist for not having the German bomb in time, but if a German asks me "well, for you, a German, Germany was not only Hitler as it wasn't for so many of us, either. Germany was also our childhood friends and also it was the German civilization", like I and Planck had said to ourselves and we didn't leave like Austrian and Jewish physicists correctly did, and we stayed to help Germany as we should, well if a German asks me that then I sometimes do get a hind dilemma which I then knew I shouldn't have. The worst thing is that there are other physicists that still do not, or do not yet, have the opposite dilemma and this is very bad for the future of mankind.."

After that discussion the world is not saved from further nuclear worries, of course, but at least Bohr's wife believes again in human nature; but only when they're in heaven, on earth these explanations were never given, Frayn came too late, for them as persons, but hopefully early enough, or in the nick of time, for the application of their points to their and our collective concerns.

The reason for including the above was twofold, or rather threefold if we include its utmost inherent importance and interest. To show what it means to theaterize a point in order to circulate it much more widely. And to show, on the act rather than through explanation of how it comes about, why it does make sense to circulate dialogs that were never made. Now let's go back to our initial and immediate concern for the sake of which the above train of thoughts and examples was given:

Of course, no Bush or Cheney or Obama or expert of their panels and think tanks will ever show up and have nationwide live talk with in front of Larry King with Monbiot, Stiglitz, Akerlof and Chomsky. This would be educational but the way to educate through making it to the news (and only through having the time to drop a couple of lines at most) is to first kill some John Lennon (as the guy who said he killed him to impress a girl not paying attention to him and to whom he had said she would see him on TV) or to become a bin Laden or, if you're (in comparison) a pacifist, of the Putin variety, bomb the country of an idiot like Saakashvili who attacks a neighbor believing US would follow his decisions. Persons that are not decision makers cannot make it to the news to put public dialogs on that screen, they can only put their public dialogs on theatrical stages and screens. But: would it not be very educational if one circulated dialogs he imagined between Monbiot/Stiglitz/Akerlof/Chomsky and the politicians+their thinktanks? The arguments on the one side of the table do not even have to be imagined, they can very well be factual, borrowed from their articles on ZNet or elsewhere. But doesn't it half the relevance and the liveness of the presentation compared to the one that would happen if one side was factual and the other virtual? Of course, but it also doubles it compared to the one that happened just above where both sides, Bohr's wife and Heisenberg were virtual (and in afterlife). And since that one, some readers agreed, was educational and valuable, why not a try an example of the half virtual half factual variety too? A last misgiving: Wouldn't the absent have the right to protest that they were misrepresented? Answer: They can always show up and represent themselves where they think that their screen representatives' performance was poorer than their own performance in real life, and they can always improve their own performance in real life where they think was poorer than their screen representatives' performance. Thus?: We borrowed, as title and 1st page, the famous expression and photo "Mount Bushmore" from American analysts/cartoonists¹⁶ and wrote for the web¹⁷ a "farcitragedy in soap opera format". To go straight to a summary see note 18

Notes:

1. Borrowed from Paul Street's ZNet article "Re-Imagining and Recovering Revolutionary Socialism" of July 13, 2009 written for "Re-imagining society" that borrowed it from Chomsky's "Some Tasks for Responsible People" (August 1969), for more details see Street's article.
2. Same as 1 just above.
3. ZNet, Noam. Chomsky to Albert, December 27 2006
4. Either in "The City in History", or in "The Myth of the Machine" or in "Values for Survival" or in "The Transformation of Man" (I haven't read anything else by Mumford. But my search machine can't locate which of the four excerpt archives contains it since it is not verbatim but just entered by memory")
5. In "Feynman's Lectures on Gravitation"
6. The deeper reason for that he diagnosed to lie in the "heavy baggage" they both carried from their past and consisting in the total lack of historical and psychological self-understanding of their societies.
7. We mean the first two quotes in the opening motto here, which as we said in notes 1,2 are borrowed from Street's recent ZNet article "Re-Imagining and Recovering Revolutionary Socialism" (July 13, 2009)
8. Papaioannou says he borrows that insight from Plato with one change: Plato spelled out the role of theater to accuse Athens (and say it was ruled by "theatrocracy"). Papaioannou borrows the insight but to praise Athens for that. The book in which he wrote these things was "Mass and history" ,published posthumously in Greek (in 2003), but many of its points had been included in other books of his written in French (his point about "theatrocracy" I have seen only in "Mass and history" but I've not read all of his other books)
9. We have not yet checked the extent to which this overlaps or continues the initial proposal.
10. Quite literally so: by just removing things that concern the issue of its title about cities so specifically that nothing is drawn for other issues too, one finds again a ready made context for many similar projects. (There are such things, very specific on cities, in "The City in History" since it was written to help urban planning too !!).
11. I would be happy to send anybody an excerption of this kind suited to his needs if he asks me for one and tells me where his Mumford related interests lie, e.g. through the comment section of the site of note 17 below.
12. "If I were the president, I could stop terrorist attacks against the United States in a few days. Permanently. I would first apologize -- very publicly and very sincerely -- to all the widows and orphans, the tortured and impoverished, and all the many millions of other victims of American imperialism. Then I would announce that America's global interventions have come to an end and inform Israel that it is no longer the 51st state of the union but -- believe it or not -- a foreign country. I would then reduce the military budget by at least 90% and use the savings to pay reparations to our victims and repair the damage from our bombings. There would be enough money. Do you know what one year's military budget is equal to? One year. It's equal to more than \$20,000 per hour for every hour since Jesus Christ was born. That's what I'd do on my first three days in the White House. On the fourth day, I'd be assassinated". Borrowed from: American Empire For Dummies. A talk given in Boulder Colorado by William Blum, October 21, 2002 ZNet
13. For Chomsky's own description of what's driving him personally see his interview to Navarro, I think one year ago...yes: it was ZNet, July 25 2008 (today is July 22)
14. Jacoby had written that the reason why no next generation of Mumford-like intellectuals is going to show up is that with the changes of rewards-to-living-cost-ratio that make it impossible to live on translating and writing articles and books, intellectuals would have to apply for academic positions, thus write for peers rather than in non-technical jargon comprehensible to the wider public (since tenure is based on technical publication list and since additional, "not equally rigorous" contributions are of dubious importance) thus stop influencing people, thus not be taken into consideration by decision makers, thus not have consequences on any policy... (Thus only Chomsky-like or Herman-like or Monbiot-like or Blum-like individuals etc who could, concurrently, do two things well, academia+writing could survive as potential influencers yet ,at so reduced numbers that influence becomes an oxymoron or, as Chomsky puts it (quote by memory, not verbatim) "Not to have illusions, we are allowed to exist exactly because we only have subcritical influence and thus serve the impression that free speech exists. That we continue is a result of thinking out if we offer more by talking than by not talking..." (Also I haven't checked if all the above names are in academia too. But the point is clear). Let's also briefly comment a familiar and somewhat neurotic and funny rationalization often made, more through stance than through words, by academics when judged for their positions on an issue or, more often, their lack of positions on an issue: "I don't feel I have to answer to people of less important academic achievement than me. Their arguments don't count to me and my equals, let an equal of mine repeat them to me and I will answer". Well, if they are not the kind of persons who could do well two things (one of which , being a citizen too, would become mandatory in other societies through contempt upon its absence) then their achievement is based on being moronized in their other function, and if their adversary was an equal he too would have been moronized and would have nothing to oppose to them. To Chomskies who are their "equals" their stance is as infantile as follows: "Why is he entitled to express opinions on such things? Is he an expert? He's a linguist! Has he a degree in Political Science?")
15. The argument that everybody becomes an author if he states so, if cheap ways to spread books are devised, is not so waterproof: Does one really need an editor's hesitations in front of futile investment expense to have quality control by book reviewers trustable by readers? For interest groups like authors-readers-bookreviewers sharing a common ideal, e.g. change (especially if the change includes free market mechanisms) why can't responsible book-reviewing happen at prices reduced through electronic mechanisms like the book prices?
16. Clicking at the bottom of the photo seen through note 18 leads to its sources.
17. www.johnalevizos.net that started Jan.2008. Don't mind the too name-like site-title. It mostly excerpts others.
18. Google with: *Mount Bushmore. "Tho' obscur'd, this is the form of the Angelic Land". William Blake ("America"). "...It was in the theater that* (The summary of the whole, lo-o-ong soap serial, is only 3 pages, font size 10)

PS: Added remarks: 1. In the list of expressions involving imagination, in the second paragraph of page 1, the book title “The imaginary institution of society” is absent because the parts of that book’s content for which it is usually cited are mostly the ones that do not make it irreplaceable but can be found in many other treatises and books. 2. To the last page’s last paragraph we add that another legitimate way to educate through the news is to throw a couple of shoes to a US president, the most pacifist approach when compared to the rest of the approaches cited there, but among the effects Al Zaidi’s such move, some months ago, had on the collective conscious the most practical was just to make some American journalists propose to American citizens to send by registered mail a shoe to the White House and imagine the effect in case a huge hill formed, not something more effective. 3. Additions to the “Mount Bushmore” summary (added in other sites of mine that were made after the Bush-Obama change) will be added to the comment section of the site of note 17.

And anyway, in the present book we will include, in the next chapter, the theatrical efforts alluded to above. So the interested reader doesn’t have to look them up on his own; but we preferred to present the above in the exact way we had posted it on Z-Space.

A natural question forming in the mind of the reader before he reads further on is what “critics of other countries like the above” think and do about their own country, especially if it’s Greece, and, even more especially, if it’s after it entered the eye of the cyclone of international criticism. We’ll do, return to that in the chapters that follow, and quite amply too. Here let’s close the present chapter showing a sample of what is written on local concerns by the thinker who wrote the book on global concerns that we saw book reviewed on the first page of the present, first, chapter of the present book. So we include excerpts from the first few chapters of his book “The decline of the house of the Vasiliadis” (just an indicative name and class, no connotation of e.g. something royal etc...)

Η ΠΤΩΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΟΙΚΟΥ ΤΩΝ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΔΗ

Στην εποχή μας δεν υπάρχει τίποτα το τραγικό είτε στην Ελλάδα είτε στον πλανήτη ολόκληρο. Κανείς δεν μιμείται μεγάλες και τέλειες πράξεις αλλά μάλλον εφήμερες και ανόητες. Αντιδρούμε σαν παιδιά δίχως σκοπό. Ο Αριστοτέλης θα μας παρατηρούσε με ύφος απορίας, μην μπορώντας να καταλάβει πως εννοούμε την πράξη αυτή καθαυτή και αν είμαστε ικανοί να πράττουμε ή απλά να κουνάμε τα μέλη μας σαν νευρόσπαστα. Ο άνθρωπος ως μηχανισμός, ως μαύρο κουτί είναι πια εδώ, αν και όλοι πιστεύουμε πως το κουτί έχει συνείδηση αλλά δεν ξέρουμε τι ακριβώς είναι. Πιθανόν είναι χημικές αντιδράσεις, νευρώνες, και σίγουρα αποτέλεσμα της φυσικής εξέλιξης, και ίσως όλα αυτά μαζί αλλά τι ακριβώς είναι η συνείδηση μας διαφεύγει. Και αυτού του είδους η άγνοια βαραίνει περισσότερο όσο η επιστήμη βρίσκει απαντήσεις σε τόσες άλλου είδους ερωτήσεις.

Οι ατομικές ζωές των ανθρώπων ήταν και πάντα είναι άθυρμα μιας τυχαιότητας, της αρχικής αυτής συνθήκης η οποία κυριαρχούσε χωρίς αντίπαλο πάνω σε όλους και σε όλα. Ακόμη και οι νόμοι της φυσικής τυχαία διαμορφώθηκαν ως έχουν μετά το μεγάλο μπανγκ. Αν δεν διαμορφώθηκαν τυχαία αυτή την κοσμογονική έκρηξη, τότε υπάρχει κάποια τελεολογία διπλωμένη ανάμεσα στα σωματίδιο η οποία ίσως είναι η απάντηση στο ερώτημα για τη συνείδηση. Οι ρέμπελοι καλόγεροι του Μεσαίωνα λάτρευαν την τύχη όταν μετά τη φυγή τους από το μοναστήρι τραγουδούσαν στα καπηλειά, *Fortuna, Imperatrix mundi*.

Η τραγωδία στις μέρες μας είναι προσδιορίσιμη μόνον ως οικονομική οπισθοχώρηση, ως υπό-ανάπτυξη, και τελικά ως πενία. Η έλλειψη υλικών αγαθών είναι η χειρότερη μορφή δουλείας, αποτυχίας, υποταγής. Πως φτάσανε ως εδώ οι πανούργοι και έξυπνοι Έλληνες; Πως κατάφεραν άνθρωποι με τόσο ευστροφία και προσαρμοστικότητα στα τέσσερα σημεία του ορίζοντα να φτάσουν στην οικονομική και ηθική εξαθλίωση; Το ίδιο θα ρωτήσει κανείς και για ολόκληρη την ορθολογική και εργαλειακή Ευρώπη και Αμερική. Υπάρχουν πολλές απαντήσεις, είτε ως εξηγήσεις, είτε ως περιγραφές. Οι δεύτερες είναι εύκολες, οι πρώτες δύσκολες και πολυεπίπεδες. Δεν ξέρω την αιτία της χρεοκοπίας της Ελλάδος και πολύ περισσότερο δεν ξέρω τις αιτίες για ολόκληρη αυτή τη ανατροπή στην παγκόσμιο οικονομία. Όποιος διαβάσει αυτήν την ιστορία ίσως βγάλει το δικό του συμπέρασμα.

Οι Έλληνες ζούσανε, το λέω στο τρίτο πρόσωπο γιατί εγώ έχω φύγει από αυτόν τον ασφυκτικό κλειό της επιβίωσης, τις χειρότερες μέρες που είχαν ζήσει τα τελευταία πενήντα χρόνια. Από την εποχή που η συντροφός μου Ιώ άφησε τον κόσμο αυτό έφυγα και εγώ για έναν τόπο όπου ούτε οι άνθρωποι που γνώρισα, ούτε όσους διάβασα και ασχολήθηκα μαζί τους θα με είχαν ακολουθήσει. Εγώ, ο κατά κόσμον Θόδωρος Αρμενάκης αναμνησκόμαι προσπαθώντας να καταλάβω όσα δεν κατάλαβα ανάμεσα σε όλους αυτούς τους ανθρώπους, τις βιβλιοθήκες και τα εργαστήρια. Εδώ με δέχτηκαν όχι πολύ εύκολα αλλά έτυχε να έχω και εδώ γνωστούς. Γνωστούς από τις περιπλανήσεις μου ανάμεσα σε τόσους ιδιόρρυθμους και παράταιρους ανθρώπους. Βρέθηκαν κάποιοι που είχαν ακουσει για μένα και με άφησαν εδώ να συλλογιέμαι και να αναμετρώ τις ζωές ανθρώπων όχι με τον ίσκιο της δικής μου αλλά με τα όνειρα, τις ικανότητες και τις αδυναμίες των ιδίων. Και ακόμα δεν μπορώ να αποφασίσω αν

όλοι αυτοί ήταν θύματα ενός προσωπικού ψυχισμού τους ή μιας κοινωνικής διεργασίας που όμως ήταν αόρατη και σε αυτούς και σε μένα λίγο πριν ξεσπάσει η θύελλα. Αμφιβάλλω αν όσοι ζουν αυτήν την κατάσταση θα ζήσουν καλύτερες μέρες. Οι άνθρωποι που έζησαν τη Γαλλική ή την Οκτωβριανή Επανάσταση έζησαν τρομερές μέρες όμως ήσαν, ιστορικές. Οι μέρες της Ελληνικής Καταστροφής δεν έχουν τίποτε το ηρωικό, το ιστορικά αξιοσημείωτο για την ανθρωπότητα. Οι μέρες της κρίσης στην Ευρώπη και Αμερική ίσως όμως μετουσιωθούν σε κάτι είτε λυτρωτικό ή κάτι φοβερό για όλους. Ίσως όλα αυτά να είναι ένα παράδειγμα προς αποφυγή ή μια διήγηση με κακό τέλος.

Κράτησα στη μνήμη μου τα όσα έγιναν στη χώρα μου και στους ανθρώπους της, κράτησα στη μνήμη αυτούς που γνώρισα και αγάπησα. Όσα μπόρεσα τα κράτησα και πάνω στο χαρτί, για να βγάλω κάποιο συμπέρασμα για τους ανθρώπους, για το πόσο η ευτυχία και η δυστυχία είναι συνώνυμα της ζωής και πως η κάθε επιτυχία μπορεί να θρέψει το σπόρο της καταστροφής. Τα κράτησα και τα συλλογιέμαι τις ώρες που κοιτάζω το πέλαγος να απλώνεται άλλοτε γαλήνιο, άλλοτε φουρτουνιασμένο όπως η ψυχή μας που πέφτει από την ανησυχία στην ανία, από την ταραχή στην αδιαφορία. Δεν μπορώ να αποφασίσω το ρόλο του καθενός στην ίδια τη ζωή του, ούτε καν αν η δική μου ζωή ήταν δική μου. Και όμως πιστεύω στην ελεύθερη βούληση του ανθρώπου όσο και αν οι ερμηνείες πολλές φορές μας δείχνουν προς μίαν άλλη εξήγηση των πράξεων μας.

Πριν βρεθώ εδώ άκουγα το ραδιόφωνο και την τηλεόραση να κρωζουν ωσάν όρνεα πάνω από τα πτώματα των ακροατών και θεατών τους. Πτώχευση, «προσέχετε τους Έλληνες όταν σας προσφέρουν ομόλογα» έγραφε ένας Αμερικανός οικονομολόγος, «είναι απάτη». Η χώρα έχει γίνει περίγελος, μια χώρα απατεώνων, τεμπέληδων, τρυφηλών τω πάλοι ποτέ ηρώων, οι οποίοι κάποτε ήσαν παράδειγμα για μίμηση όσων αγάπησαν την ελευθερία. Για όσους αγάπησαν την ιστορία αυτού του τόπου δεν βλέπουν παρά ένα χώρο θρυμματισμένο από την ίδια την Ιστορία.

Οι πολιτικοί, οι διανοούμενοι, οι ιδεολόγοι, κάποιοι επαγγελματίες της επιβίωσης, όρισαν κατά το δοκούν όλη την άρνηση, την απόρριψη και τα έκαναν λόγο καταγγελτικό εναντίον όλων όσων τους λιοδορούσαν και τους οίκτιραν. Οι φιλοδυτικοί, οι φιλότουρκοι, οι απογοητευμένοι, οι ριζοσπάστες, οι επαναστάτες, οι παλαιό-μαρξιστές, ακόμα και οι κρετίνοι νέο-ναζί, μαζί και οι νέο-ορθόδοξοι, όλοι ένα σπαραξικάρδιο σύμπλεγμα παρέα με τους παγανιστές άρχισαν να ψάχνουν μέσα στα αραχνιασμένα αρχεία της ιστορίας του τόπου να βρουν την αιτία για αυτό το διασυρμό, τη δυστυχία, την εθελοντική αυτοκτονία.

Κάποιοι ειδικοί των ΜΜΕ σχεδίασαν ακόμη και μια Αφροδίτη να τους κοιτάζει μέσα από το εξώφυλλο ενός γερμανικού περιοδικού υψώνοντας το μεσαίο της δάχτυλο, προς τους καλοκάγαθους και εργατικούς Γερμανούς οι οποίοι δούλευαν νυχθημερόν-έτσι έλεγαν λαός και κάποιοι πολιτικοί τους- για να πληρώσουν τα χρέη των ανέμελων Ελλήνων. Ελάχιστοι Γερμανοί βέβαια, αναφέρθηκαν στους δύο παγκοσμίους πολέμους τους οποίους προκάλεσαν και τις ασύλληπτες καταστροφές που έζησαν οι Έλληνες. *Weltgeschichte ist Weltgericht*. Την ιστορία ως γενική κρίση και ο Έγγελος και ο Μαρξ, κατά τον Καστοριάδη πιστός εκφραστής του πρώτου προσπάθησαν να αποδώσουν. Το ίδιο έκαναν και οι θεολόγοι. Μόνο που η Ιστορία δεν είναι γενική κρίση, είναι σύγκρουση ακόμα και

παράκρουση. Δεν υπάρχει συγγραφέας ούτε διανοητής να συρράψει μια γενική κρίση για την Ιστορία, μια μεγάλη διήγηση. Αντίθετα υπάρχουν πολλοί που αφηγούνται παράταιρα και αντιφατικά κομμάτια και όχι μια μεγάλη τραγωδία οργανωμένη σε μέρη με ηδύ λόγο, έχοντας σκοπό την κάθαρση.

Είχαμε κατασκευάσει το ιδεολόγημα της ζωής ως οικονομικό βίωμα. Ο αιώνας της πίστης, είχε παραδοθεί στον αιώνα της Επιστήμης και στη συνέχεια οι παραγωγικές δυνάμεις της Ιστορίας, όποιες και αν είναι αυτές, κατέλαβαν την εξουσία. Ό,τι μπορούσε να μετρηθεί μπήκε στο στόχαστρο της στατιστικής και των μαθηματικών. Η γεωμετρική δομή του κόσμου, μια Πλατωνική φαντασίωση, έδωσε τη θέση της στη μετρίσιμη ανθρωπόωρα παραγωγικότητας, της προόδου.

Ένας Πρόεδρος των ΗΠΑ είχε δηλώσει: «είναι η οικονομία ηλίθιε». Ο ίδιος χωμένος στο Οβάλ Γραφείο έκανε έρωτα με μια νεαρή γραμματέα. Ο ερωτικός σπασμός έγινε νομική διεκδυστίδα για να μπορέσει ο νομικός πολιτισμός μας να αποφανθεί τι είναι ερωτική πράξη και τι ερωτικό παιχνίδι. Εκείνος ο τρισάθλιος Μαρκήσιος, θα είχε οπωσδήποτε πάθει αποπληξία αν ζούσε. Θα είχε εθελοντικά περπατήσει προς τη γκιλοτίνα μια και οι επίγονοί του δεν είχαν ακόμη εγκολπωθεί το μέγιστο των μαθημάτων του: η ισχύς είναι η ολοκλήρωση της ηδονής. Ο ίδιος δεν είχε ακόμη καταλάβει ποιον αιώνα είχε προλογίσει. Αν η Τζαστίν είχε κεραυνοβοληθεί μετά από τα απίστευτα βασανιστήριά της, από έναν ουρανό ο οποίος δεν είχε απονείμει δικαιοσύνη αλλά τη γαλήνη της ανυπαρξίας, εμείς δεν είχαμε να περιμένουμε τίποτα περισσότερο από τον οικονομικό άνθρωπο παρά να εκοσμεματώσει πάνω στο κέντρο του ουρανού με όλα τα παραγωγικά μέσα, με όλες τις μηχανές και τις μεθόδους της στατιστικής.

Οι «αντιφάσεις του καπιταλισμού» σαν ορθολογική κριτική σε ένα σύστημα το οποίο εκφράζει τον ορθολογισμό δεν διαφαίνονται στην ανάλυση των συνθηκών παραγωγής. Πιο ποιητικά και για αυτό πιο πρακτικά ορθώνονται μπροστά μας ως η Πάνδημη Αφροδίτη, και το πυρηνικό εργοστάσιο της Φουκουσίμα. Το δεύτερο διέσπειρε καίσιο 137 και αυτή περιμένει γεμάτη καρκίνους και τερατογενέσεις να διατηρήσει τα ιερά μυστήρια της Φύσης ως την επιθυμία της αθανασίας των θνητών τεράτων τα οποία κατακυριεύσαν τη γη.

Ο Στέφανος Βασιλειάδης ο φίλος μου απόμεινε εκεί πίσω στην τύρβη της πόλης που άφησα πίσω μου την τελευταία φορά που τον είδα παραληρούσε συνθέτοντας μια νέα Έρημη Χώρα: «Τα ιερά παράγωγα, οι τιτλοποιήσεις και οι μοχλεύσεις των κεφαλαίων και των στοιχημάτων ανόδου καθόδου, οι υποχρεώσεις και τα δικαιώματα για πώληση και αγορά αγαθών και τίτλων, όλα μαζί στα έγκατα ενός προγράμματος με δισεκατομμύρια αριθμητικές πράξεις και αλγόριθμους ταξινομημένους σύμφωνα με παραδοχές του κινδύνου βρυχώνται μέσα τους, αναδύοντας τη μπόχα μιας ωφελμιστικής υπολογιστικής η οποία ορθολογισμένη όπως και η λειτουργία μιας μηχανής εσωτερικής καύσης εκπέμπει κύματα διοξειδίου του άνθρακα τα οποία περικλείουν τη θάλασσα και την γην όλην. Η Ελλάδα βυθισμένη σε ανείπωτη ασυναρτησία, παραδομένη στο αποχαυνωτικό κομπραδόρικο εμπόριο με χάντρες, καθρεφτάκια και ούισκι, αγόραζε υποβρύχια που έγερναν, τανκ δίχως πυρομαχικά, με το αζημίωτο για τους ήρωες της ατομικής οικονομικής επιβίωσης. Έκανε συμφωνίες για να τις αθετήσει, έκανε εκλογές με ηγέτες από την παλιά ηρωική εποχή του 1950. Είχε δημιουργήσει ένα κληρονομικό

σύστημα δημοκρατίας με βασιλικούς οίκους τα κόμματα. Ήταν μια κοινωνία με πατριαρχική δομή πατριών και φυλών, γεμάτη εμπιστοσύνη στην ευφυΐα της και αμφιβολίες για το παρελθόν της η οποία βυθιζόνταν στα νερά του Αιγαίου γεμάτα από πετρέλαια και σκάφη αναψυχής με σημαίες ευκαιρίας. Η κοινωνία τους είχε αμφιβολίες για το παρελθόν της. Τηλεοπτικοί σταθμοί αναρωτιόντουσαν αν το 1821 σηματοδότησε τη γένεση ενός έθνους, ενός κράτος, ή και τα δύο μαζί. Αναρωτιόντουσαν αν η Τουρκοκρατία ήταν ήπια ή σκληρή σκλαβιά, αν έπρεπε να γίνει καν η Επανάσταση. Βαρύγδουποι καθηγητές διηγούνταν τις «άγνωστες» πτυχές του Αγώνα. Το ΚΚΕ αναρωτιέται για τη θέση του Παπαδιαμάντη στον αγώνα του παγκόσμιου προλεταριάτου, και στο Άγιο Όρος ο διάβολος φόραγε ακόμα την Παπική τιάρα, την ποδιά των Μασόνων και ζωγράφιζε τις σκοτεινές νύχτες το άστρο του Δαβίδ στα καμπαναριά».

Εγώ περισσότερο μαθητής του Αριστοφάνη είχα φτάσει να πιστεύω πως ούτε αυτός ο μέγιστος της κωμωδίας θα μπορούσε ποτέ να συμπεριλάβει σε μια ή και σε περισσότερες το σύγχρονο γίνεσθαι της Ελλάδος. Δεν θα μπορούσε γιατί η Νεφελοκοκκυγία έχει διασπαστεί σε ένα νεφέλωμα από υπαρξιακά ερωτήματα τα οποία απασχολούν φιλοσόφους, μουσικοσυνθέτες, χορευτές, σχεδιαστές μόδας, τραγουδιστές μαζικά και απόλυτα. Δημοσιογράφοι οι οποίοι ανέλυναν τα τραγούδια της Ευρωβίζιον ανέλυναν τα διαφορικά επιτόκια, και μανεκέν μιλούσαν εμβριθώς για το τραπεζικό σύστημα. Που και που εμφανίζονται και κάποιοι οι οποίοι διδάσκουν οικονομικά, ξεχασμένοι επί δεκαετίες, οι οποίοι έπαιρναν το αίμα τους πίσω, περιγράφοντας τα αξιώματα μιας επιστήμης η οποία αποκαλείται «επιστήμη της καταστροφής».

Και όμως τίποτα δεν προμήνυε κάτι τέτοιο. Τα πάρτι στη Μύκονο, οι συνωμοσίες για εκλογές, οι μίζες των μεγάλων έργων, η περιώνυμη Ολυμπιάδα κρατούσαν την λίμπιντο υψηλά. «Η ισχυρή Ελλάδα» άθυρμα στο χείλη των ασεβών εχθρών και των προδομένων φίλων σφάδαζε πάνω στα σώματα των νέων, των όσων ζητούσαν αξιοπρέπεια και θάρρος. Η προηγούμενη γενιά-η δική μου- τους είχε πρόδωσε με τις καλύτερες προθέσεις.

Ο μακαρίτης πια, ο πάλαι ποτέ συνεταιίρος του Στέφανου, Γιάννης Γεωργίου του έλεγε χρόνια πριν κοιτάζοντας την Ακρόπολη από το γραφείο του: «Η Κόλαση είναι στρωμένη με καλές προθέσεις». Ο Στέφανος μου διηγιόταν: «Ο ίδιος είχε καλές προθέσεις. Είχε ένα γραφείο επιλωμένο με γούστο. Βαθειά πράσινη λάκα με μπαμπού και γυαλί. Ο Γεωργίου είχε γούστο, τουλάχιστον η διακοσμήτρια είχε. Το να ξέρεις να διαλέγεις διακοσμήτρια είναι και αυτό καλό γούστο. Εκφράζονταν πάντα με γρήγορες κοφτές αποφασιστικές κινήσεις δίνοντας στους συνομιλητές του την εντύπωση ότι ήξερε τι έλεγε και τι έκανε. Εκείνη τη στιγμή κοιτούσε τον αρχαίο βράχο και μιλούσε αργά αλλά αποφασιστικά...μάλλον μιλούσε στον εαυτό του παρά σε μένα. Είχε καλές προθέσεις, για τον εαυτό του και για την οικογένεια του, για τους φίλους του. Πέρα από εκεί τα πράγματα γίνονταν δυσδιάκριτα. Έτσι ήταν...μέχρις μιαν εποχή...μέχρις ένα σημείο επιτυχίας...μέχρις ότου δεν μπορούσε ο ίδιος να ελέγξει τις καλές του προθέσεις. Αυτές που έγιναν ένας βρόγχος και τον έπνιξαν». Αργότερα, όπως κατάλαβα οι καλές προθέσεις έπνιξαν και το Στέφανο και όλους μας.

.....

Ο Στέφανος Βασιλειάδης έμενε μόνος σε μια υπόγεια γκαρσονιέρα κάπου στα κάτω Πατήσια. Έφτανε πια τα εβδομήντα. Τα μαλλιά του ήταν γκριζα και το προσωπό του νεανικό. Ήταν μετρίου αναστήματος με στρογγυλό πρόσωπο. Γεμάτος, καμπούριαζε πια σαν να κουβαλούσε ένα βάρος το οποίο δεν έλεγε να ξεφορτωθεί. Μερικές φορές ανασηκώνονταν και τότε έδειχνε και το ύψος του και το πόσο αποφασιστικός μπορούσε να δείχνει. Αυτό κρατούσε για λίγο. Γρήγορα μαζεύονταν στην γνώριμη στάση του και συνέχιζε να με κοιτάζει δίχως να είναι σίγουρος για αυτό που έλεγε. Αυτό έγινε πρόσφατα μετά την καταστροφή όλων μας και τη δική του. Και μα την αλήθεια δεν ξέρω ποια ακολούθησε ποια.

Η γκαρσονιέρα που έμενε ήταν είκοσι πέντε τετραγωνικά και είχε θέα στον ακάλυπτο, δηλαδή σε μπετόν από τους γύρω τοίχους των πολυκατοικιών. Αριστερά υπήρχε μια χαμηλή μεσοτοιχία που έβλεπε σε ένα μικρό κήπο από ένα παλιό χτίσμα ανεκμετάλλευτο ακόμα και πίσω της δύο δέντρα, λίγο πράσινο. Στις άκρες ελάχιστης αυτής από μπετόν το γκριζο υλικό είχε σπάσει και στη ρωγμή φύτευαν δύο απροσδιόριστα φυτά, πολύτιμα απομεινάρια της φύσης που δεν έλεγε να υποκύψει στα έργα των ανθρώπων. Τον έβλεπα να τα κοιτάζει με απέραντη προσοχή. Παλιά όταν είχε ένα μεγάλο και καλοδιατηρημένο κήπο ποτέ δεν τον είχα δει να τον κοιτάχει με τέτοια αφοσίωση.

Δεν είχε ποτέ φανταστεί το μέλλον να εξαρτάται από τους νάνους των Νιμπελούγκεν. Η Γερμανική μυθολογία τον απωθούσε αφάνταστα. Και όμως οι νάνοι στα θεμέλια της γης, δηλαδή του τραπεζικού οικοδομήματος, είχαν κάνει την δουλειά τους όπως οι καλικάτζαροι τις μέρες που προσπαθούν να ροκανίσουν τον κορμό του δέντρου της γης. Τα μικρά διαβολάκια δεν τα καταφέρνουν ποτέ. Το δέντρο, όσο οι καλικάτζαροι είναι στην επιφάνεια περνώντας ευχάριστα τον καιρό τους τις μέρες των Χριστουγέννων φοβίζοντας γριές και παιδιά, αποκτούσε την παλιά του δύναμη. Ο κόσμος κρατιόταν όρθιος. Τώρα, όσο τα κακόβουλα αυτά πνεύματα στα υπόγεια των τραπεζών μένουν μεθοδικά στα έγκατά της γής το δέντρο έχει δυσκολίες να αναγεννηθεί. Μήπως αυτή τη φορά αντί για τα καλικατζαράκια του Νότου καταφέρνουν οι νάνοι της μυθολογίας των βορείων, που καταλήγει στην αιώνια σιωπή και ακινησία των πάγων, να ρίξουν τον κόσμο κάτω; Οι καλικάτζαροι με την αγιαστούρα του παπά το βάζουν στα πόδια. Οι νάνοι στα έγκατά της γης φαίνεται να μην υπολογίζουν καμιά παρέμβαση, κυρίως αυτοί οι οποίοι κατοικοεδρεύουν κάτω από τα υπόγεια των τραπεζών.

Μια μικρή εταιρία την οποία είχε φτιάξει μαζί με άλλους είχε βυθιστεί. Ζούσε με μια σύνταξη που κάθε τόσο ίσως να μην υπήρχε μια και τα οικονομικά των ταμείων εξαρτιόνταν από το δημόσιο χρέος. Ότι αγόραζε πριν λίγα χρόνια τώρα του ήταν απαγορευμένο. Όπως μου έλεγε τα είχε κάνει θάλασσα. Δεν είχε ποτέ προγραμματίσει σωστά. Ήταν πάντα εκτός φάσης με τους ανθρώπους και το κοινωνικό και οικονομικό κατεστημένο της Ελλάδος. Ο Στέφανος Βασιλειάδης απόλυτα ορθολογιστής για όλους ήταν ο απόλυτα ανορθολογικός όταν έφτανε να ορίσει τη ζωή του. Ήταν ένα μυστήριο για μένα πως ένας άνθρωπος που ανέλυε με τέτοια λεπτομέρεια οικονομικά και διεθνή θέματα είχε αφήσει τον εαυτό του σε χέρια απατεώνων και είχε φτάσει να πένεται, αυτός ένας ευκατάστατος άνθρωπος με δυνατό

μυαλό. Και όμως...προσπαθούσα να του αναλύσω πως δεν ήταν αυτό που πίστευε, αλλά μάταια. Και δεν το έλεγα από ευγένεια, το πίστευα. Ο Στέφανος δεν ήταν αποτυχημένος, ήταν μια περίπτωση όπως πάμπολοι άλλοι, έτσι νομίζω γιατί δεν έχω πείρα σε αυτά, που οι άνεμοι γύρω του τον είχαν παρασύρει όχι γιατί δεν τους αισθανόταν αλλά ακριβώς γιατί τους αισθανόταν καλύτερα από κάθε άλλον αλλά δεν μπορούσε να τους αντισταθεί. Η απόλυτη κατανόηση που έδειχνε απέναντι στους άλλους η βαθειά ανάλυση που των γεγονότων ήταν η βάση για να αφήσει την τύχη του στα χέρια τους πράγμα ανεπίτρεπτο για κάποιον ο οποίος ήξερε πως εκείνοι δεν ήσαν ικανοί για πολλά περισσότερα από όσα είχαν πετύχει. Ίσως έπασχε από αδυναμία της θέλησης να επιβληθεί πάνω στους άλλους.

.....

Ο Θόδωρος έκανε την εμφάνισή του στο σπίτι μου δύο μέρες μετά τα γεγονότα στο κέντρο των Αθηνών. Τότε ζούσα με την Άρτεμη και τα δύο του παιδιά τον Νίκο και τη Θέμιδα κάπου στα βόρεια προάστια...είχαμε ακόμα κάποια χρήματα μετά την δεύτερη καταστροφή που μας χτύπησε. Η πρώτη είχε συμβεί μερικά χρόνια πριν όταν κατέρρευσε το χρηματιστήριο. Μου έδωσε να διαβάσει μερικά φυλλάδια που κρατούσε στα χέρια του. Ο Θόδωρος Αρμενάκης ήταν ψηλός, γεμάτος, τα μαλλιά του είχαν ασπρίσει επικίνδυνα. Το πρόσωπό του έδειχνε νευρική ανησυχία αλλά και κάποιο ενθουσιασμό. Είχε πάντα μιαν έντονα αρνητική αντίληψη για τον κόσμο η οποία μεταμφιέζονταν σε απάθεια αλλά ήταν έτοιμος να αντιδράσει σε κάθε πρόκληση, με επιχειρήματα που σε έφερναν άμεσα σε δύσκολη θέση. όσο απαθής μπορούσε να είναι για κάτι, τόσο συναισθηματικά και φυσικά μπορούσε να είναι ταυτισμένος με κάτι άλλο. Υποψιάστηκε ότι είχε ανησυχήσει για το πως θα τα έπαιρνε όλα αυτά. Ήξερε ότι τέτοια συμβάντα με αναστάτωναν...και ήθελε να μου μιλήσει, να πει τη γνώμη του, να ακούσει τι θα του έλεγα. Με βρήκε να καπνίζω πίνοντας τσίπουρο μπροστά στον υπολογιστή. Η μηχανή, επιδεκτική κάθε αλλαγής, κάθε διαμόρφωσης της επόμενης πρότασης περίμενε πειθήνια τις αντιδράσεις μου...μάταια...είχα παραδοθεί στις εικόνες και τα σχόλια των ΜΜΕ.

-Ακούς τις ειδήσεις; Τι νομίζεις για όλα αυτά;

-Το κέντρο της Αθήνας έχει υποστεί επίθεση...αυτό ακούω από το ραδιόφωνο. Μαθητές, φοιτητές, και απροσδιόριστοι τρίτοι έχουν μετατρέψει την πόλη σε μια αρένα πράξεων...πράξεων αυτοκαταστροφής...αυτοκτονίας. Ο Τσόρτσιλ θεωρούσε ότι οι Εβραίοι και οι Έλληνες είναι λαοί μεγάλοι αλλά αυτοκαταστροφικοί. Έμπλεοι εμφυλίων και αδελφοκτονιών.

-Πώς σου ήρθε στο νου ο Τσόρτσιλ;

-Δε θαυμάζω τον Τσόρτσιλ, ως πολιτικό. Ήταν ένας αποτυχημένος...από την απόβαση στα Δαρδανέλια έως την οικονομική πολιτική του τη δεκαετία του είκοσι. Τον θυμήθηκα γιατί είχε διαβάσει ανάμεσα στις γραμμές της ιστορίας και των δύο λαών. Δεν είχε διατυπώσει παρά το εμφανές. Από τον Αγαμέμνονα και τον Αχιλλέα έως τα Δεκεμβριανά του 44 οι Έλληνες πολέμησαν ο ένας τον άλλον με πάθος, αυταπάρνηση, ηρωισμό. Έκαναν τα αδύνατα δυνατά να νικήσουν τον αντίπαλο... Έλληνα...να καταστρέψουν...ό,τι έχτιζαν οι ίδιοι. Και το κάνουν ακόμη με τη δικαιολογία ότι υποφέρουν

οικονομικά, ότι το κράτος είναι δυνάστης κακός, ότι η κοινωνία είναι άδικη, ότι...ότι...ότι. Και αν όλα αυτά ήταν αλήθεια στο υπερθετικό βαθμό, και πάλι δεν υπάρχει δικαιολογία για ό,τι γίνεται στους δρόμους της Αθήνας, της διαμαντόπετρας στης γης το δαχτυλίδι, όπως λέει ο ποιητής...μιας θαμπής και ραγισμένης διαμαντόπετρας, ριγμένης ανάμεσα στα πυρολυμένα σκουπίδια. Εξέγερση ενάντια στα τελευταία τριάντα πέντε χρόνια ειρήνης και σταθερότητας, οικονομικής ευμάρειας με πρωτόγνωρη δημοκρατική διακυβέρνηση...εξέγερση ενάντια στην ευκαιρία να χτίσουν ένα πολύ καλύτερο μέλλον μέσα στην Ευρώπη...εξέγερση ενάντια στην καλή τους τύχη την οποίαν ακόμα δεν μπορούν να πιστέψουν.

-Πιστεύεις ότι όλα αυτά γίνονται αναίτια; Πιστεύεις ότι τα χρόνια αυτά ήσαν τόσο καλά; Πιστεύεις στην ευκαιρία της Ευρώπης; Το πιστεύεις αλήθεια;

-Η Αθήνα δεν βρίσκεται στην κατάσταση του Δεκέμβρη του 44 αλλά σε ένα Δεκέμβρη μεταμοντέρνας Ελληνικού τρικυμίας εν κρανίω. Ακούω τη χρήση της λέξης «Επανάσταση» και εξεγείρομαι. Η Επανάσταση είναι ένας όρος ο οποίος ακούγεται από «αναλυτές» χωρίς να του δίνεται κανένα ακριβές περιεχόμενο. Είναι μια επιθυμία η οποία διακρίνεται από το λυρισμό της περιγραφής ενός θανάτου...μια απόδραση δίχως προορισμό...έναν χωρισμό δίχως επιστροφή. Η χώρα πενθεί ουρλιάζοντας μέσα στη γιορτινή ατμόσφαιρά των Χριστουγέννων τα οποία έχουν μετατραπεί σε έναν εμπορικό οργασμό ο οποίος κινδυνεύει πια να μείνει ανεκπλήρωτος, μια εκσπερμάτωση δίχως γόνιμη και αποδεκτική μήτρα».

-Γιατί συγκρίνεις το 44 με το σήμερα;

-Το Δεκέμβριο του 44, στο ξενοδοχείο «Μεγάλη Βρετανία», ο εκπρόσωπος της αποικιοκρατίας, Τσόρτσιλ συναντήθηκε με τον Αντιβασιλέα Αρχιεπίσκοπο Δαμασκηνό. Στους δρόμους γύρω το ΕΑΜ επιτέθηκε ή και αμύνονταν. Το κέντρο της Αθήνας είχε γεμίσει νεκρούς και φόβο. Από την Ακαδημίας, τα Εξάρχεια, την 3^η Σεπτεμβρίου, το Κουκάκι, του Μακρογιάννη. Η Αθήνα ζούσε έναν πόλεμο, έναν εμφύλιο. Τώρα η Αθήνα ζει μια παρωδία, έναν αυτοσαρκασμό της αδυναμίας της να σκεφτεί, να δημιουργήσει. Απαρνιέται τη μονοτονία της αδιαφορίας της, αυτομαστιγώνεται όπως οι Πέρσες σίτες στη μνήμη του Χαλίφη Αλή.

-Μα...είναι μια διαμαρτυρία...μια δήλωση ότι και αυτοί υπάρχουν...σίγουρα η δολοφονία του παιδιού...

-Ποιος τιμωρεί ένα έγκλημα με μια τυφλή καταστροφή; Ένας έφηβος πέφτει νεκρός από έναν ασυνείδητο. Μια ολόκληρη σύναξη ανθρώπων σπάνε, καταστρέφουν, καίνε μαγαζιά, αυτοκίνητα. Στην Αμερική θυμάμαι τέτοιες αντιδράσεις στο Σικάγο, στο Λος Άντζελες, στη Φιλαδέλφεια από μαύρους εναντίον της αστυνομίας μετά από άγριες συμπεριφορές της τελευταίας σε μαύρους. Ήταν εξεγέρσεις προϊόν φυλετικής διένεξης όπου οι μαύροι εγκλωβισμένοι στις μητροπόλεις είχαν κάθε λόγο να εξεγερθούν σε αδικίες αιώνων και στερεότυπα καταδικαστικά για αυτούς. Εδώ τι συμβαίνει; Πες μου, φαίνεται πως δεν έχω επαφή με την πραγματικότητα. Ζητάνε οι νέοι μια ουτοπία; Ήρθε η ώρα να γκρεμίσουμε ό,τι χτίσαμε; Είναι πράγματι τόσο κακό; Από τον Παράδεισο έως την σοσιαλιστική ουτοπία και την «αυτορρυθμιζόμενη» ελεύθερη αγορά κατασκευάσαμε με τη φαντασία μας

ευτυχισμένους και δίκαιους κόσμους για τους οποίους πολλοί θυσιάστηκαν και πολλά θυσίασαν; Αποτύχαμε; Τι ζητάμε αυτοί που διαμαρτύρονται; Μήπως κάνω λάθος;

Απέναντί τους η τηλεόραση έδειχνε μαγαζιά και σκουπίδια στις φλόγες. Άνθρωποι τρέχουν να γλυτώσουν ή να επιτεθούν. Υπάρχει εξέγερση, έτσι έλεγαν οι δημοσιογράφοι... ο Στέφανος την έκλεισε.

-Ωστε έχουμε εξέγερση εναντίον του αστικού καθεστώτος. Οι νέοι εξεγείρονται...όλοι μιλάνε για τους νέους...ένας νεαρός μαθητής σκοτώθηκε από σφαίρα αστυνομικού, και οι νέοι εξεγείρονται. Εξέγερση...γύρω από το Πολυτεχνείο, τη Νομική, την ΑΣΟΕ, όπως τότε...τριάντα πέντε χρόνια πριν...θυμάσαι...τότε ήμουν νέος...όχι τόσο νέος όσο οι μαθητές του Λυκείου...αλλά νέος...εξέγερση...τότε και τώρα.

-Τα θυμόμαστε. Εσύ τα έζησες από πολύ κοντά. Τώρα πάντως τα πράγματα δεν είναι ακριβώς όπως τα λες Σε μερικά πράγματα πρέπει να καταλάβεις, αν θελήσεις... Στέφανε...αλλά μάλλον δεν θέλεις.

-Τότε υπήρχε κάτι συγκεκριμένο, τώρα παλεύουν για κάτι αφηρημένο απροσδιόριστο, μια διαψευθείσα προσδοκία η οποία παίρνει εκδίκηση...μια επιθυμία...μια προσμονή η οποία φαίνεται στους νέους ότι δεν θα εκπληρωθεί. Τότε...το 1973 η εξέγερση έφερε τον Ιωαννίδη...το 44 η εξέγερση απέτυχε μετά από χρόνια εμφυλίου πολέμου, αλλά έγινε ο βρόγχος στη σκέψη και τη συνείδησή μας...ο εφιάλτης τον οποίον προσπαθούμε να ξορκίσουμε και ακόμα βρίσκεται ανάμεσα μας...μια αδελφοκτονία για την οποίαν καμιά Αντιγόνη δε θυσιάστηκε. Τότε απέτυχε γιατί δεν υπήρχαν οι συνθήκες για να πετύχει...τώρα υπάρχουν; Τώρα το μόνο το οποίο υπάρχει είναι μια παγκόσμια ανισορροπία, μια ζάλη του συστήματος. Το σύστημα, λέξη βαρυσήμαντη με σκοτεινές αναφορές σε συνωμοσίες, και αόρατη καταπίεση. Το σύστημα...το σύστημα είναι ο εχθρός μας. Ανάθεμα με αν καταλαβαίνω πια τι συμβαίνει. Κάποτε έπινα πιο ευγενικά ποτά, τώρα δεν μου είναι απαραίτητα, ή μάλλον μου είναι περιττά.

-Γιατί ακούς τόσες αναλύσεις, οι πιο πολλές είναι ανόητες. Καταλαβαίνεις πολύ καλά ότι κάτι πάει στραβά, κάπου τα πράγματα έχουν σκαλώσει.

-Οι εφημερίδες και οι τηλεοπτικές εκπομπές είναι κυριευμένες από την ανάλυση της κοινωνικής αναταραχής. Ο κάθε ένας είναι ένας βαθυστόχαστος κοινωνιολόγος με γνώσης ψυχολογίας των μαζών, με αναφορές στις κρίσεις του παρελθόντος. Η Ελλάδα συνταράσσεται από τις ίδιες τις πράξεις. Μένει ενεδά εμπρός στην τόλμη της και το θάρρος να δηλώσει τη δυσαρέσκεια της προς το κάθε τι, το κέρδος, τη διαφθορά, τον καταναλωτισμό, τον βιασμό της Φύσης, την φτώχεια, την έλλειψη αλληλεγγύης, την μοναξιά. Δεν πιστεύω ότι δείχνει θάρρος...τότε υπήρχε θάρρος...τώρα υπάρχει θράσος. Ένα είναι αλήθεια...υπάρχει η διάψευση μεγάλων προσδοκιών. Και...έχεις δίκιο δεν θέλω να παραδεχτώ ότι όλα αυτά μπορούν να προκαλέσουν δίκαιη οργή η οποία εκδηλώνεται με αυτόν τον τρόπο. Δεν μπορώ να δεχτώ την τυφλή βία εναντίον ανθρώπων οι οποίοι θα αναρωτιούνται αύριο σε τι έφταιζαν και έχασαν τις περιουσίες τους-.

-Εστω, τώρα έχουν θράσος...κάτι είναι και αυτό...προσελκύει την προσοχή».

-Η κυβέρνηση φταίει για όλα. Και είναι αλήθεια, η κάθε κυβέρνηση φταίει για όλα. Κανείς άλλος εκτός από την κυβέρνηση, τους κακούς Αμερικάνους ή και Ευρωπαίους, τους ξένους συνωμότες και

ανθέλληνες δεν έφταιξε ποτέ σε αυτήν την χώρα. Εμείς, ο λαός είμαστε άωμοι, προδομένοι και πληρώνουμε τις αμαρτίες άλλων.

-Το παρατραβάς...

-Και τότε το ίδιο πίστευαν όλοι. Σε όλη μου τη ζωή αυτό θυμάμαι, όλοι έφταιγαν εκτός από εμάς. Και ήταν πράγματι έτσι. Ο λαός δεν μπορεί να φταίει όταν οι ηγέτες του τον προδίδουν, όταν οι ξένοι και δυνατοί τον μισούν. Και τότε, με κάθε δυνατή δικαιολογία, η εξέγερση πίστευε στην ανατροπή. Και τώρα από ό,τι διαβάζω από τα φυλλάδια τα οποία μου έφερες...

-Μου τα έδωσε μια κοπέλα στην Πατησίων και Ηπείρου.

-Θυμάσαι...εκεί μας σταμάτησε, το 73 ο αστυνομικός...

-Εγώ δεν θυμάμαι...εσύ μου το έχεις διηγηθεί...σε σταμάτησαν...με τον πατέρα σου.

-Ακριβώς...τότε έπεφταν σφαίρες...τώρα η εξέγερση διακηρύσσει την επιθυμία για αλλαγή: «Θέλουμε να πραγματοποιήσουμε τα όνειρά μας για έναν κόσμο χωρίς εξουσίες, σύνορα, φυλακές στρατούς», να, εδώ είναι τυπωμένες σε πυκνές αράδες με καταδίκες για το απάνθρωπο και δολοφονικό κράτος, για τον φασισμό της εξουσίας την καταπίεση, τη βία της αστικής κοινωνίας. Αναρωτιέμαι...όλα αυτά που διαβάζω τα πιστεύουν αυτοί οι οποίοι τα έγραψαν. Αν αυτά τα παιδιά πιστεύουν ότι ζούμε μόνο μέσα το ψέμα και την απάτη, τότε πώς πρέπει να ζήσουν όσοι καταδικάζουν αυτή την αθλιότητα; Να απαρνηθούν τη συμμετοχή τους στο σύστημα; Να σταματήσουν να παράγουν...να καταναλώνουν; Να αναθεωρήσουν τα πάντα προς μια Νιτσεϊκή ηθική πέραν του καλού και του κακού; Γιατί η ανατροπή του κακού δεν συνεπάγεται την έλευση του καλού. Μπορεί να αναγγέλλει την έλευση ενός μεγαλύτερου κακού. Η κάθε επανάσταση θέλει να ξεριζώσει το κακό το οποίο έχει γίνει ανυπόφορο, αλλά δεν μπορούμε να το θεραπεύσουμε κουβαλώντας μπαγκάζια από άλλες εποχές, φτιασιδία και ψιμύθια για πεθαμένους. Υπάρχει άραγε καλό και κακό;

-Εγώ πιστεύω ότι υπάρχει καλό και κακό....

-Είσαι αφελής...

-Και όμως...όλοι πιστεύουν ότι υπάρχει καλό και κακό....

-Και τι αποδεικνύει αυτό;

Το τηλέφωνο χτύπησε... επίμονα...απαιτητικά...σαν ένας επαγγελματίας ζητιάνος ή ένας πεινασμένος για ένα κομμάτι ψωμί.

-Βλέπεις τι γίνεται;! Ο κάθε αλήτης, ο κάθε διεστραμμένος είναι ελεύθερος να σπάσει, να βάλει φωτιά, να κλέψει». Ο Θωμάς Σαρόγλου, τρίτη γενιά από την προσφυγιά της Μικράς Ασίας θρηνούσε την καταστροφή που είχαν ονομάσει «εξέγερση».

-Μην το παίρνεις τόσο βαριά, Θωμά. Ξέρεις, τόσα χρόνια γίνονται τα ίδια και το ίδια...Μιθριδατισμός της ελληνικής κοινωνίας στην ασχήμια, την ανομία την οποία ονομάζουμε διαμαρτυρία, έκφραση αντίστασης στο κάθε στραβό της κοινωνίας μας. Θα περάσει, δεν θα μείνουμε σε αυτό. Πες μου τα νέα σου.

-Με παρηγορείς ή με εμπαιζεις; Τι θα γίνει αν συνεχιστεί αυτό το χάλι;

Εντάξει, σε παρηγορώ. Ήρθε ξανά η διάθεση της αυτοκαταστροφής στους Έλληνες, μια ασυνείδητη ροπή στην τρέλα. Τώρα βγήκε στην επιφάνεια. Τα δεχτήκαμε όλα, ταπεινώσεις, βιασμούς της ιστορίας μας, της εθνικής κυριαρχίας, της οικονομίας, του περιβάλλοντος. Τα δεχτήκαμε όλα για να αποφύγουμε το αναπόφευκτο, την αυτοκτονία.

Η γραμμή έμεινε σιωπηλή.

-Πως φτάσαμε ως εδώ; Ο Θωμάς αντέδρασε σαν να ξύπνησε από ένα κακό όνειρο.

-Πως φτάσαμε ως εδώ; Που ήσουν στην διάρκεια της Τουρκικής εισβολής στην Κύπρο;

-Τι είδους ερώτηση είναι αυτή; Μου απαντάς στο πως φτάσαμε ως εδώ ρωτώντας με για την Τουρκική εισβολή; Ήμουν στο σπίτι μου...το ξέρεις όπως ήσουν και εσύ.

-Ακριβώς, και οι δύο ήμαστε σπίτι μας. Όλοι είμαστε σπίτι μας. Δεν αντισταθήκαμε στην εισβολή. Δεν αντιστεκόμαστε σε κανέναν. Εξαργυρώσαμε τη δημοκρατία με εθνική καταστροφή για να χτίσουμε μια καλύτερη Ελλάδα και να τα αποτελέσματα. Τώρα κάνουμε αντίσταση στην αστυνομία, στην κυβέρνηση, στην αντιπολίτευση, στη δικαιοσύνη, στους διανοούμενους. Εύκολη, βολική αντίσταση, σε έναν άβουλο και παραδομένο εχθρό με το όνομα, ελληνικό δημόσιο, δηλαδή ελληνικό πολιτικό σύστημα, δηλαδή εμάς.

-Αυτό δεν απαντάει στο ερώτημα τι θα γίνει αύριο σε αυτόν τον τόπο, για τα παιδιά μας για τα εγγόνια μας. Τα έχουμε ξαναπεί αυτά, τώρα τι βλέπεις να γίνεται;

Η φωνή του είχε μια αγωνία που δεν ήθελα να φουντώσω. Είχα παρεκτραπεί.

-Όπως ήρθε αυτό το κακό θα περάσει. Ξέρεις, εύκολα παίρνουμε φωτά και εύκολα τα παρατάμε. Σε λίγες μέρες θα έχουμε άλλα να σκεφτόμαστε.

-Με καθησυχάζεις...ας είναι, μάλλον θα καταλήξει κα αυτό σαν όλες τις άλλες ελληνικές ανοησίες, σε μια γελοιότητα. Καληνύχτα.

Έκλεισα το τηλέφωνο.

-Θόδωρε, ο Σαρόγλου και εγώ έχουμε τα ίδια πολιτικά πιστεύω. Όταν συμφωνείς με κάποιον η συζήτηση δεν μπορεί να οδηγηθεί σε άγνωστα μονοπάτια, θα καταλήξει σε μια γνώριμη επωδό, «τα πράγματα είναι όπως τα πιστεύουμε». Αναρωτιέμαι τι θα έλεγαν αν ήταν ζωντανοί οι συνταγματάρχες!

-Και πάλι ξέφυγες...για σένα όλα είναι λάθος...και αυτά που βλέπεις να γίνονται είναι εγκλήματα. Θέλεις όλα να βαδίζουν με σχέδιο, με τάξη...οι έφηβοι, οι νέοι είναι θυμωμένοι...θα ξεσπάσουν...δες τι συμβαίνει γύρω σου...σταμάτα να είσαι προκατειλημμένος. Μπορεί να βλέπουμε κάτι διαφορετικό να γεννιέται.

-Υπερβάλω;! Είμαι προκατειλημμένος! Έχεις δίκιο. Είμαι προκατειλημμένος όχι ενάντια στους νέους αλλά στους γέρους σαν και εμένα. Για ποιους νέους μιλάμε; Που βρίσκονται οι νέοι; Δεν υπάρχουν...δεν τους φέραμε στον κόσμο...τους απορρίψαμε πριν καν γεννηθούν. Η χώρα έχει μια δράκα νέων οι οποίοι έμαθαν να ζητάνε τα πάντα και με το δίκιο τους γιατί τους βλέπουμε σαν σπάνιο είδος...είδος προς εξαφάνιση. Οι λιγοστοί νέοι στην Ελλάδα ζουν κάτω από την προστασία και τον φόβο μας πως σύντομα η γενιά των Ελλήνων θα χαθεί. Από τους γνωστούς μου και φίλους μετά βίας

μερικοί έχουν δύο παιδιά, οι περισσότεροι είναι άκληροι. Αποτύχαμε Άρη να δώσουμε ζωή σε νέους. Και σε αυτούς που έχουμε τους δώσαμε τα λάθος μαθήματα για τη ζωή...τους μάθαμε να έχουν δικαιώματα και καμία υποχρέωση για κανένα, ακόμα και για τον εαυτό τους. Τι καταφέραμε; Από τους προδότες και ανεγκέφαλους της «Επανάστασης», στους σημερινούς ανεγκέφαλους, δημιουργήματα μιας κοινωνίας η οποία έχει αναγάγει τον φιλοτομαρισμό σε αξίωμα. Τι φταις όμως να ακούς το μοιρολόι μου. Δεν φταις σε τίποτα. Αυτοί οι νέοι μάλλον δηλώνουν κάτι για το μέλλον δίχως να ξέρουν τίποτα για το παρόν. Παρασύρονται αλλά η ανομία είναι προνόμιο των Ελλήνων οι οποίοι δεν μπόρεσαν ακόμη να συγκροτήσουν έναν ουσιαστικό, λειτουργικό τρόπο να ελέγχουν τη ζωή τους, τον τόπο τους, το ίδιο τους το μέλλον.

Σταμάτησα ασθμαίνοντας. Κοίταξα το ποτήρι μου και κατάλαβα ότι χρησιμοποιούσα τον Θόδωρο όπως χρησιμοποιούσα και τον Άρη τον παλιό μαθητή μου...τους χρησιμοποιούσα για να ακούω τον εαυτό μου να μιλάει δυνατά σε άλλους εγώ που θεωρούσα τον εαυτό μου σιωπηλό μάρτυρα και συνεργό σε ένα διαρκές έγκλημα το οποίο όμως κανείς δεν μπόρεσε να σταματήσει. Άκουγα, σαν να ήταν δίπλα του, τη φωνή του Γιάννη Σταύρου να μου απαντάει σε αυστηρό τόνο. Ο Γιάννης δεν ήταν διανοούμενος, ήταν ζωγράφος. Είχε καταφέρει να αποστασιοποιηθεί από τη βοή και την αντάρα της κοινωνικής και καλλιτεχνικής ζωής. Με έναν μοναδικό τρόπο η τέχνη του ήταν ο καταλύτης για αυτό το συναισθηματικό και νοητικό του επίτευγμα. Το χρώμα, η σκιά, η γραμμή είχαν για αυτόν μεγαλύτερη σημασία από οποιαδήποτε «επανάσταση», οποιαδήποτε πολιτική. Για αυτόν το παράδειγμα ήταν ο Θεοτοκόπουλος. Είχε κατασταλάξει μέσα του η αλήθεια για αυτόν τον τόπο δίχως να κάνει βαθυστόχαστες αναλύσεις. Φτωχός, με μια υγεία κλονισμένη, είχε καταφέρει να σταθεί όρθιος μόνος του. Τώρα δεν είναι πια μαζί μας, αλλά ξαφνικά πήρε το λόγο.

«Πάλι γίνεσαι καταστροφολόγος, ανυπόφορα απαισιόδοξος, αφήνεις ιστορίες από το παρελθόν να βαραίνουν, όχι την κρίση σου αλλά την ψυχή σου, κουράζεις τον εαυτό σου και τους άλλους, με το έρεβος το οποίο «παρατηρείς» για το μέλλον. Σταμάτα και κοίταξε με λίγη αισιοδοξία τα πράγματα. Η κοινωνία δεν πεθαίνει αλλάζει ρυθμούς, προσαρμόζεται σε συνθήκες πρωτόγνωρες. Χάθηκε η μυθολογία και οι παραστάσεις που ξέραμε...πώς να στο πω...ήταν ανίκανες να αντισταθούν στη λαίλαπα το οποίο ήρθε από έξω και από μέσα μας. Το κύμα της τεχνολογίας, της απόλαυσης εδώ και τώρα δίχως υποχρεώσεις ή δευτερες σκέψεις. Η Ελλάδα που ήξερες πάει...έφυγε, ζήτησε με ό,τι σε αγγίζει».

Η φωνή του Γιάννη σίγασε. Ακούμπησα το κεφάλι του στην πολυθρόνα και έκλεισα το μάτια.

-Στέφανε, είσαι φορτωμένος...θα τα πούμε μιαν άλλη φορά. Καληνύχτα.

Ο Θόδωρος έφυγε. Είχε καταλάβει ότι δεν βρισκόμουν σε κατάσταση να συζητήσω ήρεμα. Και πώς να ήμουν; Τι πήγαινε καλά για να μπορώ να είμαι ήρεμος...η τηλεόραση έπαιζε. Η εκπομπή από το κανάλι της Θεσσαλονίκης, δίχως τις θεατρικές κορώνες των εμπορικών σταθμών. Ένας γνωστός διανοούμενος μιλούσε για τη λογική και το συναίσθημα, το πρώτο ήταν παράδοση της Δυτικής Εκκλησίας, το δεύτερο της Ανατολικής. Το συναίσθημα, έτσι έλεγε, είναι το κύριο κριτήριο αντίδρασης για μας, ως μέρος της παράδοσης μας. Αυτό το συναίσθημα, πίστευε βγαίνει στην επιφάνεια, άναρχο,

πιστικό...εκφράζεται με συμπεριφορές ανεξέλεγκτες, οι οποίες καταλήγουν, όπως έχουν καταλήξει πάντα, στην αυτοκαταστροφή μας. Έτσι προσπαθούσε να εξηγήσει τα γεγονότα. Ίσως να είχε ένα κάποιο δίκιο. Το συναίσθημα μπορεί να είναι η πιο ισχυρή συνιστώσα της Ελληνικής πραγματικότητας. Όμως δεν υπάρχει κανείς και πουθενά ο οποίος κάποτε δεν θα αντιδράσει συναισθηματικά. Δεν ήξερε αν αυτή η συμπεριφορά προέρχεται από την παράδοση της Ανατολικής Εκκλησίας η οποία προσεγγίζει το Θεό μέσω του συναίσθηματος αλλά είναι προφανές ότι όλες αυτές οι πράξεις δεν έχουν παρά ένα άναρχο συναισθηματικό κίνητρο. Η τάξη, η ιεράρχηση σκοπών και μέσων, η λογική έρχονται μετά από την πίεση της ανάγκης και της επιθυμίας. Το Σύμπαν και οι επιθυμίες μας δεν ταυτίζονται, συγκρούονται ανηλεώς και το Σύμπαν πάντα κερδίζει. Αν το λογικό μέρος της ψυχής κατά τον Πλάτωνα έχει διαμορφώσει μια κοινωνία κανόνων και αρχών, οι επιθυμίες και τα πάθη μας βρίσκουν πάντα τρόπο να βγουν στην επιφάνεια, να σκορπίσουν στους πέντε ανέμους όσα χτίσαμε.

Η μέρα μου τέλειωνε χειρότερα από την προηγούμενη. Ήθελα να κοιμηθώ αλλά δεν μπορούσα. Ο ύπνος μου είχε γίνει εφιάλτης. Η Άρτεμης κοιμόταν...ευτυχώς...μπορούσε και κοιμόταν μετά από τη σωματική κούραση της μέρας. Για αυτήν ο ύπνος ήταν μια ευλογία. Ο γιος μου δεν έχει γυρίσει από τη δουλειά του ακόμη. Η κόρη μου κοιμόταν και αυτή. Για χρόνια ο ύπνος της ήταν κομματιασμένος, τη μέρα κυρίως...η νύχτα ήταν για αυτήν μια καταδίκη. Τώρα ξυπνάει νωρίς και κοιμάται...πόσο λυτρωτικός ήταν αυτός ο ύπνος της! Αυτός ο ύπνος της με γαλήνευε...όπως και το διάβασμα. Το κείμενο, αφού έσβηνα το φως, τον συντρόφευε στο σκοτάδι...συνέχιζε να σχηματίζει νέα κείμενα στο νου μου, να βρίσκει απαντήσεις, να απορρίπτει συμπεράσματα, να επινοεί νέες αιτίες για γεγονότα. Δεν με έπαιρνε ο ύπνος. Αύριο είχα να αντιμετωπίσει μια δύσκολη μέρα. Η δουλειά μου δεν περπατούσε. Έκανα συνεχώς λογαριασμούς...νοερούς, σκεπτόμουν πιθανές αλλά μάλλον φανταστικές λύσεις. Ήμουν και εγώ στην ίδια κατάσταση με τα δημόσια οικονομικά της χώρας. Ήδη, η «συντηρητική» κυβέρνηση έπαιρνε κάποια μέτρα φορολογικά, για πόθεν έσχες, και για κάποιες μειώσεις στις σπατάλες του δημοσίου. Στη δουλειά μου τα χρέη ανέβαιναν και ο τζίρος έπεφτε, τα έξοδα έτρεχαν. Οι εκατοντάδες χιλιάδες, άραγε πόσοι είναι, δημόσιοι υπάλληλοι, ήθελαν τους μισθούς τους, τις συντάξεις τους, τα φάρμακά τους. Το κράτος έπρεπε να τα φροντίσει όλα. Η εταιρεία έπρεπε να φροντίσει τον εαυτό της, τους λίγους εργαζόμενους, την επιβίωση της. Το κράτος έπρεπε να φροντίσει ακόμα και τα σπασμένα τζάμια, τις καμένες βιτρίνες, τους κατεστραμμένους μαγαζάτορες, τους κάδους των απορριμμάτων των οποίων το περιεχόμενο έχουν αδειάσει στο δρόμο και στα πεζοδρόμια και πλαγιασμένοι κείτονται κουφάρια ενός πολέμου ο οποίος τους οδηγεί προς τα σκουπίδια της Ιστορίας. Το κράτος βέβαια δεν πληρώνει τις ζημιές αυτές. Θα πληρώσει όμως τη χαμένη αξιοπιστία για τον τουρισμό, και κάποιοι θα πληρώσουν την «εξέγερση» χάνοντας τη δουλειά τους.

Πλησίαζαν Χριστούγεννα, η γέννηση μέσα στο χειμώνα, η ελπίδα, σύμφωνα με όσους πιστεύουν στα θαύματα, του ανθρώπου για να αντέξει τη σκληρότητα του κόσμου τούτου. Το πνεύμα της γιορτής μόλις που ξεπροβάλλει ανάμεσα από τα φώτα της διακόσμησης των δρόμων. Διασχίζει την πόλη και φεύγει μακριά, κάπου σε μια άγνωστη τροχιά. Δεν αντέχουν να αισθάνονται μόνο να μιμούνται κάποιες παγιωμένες συμπεριφορές ...αυτό είναι αρκετό, στο κάτω κάτω κανείς δεν μπορούσε να

αποδείξει το συναίσθημα...μόνο η συμπεριφορά τους... οι αισθήσεις τους είχαν σχεδόν απονεκρωθεί. Η πόλη δεν αντέχει την παρουσία τους, ούτε και αυτοί την παρουσία των «άλλων», των όποιων άλλων. Θέλουν να διώξουν τους άλλους από αυτήν την πόλη, από τη ζωή τους. Τους έχουν κάνει κακό, Τους έχουν κλείσει σε μια απέραντη θλίψη, σε μια αβάσταχτη κατήφεια. Και όλοι ζητάνε ελευθερία, θέλουν να αντισταθούν. Η ανάγκη τους κάνει βίαιους, απροσπέλαστους.

Ήθελα να κοιμηθώ. Να σταματήσω να σκάφτομαι. Δεν ήθελα καν να ξυπνήσω.

-Έχεις επηρεαστεί άσχημα από το γεγονός. Μην το παίρνεις τόσο σοβαρά. Το να συμπεραίνει κανείς τόσα πολλά για το μέλλον είναι κουραστικό. Βλέπεις πολύ μακριά...αυτό σου κάνει κακό...ξέρεις που θα καταλήξουν όλα αυτά...στα ίδια και στα ίδια.

Ο Θόδωρος είχε επιστρέψει την άλλη μέρα να ελέγξει την κατάστασή μου.

-Έχεις δίκιο. Τα νεύρα μου είναι σε άθλια κατάσταση. Όλα αυτά είναι ψυχοφθόρα. Θυμάσαι την αφήγηση μου για την περίοδο της θητείας μου στο στρατό. Γελούσαμε με τους караβανάδες, με τις απίστευτες περιπέτειες μου. Τα θεωρούσα όλα εκείνα σημαντικά για όσους θα τα άκουγαν, θα τα διάβαζαν ίσως με ενδιαφέρον για να κατανοήσουν το παρελθόν. Τώρα έχουν γίνει τόσα πολλά τόσα φοβερά ώστε όλα εκείνα έχουν απελπιστικά ξεθωριάσει. Είναι φαγητό μπαγιάτικο.

-Θέλεις να τα πούμε μιαν άλλη μέρα; Καλύτερα να ξεκουραστείς.

-Όχι, αν μείνω μόνος θα γίνω χειρότερα. Ας μιλήσουμε για το σήμερα.

-Για σένα το σήμερα μπορεί να έχει ημερομηνία άγνωστου αριθμού ετών. Μια και έπιασες το Πολυτεχνείο τι θα έλεγες για την εισβολή στην Κύπρο. Μπορούμε να δούμε τα γεγονότα σε μια προοπτική τριάντα χρόνων.

-Από την εισβολή των Τούρκων στην εισβολή των εξαγριωμένων νέων στα μαγαζιά. Η επιχείρηση κατάληψης του κέντρου της Αθήνας με την συμμετοχή των σκουπιδιών ήταν πλήρως επιτυχημένη. Λες να την έχει σχεδιάσει ο Κυριακού ο πεθαμένος πια διευθυντής του 3^{ου} Επιτελικού της Στρατιάς στη Λάρισα;

-Γιατί βλέπεις τα γεγονότα τόσο αρνητικά; Υπάρχουν πραγματικά προβλήματα για τους νέους. Τα όσα βίωσες εσύ ή εγώ δεν υπάρχουν. Ξέχασες τα δικά μου στο στρατό. Πήγα στο νησί και έμενα υπηρεσία για να βρήσκω όλον τον καιρό να γράφω. Οι μισοί νέοι είναι άνεργοι, άνεργοι με πτυχία, και με καμιά πιθανότητα να βρουν κάτι να τους εκφράζει. Ξέρεις πως μεγαλώνουν και πως ζουν τα παιδιά, οι μαθητές, οι φοιτητές; Νομίζεις πως δεν δικαιολογείται αυτή η τυφλή βία; Και όμως δικαιολογείται. Υπάρχει παντού γύρω μας.

-Θόδωρε εκφράζεσαι πιο ήπια από το γιο μου. Αυτός θέλει να κρεμάσουν τους πολιτικούς στο Σύνταγμα. Θέλει οι διαδηλωτές να κάψουν τη Βουλή. Γίνετε όλοι ξαφνικά Δεκεμβριστές;

-Γιατί όχι, αν χρειάζεται. Η καταστροφή με αηδιάζει αλλά...κάποιος πρέπει να διαμαρτυρηθεί για όσα συμβαίνουν. Οι πολίτες και οι πολιτικοί ζουν σε άλλους κόσμους.

-Δηλαδή, αν βρισκόταν ένας άλλος Παπαδόπουλος τι θα έλεγες»;

Έμεινε σιωπηλός. Σηκώθηκε από και πήγε προς την βιβλιοθήκη.

-Δεν υπάρχει τέτοια πιθανότητα...αλλά πάνω στο θυμό του κανείς μπορεί να δεχτεί ακόμα και αυτό...όπως την καταστροφή της Αθήνας.

-Την καταστροφή μας...να τη δεχτούμε πάνω στο θυμό μας; Με αυτούς τους καταγκιόζηδες που μας κυβερνάνε μπορεί κανείς να γίνει έξαλος αλλά πρέπει να σώσουμε ό,τι σώζεται, με κάθε τρόπο. Αγανακτώ όσο και εσύ αλλά δεν μπορώ να αφήσω την παρόρμηση της αυτοκαταστροφής να με παρασύρει, όσο και αν αυτό το έκανα για την προσωπική μου ζωή...δεν μπορώ να το δεχτώ για τους άλλους...

-Δεν μπορούμε να σώσουμε κανένα, ούτε καν τον εαυτό μας. Το πλοίο βάζει νερα από πολλές μπάντες και οι αντλίες δεν δουλεύουν.

Έκανε μια κίνηση σαν να του έλεγε πως δεν θέλει να ακούσει τις ανοησίες του. Πετάχτηκε από το κάθισμά του και ακούμπησε τα χέρια του πάνω στο γραφείο του.

-Έχουμε υποχρέωση να κάνουμε ό,τι μπορούμε και ακόμα ό,τι δεν μπορούμε. Ακόμα και για να λέμε πως το κάναμε σαν μια υποσημείωση στα ατέλειωτα παραληρηματικά γραπτά μου και τα ανέκδοτα ποιήματα σου.

-Τα ποιήματά μου, ποσό τα θυμήθηκες αυτά πάλι; Εγώ τα έχω ξεχάσει τουλάχιστον δύο δεκαετίες. Τουλάχιστον εσύ γράφεις ακατάπαυστα. Ανάμεσα σε διαλείμματα, σε λεωφορεία, σε τρένα. Εμπνέεσαι από το κάθε τι, βρίσκεις σημαντικά θέματα που κανείς δεν σκέφτεται καν.

-Τώρα ήρθε ο καιρός να σταματήσω να γράφω για μένα και να καταλάβω τι συμβαίνει και γιατί. Αν εσύ ξέρεις περισσότερα μπορείς να μου τα πεις. Τα θέλω όμως νιανιά, έτοιμο φαί για να τα μεταδώσω όπου νομίζω. Μην προσπαθήσεις να μου μάθεις θεωρίες και να μο αναλύσεις το κάθε τι. Με ενδιαφέρει να είμαι χρήσιμος».

-Αυτό και αν είναι νέο! Αυτό και αν είναι αλλαγή.

-Φεύγω θα χάσω το τελευταίο τρένο και δεν έχω όρεξη να πληρώνω ταξί. Τα λέμε...

Έφυγε τρέχοντας. Έμεινα να καπνίζω και να κοιτάζω τα βιβλία στο απέναντι ράφι.

.....

Ο Στέφανος Βασιλειάδης ήταν καθηγητής μου στο μάθημα της πολιτικής θεωρίας και των θεσμών της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης. Ήταν από τους καθηγητές που δεν έκανε αστεία, ήθελε προσήλωση την ώρα της παράδοσης. Δεν είμαστε τα πιο ήσυχα παιδιά του κόσμου αλλά κάπως παλεύαμε γιατί είχαμε καταλάβει πως δεν θα παίρναμε βαθμό εύκολα. Και ο βαθμός με αυτόν τον άνθρωπο στην έδρα ήταν συνάρτηση το πόσο αποτελεσματικά παρακολουθούσαμε την ώρα της παράδοσης. Κουβαλούσε χαρτιά και βιβλία και εκεί που μιλούσε για κάτι το θεωρητικό άρχιζε να μιλάει για ιστορία. Στην αρχή ήταν δύσκολο να τον παρακολουθήσει κανείς αλλά μετά από λίγα μαθήματα καταλάβαμε πως μαζί με τη θεωρία ήθελε να πιστέψουμε όπως εκείνος πίστευε πως η ιστορία είναι η βάση για το θέμα μας. Στη θεωρία ήταν απίστευτα αναλυτικός, για μας που δεν είχαμε διδαχθεί την αξία του ακριβούς ορισμού μιας έννοιας. «Δίχως να έχετε κατακτήσει έννοιες δεν θα μπορέσετε ποτέ να κατακτήσετε καμιά

επιστήμη. Ειδικά στην πολιτική όπου οι έννοιες γίνονται αθύρματα της προπαγάνδας και της ιδεοληψίας». Δεν ήταν εύκολο. Κάποιοι ήταν πιο έτοιμοι από τους άλλους. Εγώ είχα προβλήματα, δεν ήμουν από εκείνους που είχαν δουλέψει πολύ στο Λύκειο. Τώρα που είχα αποφασίσει να πάω στην Αγγλία για σπουδές στις διεθνείς σχέσεις ο χρόνος προετοιμασίας εδώ μου ήταν μια καινούργια εμπειρία.

Δεχόταν ερωτήσεις κατά τη διάρκεια και μετά το μάθημα και επέμενε να του κάνουμε ερωτήσεις. Αρχίσαμε να παίρνουμε θάρρος και οι ερωτήσεις έγιναν πυκνές αν όχι και τόσο ουσιαστικές. Μετά το μάθημα περίμενε να μας ακούσει. Εκεί άρχισα να τον πλησιάζω. Με άκουγε με προσοχή και αν και μερικές φορές έδειχνε πως οι παρατηρήσεις μου ήταν ασήμαντες έως και ανόητες δεν σταμάταγε την ανάλυση και την συμπλήρωση των κενών μου. Έτσι γίναμε «φίλοι». Με βοήθησε να προχωρήσω όσο καλύτερα μπορούσα και όταν έφυγα δεν τον ξέχασα. Στις διακοπές του τηλεφωνούσα και του έδινα πληροφορίες για τη δουλειά μου. Όταν πια τέλειωσα τον ξαναβρήκα. Δεν δίδασκε πια. Είχε ασχοληθεί με κάποιες επιχειρήσεις αλλά ήταν πάντα έτοιμος να συζητήσει και να αναλύσει όποιο θέμα με απασχολούσε. Πάντα άρχιζε από παλιές δημοσιεύσεις και αναλύσεις. Αυτό που τον ενοχλούσε δεν ήταν οι πιθανόν ελλείψεις μου, ήταν το στυλ του γραψίματός μου.

-Ποιο βιβλίο λογοτεχνίας διάβασες τελευταία;

-Δεν διαβάζω λογοτεχνία. Κάτι παιδικά μυθιστορήματα, παλιότερα, τίποτα περισσότερο.

-Κακώς, κάκιστα. Άρη πρέπει να διαβάσεις λογοτεχνία, ποίηση, δεν μπορείς να προχωρήσεις δίχως τη φαντασία και την ανάπτυξη χαρακτήρων και καταστάσεων, δίχως τη γνώση των παθών και του παραλογισμού των ανθρώπων. Η θεωρία και η επιστήμη δεν υπάρχουν εν κενώ. Ζουν και αναπνέουν μέσα στην κοινωνία και στα πάθη θεών και θνητών. Διάβασε την Ιλιάδα. Σπουδαίο κείμενο για τη δουλειά σου.

-Σοβαρολογείτε! Την Ιλιάδα! Που σας ήρθε μια τέτοια ιδέα. Τι σχέση έχει η Ιλιάδα με την αμυντική πολιτική της ΕΕ και την κρίση στη Γιουγκοσλαβία.

-Τι έκανε ο Αγαμέμνωνας; Πώς μάζεψε και πόσους μάζεψε για να κάνει την εκστρατεία στην Τροία; Δεν ήταν ο στρατός των Ελλήνων μια ΕΕ της εποχής; Ένα είδος ένωσης έστω και για ένα σκοπό όπως η κατάκτηση μιας άλλης ένωσης, γύρω από την Τροία; Τι ήταν οι Θεοί του Ολύμπου; Δεν ήταν μια ελίτ δυνατών οι οποίοι ευνοούσαν τον έναν ή τον άλλο αντιμαχόμενο. Δεν προέβαλαν συμφέροντα και ισορροπίες δυνάμεων αλλά πάθη και προτιμήσεις θνητών ή μεταξύ τους αντιζηλίες αλλά στο βάθος είχαν να προστατεύσουν την επιρροή και τη θέση τους στην ιεραρχία της δυνάμεως ανάμεσά τους. Και μια και η δύναμη του Δία ήταν δεδομένη η Ήρα επιστράτευσε τη σαγήνη του σεξ για να βοηθήσει τους Αχαιούς. Στην ανθρώπινη κατάσταση η ιεραρχία δυνάμεων δεν είναι δεδομένη και η ιστορία δεν είναι τίποτα άλλο παρά μια αλλαγή αυτής της ιεραρχίας υπέρ ή κατά ενός νέου ηγεμόνα. Μόνο που η ΕΕ είχε μιαν Ελένη που ήταν η Σοβιετική Ένωση και μια Βρισίδα που ήταν οι ΗΠΑ. Οι Ευρωπαίοι έμαθαν γρήγορα πως η Ελένη τους ήταν ένα άδειο πουκάμισο και η εκστρατεία σκόρπισε. Το ηθικό μέρος της πανστρατιάς μεταμορφώθηκε σε ένα σχέδιο για την οικονομική ενοποίηση και η ζωοποιός δύναμη της εκστρατείας που για τον Όμηρο ήταν η απαγωγή έγινε το πλιάτσικο του Οδυσσέα. Έπρεπε

να περάσουν τα δέκα χρόνια στην περιπλάνηση για να μάθει ο ήρωας της Τροίας πέρα από την αντρεισούνη του Αχιλλέα πως δεν προσβάλλεις τους θεούς, ούτε περνάς τον πόντο με τους θησαυρούς της Τροίας δίχως να πληρώσεις το τίμημα.

-Δεν μπορούσα ποτέ να σκεφτώ αυτό το απαίσιο μάθημα των αρχαίων όπως το αναλύσατε.

-Διάβασε ιστορίες αγάπης. Οι σχέση των ερωτευμένων είναι σχέσης ισχύος, μόνο που εκεί η ισχύς είναι δεσμός και όχι απόσταση. Και όταν αυτός ο δεσμός σπάσει τότε ανοίγεται ένα χάσμα άλλοτε τυπικό άλλοτε μίσους και αντιπαλότητας. Στον έρωτα βρίσκει κανείς το δεσμό που σφυρηλατούν οι δυνάμεις και των δύο. Παντοδύναμη διαδικασία που δεν θέλω να την αναγάγω σε μια βιολογική λειτουργία. Αν όμως κανείς το δει και έτσι, ακόμα και τότε η ερωτική ένωση είναι ακόμα περισσότερο μια σχέση ισχύος. Διαβάζοντας τις λεπτές ισορροπίες ανάμεσα στον έρωτα, την προδοσία, το συμβιβασμό και την οίκτο μαθαίνει κανείς να αναγνωρίζει τις ισορροπίες ή τις συγκρούσεις που αναπτύσσονται ανάμεσα σε ομάδες και κράτη. Δες τις σχέσεις παιδιών με γονείς, οικογένειες με οικογένειες, όλες είναι σχέσεις ισχύος, όχι στο επίπεδο των κρατών αλλά στο επίπεδο των παθών. Τα δυνατά πάθη ξεχωρίζουν και τις σχέσεις και τις εξελίξεις τους επηρεάζουν τους γύρω τους και διαμορφώνουν τη ζωή τους. Διάβασε, χωρίς να πεις από το νερό της τέχνης δεν θα αποκτήσεις στυλ γραφής, δεν θα αποκτήσεις την κατανόηση για να διαπεράσεις το κέλυφος της ακαδημαϊκής γλώσσας. Δεν έχεις ζήλο για να δεις πιο βαθιά τις διεθνείς σχέσεις. Η στεγνή ακαδημαϊκή προσέγγιση και το υποχρεωτικό τεχνικό γράψιμο για δημοσίευση έχουν κάνει τις αναλύσεις στερεότυπες. Ο μεγάλος δάσκαλος σε αυτό είναι ο Πλάτωνας, όχι για τις ιδέες του αλλά για την πολλαπλότητα των θεμάτων και των παραστάσεων, των εικόνων και των μύθων. Η δυναμική του γραψίματος ορίζεται από το πάθος του συγγραφέα και όχι μόνον από τις ιδέες του.

-Το ιδίωμα που γράφουμε είναι ένα και μοναδικό. Δεν υπάρχουν πολλά στυλ. Η επιστημονική μεθοδολογία και η αυστηρή παρουσίαση είναι η γραμμή για να πετύχεις.

-Να επιζητήσεις στο επάγγελμα ναι, να επιτύχεις όχι.

Οι συζητήσεις μας πήγαιναν όμως και σε άλλα σημεία που είχαν να κάνουν με τις εμπειρίες του Βασιλειάδη, με τις προσωπικές του απόψεις. Κάπου με χρησιμοποιούσε, έτσι κατάλαβα αργότερα για να σκέφτεται φωναχτά, να αναπολεί, αλλά και να ελέγχει κατά κάποιο τρόπο τις ερμηνείες του για τα γεγονότα. Η διαφορά ηλικίας μας ήταν τόση ώστε να έχουμε ζήσει δύο διαφορετικές εποχές. Αυτός ήταν παιδί του ψυχρού πολέμου και εγώ της πρόσφατης και ανεξέλεγκτης παγκοσμιοποίησης. Αυτός είχε ζήσει έναν κόσμο χωρισμένο σε δύο κομμάτια, εγώ ζούσα σε ένα κόσμο σε πολλά κομμάτια αλλά που έπρεπε να μιλήσουν και να εργαστούν μαζί.

Πήγα να τον δω μετά τα γεγονότα στην Αθήνα, όταν είχε πια μπει ο καινούργιος χρόνος. Ο πατέρας μου με προέτρεψε: «μάθε τι γνώμη έχει ο κύριος Βασιλειάδης για όλα αυτά». Ο πατέρας ήταν φοβισμένος. Σκεφτόταν τη δουλειά του, σκεφτόταν εμένα που μην μπορώντας να βρω δουλειά στον τομέα μου είχα ασχοληθεί με ασφάλειες, μεσιτείες, και χρηματοοικονομικά. Στην εποχή μας έπρεπε να είσαι ευέλικτος, να αλλάζεις κατεύθυνση γρήγορα. Αν περίμενες σε μια δουλειά, σε μια καριέρα ήσουν χαμένος. Ο αδελφός μου με τις σπουδές του στα λογιστικά φαίνεται πως θα έχει πάντα δουλειά. Ο

παλιός μου καθηγητής με δέχτηκε με χαρά και έδειξε κολακευμένος που τον θυμήθηκα. Μαζί τους βρισκόταν και ένα άλλος κύριος, ψηλός ασπρομάλλης που σηκώθηκε κα με χαιρέτησε. Ο Βασιλειάδης με σύστησε.

-Ο κύριος Θόδωρος Αρμενάκης παλιός φίλος. Θόδωρε ο Άρης Δαμάσκος, πολίος μαθητής και νυν φίλος. Έλα, Άρη, κάτσε, πες μου τα νέα σου.

-Δεν έχω κάτι σπουδαίο. Δουλεύω δώδεκα ώρες την ημέρα πουλώντας ασφάλειες, σπίτια, και ό,τι άλλο φανταστείτε, ίσως και περισσότερο και δεν έχω καιρό να παρακολουθήσω τις εξελίξεις. Εσείς θα μου πείτε. Βέβαια, όλα όσα έγιναν...

-Όσα έγιναν...δεν καταλαβαίνω γιατί οι άνθρωποι καταστρέφουν ό,τι χτίζουν άλλοι καμιά φορά και τα δικά τους έργα. Αλλά πρέπει να υπάρχει κάποιος λόγος. Θυμάμαι, με ρίγη ανείπωτης θλίψης, θα 'λεγα απελπισίας το πολιτικό πείραμα της Ελλάδας του 74.... τότε ζούσαμε στην εποχή της πολιτικής. Την εποχή της ερωτικής μας σχέσης ως λαός με κάθε είδος ιδεολογίας, πολιτικής έκφρασης, δράσης. Όλοι μιλούσαν για όλα, μια какоφωνία από γνώμες σε ένα περιβάλλον ελευθερίας το οποίο για πρώτη φορά γίνονταν πραγματικότητα στη χώρα. Κόμματα, πολιτικές, ζυμώσεις, και βέβαια οι μόνιμες υπερβολές της ελληνικής παράδοσης. Χείμαρρος ονείρων και προγραμμάτων για να διορθώσουμε το κάθε τι. Δεν είχαμε Βασιλιά και η Αριστερά ήταν νόμιμη. Όλα επιτρέπονταν. Είχαμε διαδηλώσεις στην επέτειο του Πολυτεχνείου και εκεί καθαγιασθηκε ο μέγας μύθος, ο μύθος ότι ο λαός στο Πολυτεχνείο έριξε την δικτατορία. Οι μύθοι είναι απαραίτητοι, εξαγνίζουν, προσδιορίζουν, συγκροτούν την μνήμη των λαών, των εθνών, των πολιτισμών. Ο λαός έπρεπε να καθαγιαστεί μια και ήταν κυρίαρχος και οι πολιτικοί έπρεπε να του δώσουν την αυτοπεποίθηση που δίνουν οι μυθικές διαστάσεις των ικανοτήτων του λαού έτσι ώστε να βρει τη βεβαιότητα της γνώμης του και να δώσει τις ψήφους τις οποίες χρειαζόνταν οι πολιτικοί για να νομιμοποιηθούν.. Ήταν ένα ξεκάθαρο δούνα λαβείν σε μια στιγμή η οποία θα καθόριζε το μέλλον της χώρας. Και το καθόρισε με τον ανάλογο τρόπο. Η χώρα βασίστηκε στο μύθο και προχώρησε με μύθους.

-Στέφανε γιατί βάφτισες το Πολυτεχνείο μύθο; Ο Θόδωρος ήταν με άκουγε με ύφος δύσπιστο. Δεν καταλάβαινε γιατί η σκέψη μου πήρε μια τέτοια κατεύθυνση. Για αυτόν ήταν μάλλον ιεροσουλία να αποκαλώ τον Πολυτεχνείο μύθο.

-Η δικτατορία δεν έπεσε. Ποιος συσχετίζει την θυσία της Κύπρου για την πτώση του Ιωαννίδη; Κανείς. Ο μύθος αναπαράγεται για να αισθανθεί ο λαός ισχυρός, ικανός να συντρίψει κάθε πολιτική εκτροπή, να διαφυλάξει τις ελευθερίες του. Έχει την χρησιμότητά του. Οι πολιτικοί δεν είναι βλάκες, μόνο που η ιστορική μνήμη του έθνους δεν αναγνωρίζει την ήττα, τον διασυρμό, ως το άμεσο αίτιο της έλευσης της δημοκρατίας. Και αυτή η δημοκρατία αποδείχτηκε το ίδιο ανίσχυρη με την δικτατορία να ανατρέψει τα τετελεσμένα. Κάποιοι πολιτικοί διατείνονται ότι έγινε ένας πόλεμος τον οποίον χάσαμε...άλλος μύθος, δεν χάσαμε τον πόλεμο γιατί δεν πολεμήσαμε...προδοθήκαμε.

.....

Where were we? We would go to see implemented something theatrical in nature about the international politics of our days. Let's get back to that vein by elaborating a little on something we had already started:

THE FORMAT OF SOAP OPERA AND ITS USE IN THE WEST
AS A MANUAL FOR COLLECTIVE SOCIAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

Even in the days of Bush, to make, in Europe, parodies mirroring ways of thinking of American leaders would meet with the obvious answer "Why tell us any of that? Just to let off steam? Don't we know it? Can you find a way to tell Americans themselves all that? It's them who vote for such decision makers, we only are unfortunate enough to be affected by their decisions ourselves". Of course the Americans themselves could equally counter: "If you over there are really more mature politically then how come you cannot change your own leaders, who sure are much less competent than ours since they always succumb to our leaders' directives. If more able public cannot affect a less able elite then how could a less able public affect a more able elite? So don't have the presumption to advise us". Of course both arguments are trivial, despite being right, their real common countering lying in their collaboration, or mutual inspiration through example, in issues affecting both, their focusing on internal matters in things that affect each separately, and their keeping their elites from intervening in foreign affairs where they shouldn't, especially in countries that pay much more heavily than Western voters the consequences of such entrapment; and their common problem being that neither in Europe, nor in US, the two options both kinds of voters have, are all that different and that this, in effect single, option does not reflect at all the wishes of the majority of people. And in matters affecting the globe and affected by the globe, the collaboration should be global. All this is pretty easy to say, what's not easy is of course to work out solutions to global problems and to find a way to implement them. Could be worse: could be like not many years ago when academic proofs were needed to even claim that impasses do exist that are not made up by ideological preoccupations. Now problems can't be hidden from anybody anymore, it doesn't take a degree in social or political or economic sciences to know it.

To try to help Americans overcome the proverbial "generation gap with themselves" they were traditionally accused of having, and Europeans not acquire the same, as they were accused of quickly doing, and to convey the best outcomes of American activism, not only the precious ones of the Vietnam era antiwar movements but also the precious and still unparalleled example of effective alternative media on the web, and to convey the best traditions of European activism and cultural revolution to help the political education of the "masses" (in the most sublime sense, of "the lever of history written in first names" as the expression goes) we wrote, in the second Bush term, and circulated in CD form and then, in Jan.2008, posted on the internet, as an educational manual, a "farcitriology" one part of which was a "farcitragedy in soap opera format" of which the factual basis were the articles on news from antiwar sites, the argumentative basis were the analyses of the West by people like Chomsky, Solzhenitsyn, Herman, Blum, Street, ..., ..., ..., ..., the background used were books by megathinkers like Mumford and the art forms were poetry of megapoets like Neruda and music of composers-for-all-seasons for our season like Theodorakis. That soap opera was "Mount Bushmore" which, as a quick glance at its summary can show, can also be seen as a videoclip on its Neruda-Theodorakis soundtrack (the famous "Canto General") aimed at making manifest the implications of that Poem for present day global politics and global activism and the way that among those implications one can also see a collective change of attitude to need for clarity, to need to live in freedom and with human goals, to action for the sake of life and fellow humans, a collective change of soul in societies that came to their ropes' ends too and did not just bring others there. Of course a book on neocon gangs, had two problems (at least): A problem of level and, already then at its birth, a problem of obsolescence since nobody would really want to be updated on every single both petty and insane plan that brains like Rumsfeld's would concoct even while they were taking place and since, later that the gangs were not around, someone, whether hoping Obama could be change or not believing a word of it, would be equally glad that no mention of Batmanian jokers would be needed anymore to understand politics. However a book which based its humor on making the originals be caricatures of their copies can afford to keep its level high without being irrelevant as non parallel to factuality; and when the impasses it tried to really delineate were not among the more or less trivial ones that were automatically solved by changes as superficial as the change from Bush to Obama more and more proved to be, OK then that book would not necessarily become obsolete; especially if the same problems could be analyzed in a more pleasant manner in the context of a politician who had fed so much material to comedians, a Bush story rather than its Obama version would be preferable

The non abstract implementation of all the above belongs to the next chapter

Here let's finish with what we had omitted when going from Chomsky to Solzhenitsyn:



Pablo Neruda

Nobel Lecture

Towards the Splendid City

My speech is going to be a long journey, a trip that I have taken through regions that are distant and antipodean, but not for that reason any less similar to the landscape and the solitude in Scandinavia. I refer to the way in which my country stretches down to the extreme South. So remote are we Chileans that our boundaries almost touch the South Pole, recalling the geography of Sweden, whose head reaches the snowy northern region of this planet.

Down there on those vast expanses in my native country, where I was taken by events which have already fallen into oblivion, one has to cross, and I was compelled to cross, the Andes to find the frontier of my country with Argentina. Great forests make these inaccessible areas like a tunnel through which our journey was secret and forbidden, with only the faintest signs to show us the way. There were no tracks and no paths, and I and my four companions, riding on horseback, pressed forward on our tortuous way, avoiding the obstacles set by huge trees, impassable rivers, immense cliffs and desolate expanses of snow, blindly seeking the quarter in which my own liberty lay. Those who were with me knew how to make their way forward between the dense leaves of the forest, but to feel safer they marked their route by slashing with their machetes here and there in the bark of the great trees, leaving tracks which they would follow back when they had left me alone with my destiny.

Each of us made his way forward filled with this limitless solitude, with the green and white silence of trees and huge trailing plants and layers of soil laid down over centuries, among half-fallen tree trunks which suddenly appeared as fresh obstacles to bar our progress. We were in a dazzling and secret world of nature which at the same time was a growing menace of cold, snow and persecution. Everything became one: the solitude, the danger, the silence, and the urgency of my mission.

Sometimes we followed a very faint trail, perhaps left by smugglers or ordinary criminals in flight, and we did not know whether many of them had perished, surprised by the icy hands of winter, by the fearful snowstorms which suddenly rage in the Andes and engulf the traveller, burying him under a whiteness seven storeys high.

On either side of the trail I could observe in the wild desolation something which betrayed human activity. There were piled up branches which had lasted out many winters, offerings made by hundreds who had journeyed there, crude burial mounds in memory of the fallen, so that the passer should think of those who had not been able to struggle on but had remained there under the snow for ever. My comrades, too, hacked off with their machetes branches which brushed our heads and bent down over us from the colossal trees, from oaks whose last leaves were scattering before the winter storms. And I too left a tribute at every mound, a visiting card of wood, a branch from the forest to deck one or other

of the graves of these unknown travellers.

We had to cross a river. Up on the Andean summits there run small streams which cast themselves down with dizzy and insane force, forming waterfalls that stir up earth and stones with the violence they bring with them from the heights. But this time we found calm water, a wide mirrorlike expanse which could be forded. The horses splashed in, lost their foothold and began to swim towards the other bank. Soon my horse was almost completely covered by the water, I began to plunge up and down without support, my feet fighting desperately while the horse struggled to keep its head above water. Then we got across. And hardly we reached the further bank when the seasoned countryfolk with me asked me with scarce-concealed smiles:

"Were you frightened?"

"Very. I thought my last hour had come", I said.

"We were behind you with our lassoes in our hands", they answered.

"Just there", added one of them, "my father fell and was swept away by the current. That didn't happen to you."

We continued till we came to a natural tunnel which perhaps had been bored through the imposing rocks by some mighty vanished river or created by some tremor of the earth when these heights had been formed, a channel that we entered where it had been carved out in the rock in granite. After only a few steps our horses began to slip when they sought for a foothold in the uneven surfaces of the stone and their legs were bent, sparks flying from beneath their iron shoes - several times I expected to find myself thrown off and lying there on the rock. My horse was bleeding from its muzzle and from its legs, but we persevered and continued on the long and difficult but magnificent path.

There was something awaiting us in the midst of this wild primeval forest. Suddenly, as if in a strange vision, we came to a beautiful little meadow huddled among the rocks: clear water, green grass, wild flowers, the purling of brooks and the blue heaven above, a generous stream of light unimpeded by leaves.

There we stopped as if within a magic circle, as if guests within some hallowed place, and the ceremony I now took part in had still more the air of something sacred. The cowherds dismounted from their horses. In the midst of the space, set up as if in a rite, was the skull of an ox. In silence the men approached it one after the other and put coins and food in the eyesockets of the skull. I joined them in this sacrifice intended for stray travellers, all kinds of refugees who would find bread and succour in the dead ox's eye sockets.

But the unforgettable ceremony did not end there. My country friends took off their hats and began a strange dance, hopping on one foot around the abandoned skull, moving in the ring of footprints left behind by the many others who had passed there before them. Dimly I understood, there by the side of my inscrutable companions, that there was a kind of link between unknown people, a care, an appeal and an answer even in the most distant and isolated solitude of this world.

Further on, just before we reached the frontier which was to divide me from my native land for many years, we came at night to the last pass between the mountains. Suddenly we saw the glow of a fire as a sure sign of a human presence, and when we came nearer we found some half-ruined buildings, poor

hovels which seemed to have been abandoned. We went into one of them and saw the glow of fire from tree trunks burning in the middle of the floor, carcasses of huge trees, which burnt there day and night and from which came smoke that made its way up through the cracks in the roof and rose up like a deep-blue veil in the midst of the darkness. We saw mountains of stacked cheeses, which are made by the people in these high regions. Near the fire lay a number of men grouped like sacks. In the silence we could distinguish the notes of a guitar and words in a song which was born of the embers and the darkness, and which carried with it the first human voice we had encountered during our journey. It was a song of love and distance, a cry of love and longing for the distant spring, from the towns we were coming away from, for life in its limitless extent. These men did not know who we were, they knew nothing about our flight, they had never heard either my name or my poetry; or perhaps they did, perhaps they knew us? What actually happened was that at this fire we sang and we ate, and then in the darkness we went into some primitive rooms. Through them flowed a warm stream, volcanic water in which we bathed, warmth which welled out from the mountain chain and received us in its bosom.

Happily we splashed about, dug ourselves out, as it were, liberated ourselves from the weight of the long journey on horseback. We felt refreshed, reborn, baptised, when in the dawn we started on the journey of a few miles which was to eclipse me from my native land. We rode away on our horses singing, filled with a new air, with a force that cast us out on to the world's broad highway which awaited me. This I remember well, that when we sought to give the mountain dwellers a few coins in gratitude for their songs, for the food, for the warm water, for giving us lodging and beds, I would rather say for the unexpected heavenly refuge that had met us on our journey, our offering was rejected out of hand. They had been at our service, nothing more. In this taciturn "nothing" there were hidden things that were understood, perhaps a recognition, perhaps the same kind of dreams.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I did not learn from books any recipe for writing a poem, and I, in my turn, will avoid giving any advice on mode or style which might give the new poets even a drop of supposed insight. When I am recounting in this speech something about past events, when reliving on this occasion a never-forgotten occurrence, in this place which is so different from what that was, it is because in the course of my life I have always found somewhere the necessary support, the formula which had been waiting for me not in order to be petrified in my words but in order to explain me to myself.

During this long journey I found the necessary components for the making of the poem. There I received contributions from the earth and from the soul. And I believe that poetry is an action, ephemeral or solemn, in which there enter as equal partners solitude and solidarity, emotion and action, the nearness to oneself, the nearness to mankind and to the secret manifestations of nature. And no less strongly I think that all this is sustained - man and his shadow, man and his conduct, man and his poetry - by an ever-wider sense of community, by an effort which will for ever bring together the reality and the dreams in us because it is precisely in this way that poetry unites and mingles them. And therefore I say that I do not know, after so many years, whether the lessons I learned when I crossed a daunting river, when I danced around the skull of an ox, when I bathed my body in the cleansing water from the topmost heights - I do not know whether these lessons welled forth from me in order to be imparted to many others or whether it was all a message which was sent to me by others as a demand or an accusation. I do not know whether I experienced this or created it, I do not know whether it was

truth or poetry, something passing or permanent, the poems I experienced in this hour, the experiences which I later put into verse.

From all this, my friends, there arises an insight which the poet must learn through other people. There is no insurmountable solitude. All paths lead to the same goal: to convey to others what we are. And we must pass through solitude and difficulty, isolation and silence in order to reach forth to the enchanted place where we can dance our clumsy dance and sing our sorrowful song - but in this dance or in this song there are fulfilled the most ancient rites of our conscience in the awareness of being human and of believing in a common destiny.

The truth is that even if some or many consider me to be a sectarian, barred from taking a place at the common table of friendship and responsibility, I do not wish to defend myself, for I believe that neither accusation nor defence is among the tasks of the poet. When all is said, there is no individual poet who administers poetry, and if a poet sets himself up to accuse his fellows or if some other poet wastes his life in defending himself against reasonable or unreasonable charges, it is my conviction that only vanity can so mislead us. I consider the enemies of poetry to be found not among those who practise poetry or guard it but in mere lack of agreement in the poet. For this reason no poet has any considerable enemy other than his own incapacity to make himself understood by the most forgotten and exploited of his contemporaries, and this applies to all epochs and in all countries.

The poet is not a "little god". No, he is not a "little god". He is not picked out by a mystical destiny in preference to those who follow other crafts and professions. I have often maintained that the best poet is he who prepares our daily bread: the nearest baker who does not imagine himself to be a god. He does his majestic and unpretentious work of kneading the dough, consigning it to the oven, baking it in golden colours and handing us our daily bread as a duty of fellowship. And, if the poet succeeds in achieving this simple consciousness, this too will be transformed into an element in an immense activity, in a simple or complicated structure which constitutes the building of a community, the changing of the conditions which surround mankind, the handing over of mankind's products: bread, truth, wine, dreams. If the poet joins this never-completed struggle to extend to the hands of each and all his part of his undertaking, his effort and his tenderness to the daily work of all people, then the poet must take part, the poet will take part, in the sweat, in the bread, in the wine, in the whole dream of humanity. Only in this indispensable way of being ordinary people shall we give back to poetry the mighty breadth which has been pared away from it little by little in every epoch, just as we ourselves have been whittled down in every epoch.

The mistakes which led me to a relative truth and the truths which repeatedly led me back to the mistakes did not allow me - and I never made any claims to it - to find my way to lead, to learn what is called the creative process, to reach the heights of literature that are so difficult of access. But one thing I realized - that it is we ourselves who call forth the spirits through our own myth-making. From the matter we use, or wish to use, there arise later on obstacles to our own development and the future development. We are led infallibly to reality and realism, that is to say to become indirectly conscious of everything that surrounds us and of the ways of change, and then we see, when it seems to be late, that we have erected such an exaggerated barrier that we are killing what is alive instead of helping life to develop and blossom. We force upon ourselves a realism which later proves to be more burdensome than the bricks of the building, without having erected the building which we had regarded as an indispensable part of our task. And, in the contrary case, if we succeed in creating the fetish of the

incomprehensible (or the fetish of that which is comprehensible only to a few), the fetish of the exclusive and the secret, if we exclude reality and its realistic degenerations, then we find ourselves suddenly surrounded by an impossible country, a quagmire of leaves, of mud, of cloud, where our feet sink in and we are stifled by the impossibility of communicating.

As far as we in particular are concerned, we writers within the tremendously far-flung American region, we listen unceasingly to the call to fill this mighty void with beings of flesh and blood. We are conscious of our duty as fulfillers - at the same time we are faced with the unavoidable task of critical communication within a world which is empty and is not less full of injustices, punishments and sufferings because it is empty - and we feel also the responsibility for reawakening the old dreams which sleep in statues of stone in the ruined ancient monuments, in the wide-stretching silence in planetary plains, in dense primeval forests, in rivers which roar like thunder. We must fill with words the most distant places in a dumb continent and we are intoxicated by this task of making fables and giving names. This is perhaps what is decisive in my own humble case, and if so my exaggerations or my abundance or my rhetoric would not be anything other than the simplest of events within the daily work of an American. Each and every one of my verses has chosen to take its place as a tangible object, each and every one of my poems has claimed to be a useful working instrument, each and every one of my songs has endeavoured to serve as a sign in space for a meeting between paths which cross one another, or as a piece of stone or wood on which someone, some others, those who follow after, will be able to carve the new signs.

By extending to these extreme consequences the poet's duty, in truth or in error, I determined that my posture within the community and before life should be that of in a humble way taking sides. I decided this when I saw so many honourable misfortunes, lone victories, splendid defeats. In the midst of the arena of America's struggles I saw that my human task was none other than to join the extensive forces of the organized masses of the people, to join with life and soul with suffering and hope, because it is only from this great popular stream that the necessary changes can arise for the authors and for the nations. And even if my attitude gave and still gives rise to bitter or friendly objections, the truth is that I can find no other way for an author in our far-flung and cruel countries, if we want the darkness to blossom, if we are concerned that the millions of people who have learnt neither to read us nor to read at all, who still cannot write or write to us, are to feel at home in the area of dignity without which it is impossible for them to be complete human beings.

We have inherited this damaged life of peoples dragging behind them the burden of the condemnation of centuries, the most paradisaical of peoples, the purest, those who with stones and metals made marvellous towers, jewels of dazzling brilliance - peoples who were suddenly despoiled and silenced in the fearful epochs of colonialism which still linger on.

Our original guiding stars are struggle and hope. But there is no such thing as a lone struggle, no such thing as a lone hope. In every human being are combined the most distant epochs, passivity, mistakes, sufferings, the pressing urgencies of our own time, the pace of history. But what would have become of me if, for example, I had contributed in some way to the maintenance of the feudal past of the great American continent? How should I then have been able to raise my brow, illuminated by the honour which Sweden has conferred on me, if I had not been able to feel some pride in having taken part, even to a small extent, in the change which has now come over my country? It is necessary to look at the map of America, to place oneself before its splendid multiplicity, before the cosmic generosity of the

wide places which surround us, in order to understand why many writers refuse to share the dishonour and plundering of the past, of all that which dark gods have taken away from the American peoples.

I chose the difficult way of divided responsibility and, rather than to repeat the worship of the individual as the sun and centre of the system, I have preferred to offer my services in all modesty to an honourable army which may from time to time commit mistakes but which moves forward unceasingly and struggles every day against the anachronism of the refractory and the impatience of the opinionated. For I believe that my duties as a poet involve friendship not only with the rose and with symmetry, with exalted love and endless longing, but also with unrelenting human occupations which I have incorporated into my poetry.

It is today exactly one hundred years since an unhappy and brilliant poet, the most awesome of all despairing souls, wrote down this prophecy: "A l'aurore, armés d'une ardente patience, nous entrerons aux splendides Villes." "In the dawn, armed with a burning patience, we shall enter the splendid Cities."

I believe in this prophecy of Rimbaud, the Visionary. I come from a dark region, from a land separated from all others by the steep contours of its geography. I was the most forlorn of poets and my poetry was provincial, oppressed and rainy. But always I had put my trust in man. I never lost hope. It is perhaps because of this that I have reached as far as I now have with my poetry and also with my banner.

Lastly, I wish to say to the people of good will, to the workers, to the poets, that the whole future has been expressed in this line by Rimbaud: only with a *burning patience* can we conquer the splendid City which will give light, justice and dignity to all mankind.

In this way the song will not have been sung in vain.

From *Nobel Lectures, Literature 1968-1980*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993

Copyright © The Nobel Foundation 1971

My speech is going to be a long journey, a trip that I have taken through regions that are distant and antipodean, but not for that reason any less similar to the landscape and the solitude in Scandinavia. I refer to the way in which my country stretches down to the extreme South. So remote are we Chileans that our boundaries almost touch the South Pole, recalling the geography of Sweden, whose head reaches the snowy northern region of this planet.

Down there on those vast expanses in my native country, where I was taken by events which have already fallen into oblivion, one has to cross, and I was compelled to cross, the Andes to find the frontier of my country with Argentina. Great forests make these inaccessible areas like a tunnel through which our journey was secret and forbidden, with only the faintest signs to show us the way. There

were no tracks and no paths, and I and my four companions, riding on horseback, pressed forward on our tortuous way, avoiding the obstacles set by huge trees, impassable rivers, immense cliffs and desolate expanses of snow, blindly seeking the quarter in which my own liberty lay. Those who were with me knew how to make their way forward between the dense leaves of the forest, but to feel safer they marked their route by slashing with their machetes here and there in the bark of the great trees, leaving tracks which they would follow back when they had left me alone with my destiny. Each of us made his way forward filled with this limitless solitude, with the green and white silence of trees and huge trailing plants and layers of soil laid down over centuries, among half-fallen tree trunks which suddenly appeared as fresh obstacles to bar our progress. We were in a dazzling and secret world of nature which at the same time was a growing menace of cold, snow and persecution. Everything became one: the solitude, the danger, the silence, and the urgency of my mission. Sometimes we followed a very faint trail, perhaps left by smugglers or ordinary criminals in flight, and we did not know whether many of them had perished, surprised by the icy hands of winter, by the fearful snowstorms which suddenly rage in the Andes and engulf the traveller, burying him under a whiteness seven storeys high. On either side of the trail I could observe in the wild desolation something which betrayed human activity. There were piled up branches which had lasted out many winters, offerings made by hundreds who had journeyed there, crude burial mounds in memory of the fallen, so that the passer should think of those who had not been able to struggle on but had remained there under the snow for ever. My comrades, too, hacked off with their machetes branches which brushed our heads and bent down over us from the colossal trees, from oaks whose last leaves were scattering before the winter storms. And I too left a tribute at every mound, a visiting card of wood, a branch from the forest to deck one or other of the graves of these unknown travellers. We had to cross a river. Up on the Andean summits there run small streams which cast themselves down with dizzy and insane force, forming waterfalls that stir up earth and stones with the violence they bring with them from the heights. But this time we found calm water, a wide mirrorlike expanse which could be forded. The horses splashed in, lost their foothold and began to swim towards the other bank. Soon my horse was almost completely covered by the water, I began to plunge up and down without support, my feet fighting desperately while the horse struggled to keep its head above water. Then we got across. And hardly we reached the further bank when the seasoned countryfolk with me asked me with scarce-concealed smiles:

"Were you frightened?"

"Very. I thought my last hour had come", I said.

"We were behind you with our lassoes in our hands", they answered.

"Just there", added one of them, "my father fell and was swept away by the current. That didn't happen to you."

We continued till we came to a natural tunnel which perhaps had been bored through the imposing rocks by some mighty vanished river or created by some tremor of the earth when these heights had been formed, a channel that we entered where it had been carved out in the rock in granite. After only a few steps our horses began to slip when they sought for a foothold in the uneven surfaces of the stone and their legs were bent, sparks flying from beneath their iron shoes - several times I expected to find myself thrown off and lying there on the rock. My horse was bleeding from its muzzle and from its legs, but we persevered and continued on the long and difficult but magnificent path. There was something awaiting us in the midst of this wild primeval forest. Suddenly, as if in a strange vision, we came to a beautiful little meadow huddled among the rocks: clear water, green grass, wild flowers, the purling of brooks and the blue heaven above, a generous stream of light unimpeded by

leaves.

There we stopped as if within a magic circle, as if guests within some hallowed place, and the ceremony I now took part in had still more the air of something sacred. The cowherds dismounted from their horses. In the midst of the space, set up as if in a rite, was the skull of an ox. In silence the men approached it one after the other and put coins and food in the eyesockets of the skull. I joined them in this sacrifice intended for stray travellers, all kinds of refugees who would find bread and succour in the dead ox's eye sockets.

But the unforgettable ceremony did not end there. My country friends took off their hats and began a strange dance, hopping on one foot around the abandoned skull, moving in the ring of footprints left behind by the many others who had passed there before them. Dimly I understood, there by the side of my inscrutable companions, that there was a kind of link between unknown people, a care, an appeal and an answer even in the most distant and isolated solitude of this world.

Further on, just before we reached the frontier which was to divide me from my native land for many years, we came at night to the last pass between the mountains. Suddenly we saw the glow of a fire as a sure sign of a human presence, and when we came nearer we found some half-ruined buildings, poor hovels which seemed to have been abandoned. We went into one of them and saw the glow of fire from tree trunks burning in the middle of the floor, carcasses of huge trees, which burnt there day and night and from which came smoke that made its way up through the cracks in the roof and rose up like a deep-blue veil in the midst of the darkness. We saw mountains of stacked cheeses, which are made by the people in these high regions. Near the fire lay a number of men grouped like sacks. In the silence we could distinguish the notes of a guitar and words in a song which was born of the embers and the darkness, and which carried with it the first human voice we had encountered during our journey. It was a song of love and distance, a cry of love and longing for the distant spring, from the towns we were coming away from, for life in its limitless extent. These men did not know who we were, they knew nothing about our flight, they had never heard either my name or my poetry; or perhaps they did, perhaps they knew us? What actually happened was that at this fire we sang and we ate, and then in the darkness we went into some primitive rooms. Through them flowed a warm stream, volcanic water in which we bathed, warmth which welled out from the mountain chain and received us in its bosom. Happily we splashed about, dug ourselves out, as it were, liberated ourselves from the weight of the long journey on horseback. We felt refreshed, reborn, baptised, when in the dawn we started on the journey of a few miles which was to eclipse me from my native land. We rode away on our horses singing, filled with a new air, with a force that cast us out on to the world's broad highway which awaited me. This I remember well, that when we sought to give the mountain dwellers a few coins in gratitude for their songs, for the food, for the warm water, for giving us lodging and beds, I would rather say for the unexpected heavenly refuge that had met us on our journey, our offering was rejected out of hand. They had been at our service, nothing more. In this taciturn "nothing" there were hidden things that were understood, perhaps a recognition, perhaps the same kind of dreams.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I did not learn from books any recipe for writing a poem, and I, in my turn, will avoid giving any advice on mode or style which might give the new poets even a drop of supposed insight. When I am recounting in this speech something about past events, when reliving on this occasion a never-forgotten occurrence, in this place which is so different from what that was, it is because in the course of my life I have always found somewhere the necessary support, the formula which had been waiting for me not in order to be petrified in my words but in order to explain me to myself.

During this long journey I found the necessary components for the making of the poem. There I

received contributions from the earth and from the soul. And I believe that poetry is an action, ephemeral or solemn, in which there enter as equal partners solitude and solidarity, emotion and action, the nearness to oneself, the nearness to mankind and to the secret manifestations of nature. And no less strongly I think that all this is sustained - man and his shadow, man and his conduct, man and his poetry - by an ever-wider sense of community, by an effort which will for ever bring together the reality and the dreams in us because it is precisely in this way that poetry unites and mingles them. And therefore I say that I do not know, after so many years, whether the lessons I learned when I crossed a daunting river, when I danced around the skull of an ox, when I bathed my body in the cleansing water from the topmost heights - I do not know whether these lessons welled forth from me in order to be imparted to many others or whether it was all a message which was sent to me by others as a demand or an accusation. I do not know whether I experienced this or created it, I do not know whether it was truth or poetry, something passing or permanent, the poems I experienced in this hour, the experiences which I later put into verse.

From all this, my friends, there arises an insight which the poet must learn through other people. There is no insurmountable solitude. All paths lead to the same goal: to convey to others what we are. And we must pass through solitude and difficulty, isolation and silence in order to reach forth to the enchanted place where we can dance our clumsy dance and sing our sorrowful song - but in this dance or in this song there are fulfilled the most ancient rites of our conscience in the awareness of being human and of believing in a common destiny.

The truth is that even if some or many consider me to be a sectarian, barred from taking a place at the common table of friendship and responsibility, I do not wish to defend myself, for I believe that neither accusation nor defence is among the tasks of the poet. When all is said, there is no individual poet who administers poetry, and if a poet sets himself up to accuse his fellows or if some other poet wastes his life in defending himself against reasonable or unreasonable charges, it is my conviction that only vanity can so mislead us. I consider the enemies of poetry to be found not among those who practise poetry or guard it but in mere lack of agreement in the poet. For this reason no poet has any considerable enemy other than his own incapacity to make himself understood by the most forgotten and exploited of his contemporaries, and this applies to all epochs and in all countries.

The poet is not a "little god". No, he is not a "little god". He is not picked out by a mystical destiny in preference to those who follow other crafts and professions. I have often maintained that the best poet is he who prepares our daily bread: the nearest baker who does not imagine himself to be a god. He does his majestic and unpretentious work of kneading the dough, consigning it to the oven, baking it in golden colours and handing us our daily bread as a duty of fellowship. And, if the poet succeeds in achieving this simple consciousness, this too will be transformed into an element in an immense activity, in a simple or complicated structure which constitutes the building of a community, the changing of the conditions which surround mankind, the handing over of mankind's products: bread, truth, wine, dreams. If the poet joins this never-completed struggle to extend to the hands of each and all his part of his undertaking, his effort and his tenderness to the daily work of all people, then the poet must take part, the poet will take part, in the sweat, in the bread, in the wine, in the whole dream of humanity. Only in this indispensable way of being ordinary people shall we give back to poetry the mighty breadth which has been pared away from it little by little in every epoch, just as we ourselves have been whittled down in every epoch.

The mistakes which led me to a relative truth and the truths which repeatedly led me back to the mistakes did not allow me - and I never made any claims to it - to find my way to lead, to learn what is called the creative process, to reach the heights of literature that are so difficult of access. But one thing I realized - that it is we ourselves who call forth the spirits through our own myth-making. From the

matter we use, or wish to use, there arise later on obstacles to our own development and the future development. We are led infallibly to reality and realism, that is to say to become indirectly conscious of everything that surrounds us and of the ways of change, and then we see, when it seems to be late, that we have erected such an exaggerated barrier that we are killing what is alive instead of helping life to develop and blossom. We force upon ourselves a realism which later proves to be more burdensome than the bricks of the building, without having erected the building which we had regarded as an indispensable part of our task. And, in the contrary case, if we succeed in creating the fetish of the incomprehensible (or the fetish of that which is comprehensible only to a few), the fetish of the exclusive and the secret, if we exclude reality and its realistic degenerations, then we find ourselves suddenly surrounded by an impossible country, a quagmire of leaves, of mud, of cloud, where our feet sink in and we are stifled by the impossibility of communicating.

As far as we in particular are concerned, we writers within the tremendously far-flung American region, we listen unceasingly to the call to fill this mighty void with beings of flesh and blood. We are conscious of our duty as fulfillers - at the same time we are faced with the unavoidable task of critical communication within a world which is empty and is not less full of injustices, punishments and sufferings because it is empty - and we feel also the responsibility for reawakening the old dreams which sleep in statues of stone in the ruined ancient monuments, in the wide-stretching silence in planetary plains, in dense primeval forests, in rivers which roar like thunder. We must fill with words the most distant places in a dumb continent and we are intoxicated by this task of making fables and giving names. This is perhaps what is decisive in my own humble case, and if so my exaggerations or my abundance or my rhetoric would not be anything other than the simplest of events within the daily work of an American. Each and every one of my verses has chosen to take its place as a tangible object, each and every one of my poems has claimed to be a useful working instrument, each and every one of my songs has endeavoured to serve as a sign in space for a meeting between paths which cross one another, or as a piece of stone or wood on which someone, some others, those who follow after, will be able to carve the new signs.

By extending to these extreme consequences the poet's duty, in truth or in error, I determined that my posture within the community and before life should be that of in a humble way taking sides. I decided this when I saw so many honourable misfortunes, lone victories, splendid defeats. In the midst of the arena of America's struggles I saw that my human task was none other than to join the extensive forces of the organized masses of the people, to join with life and soul with suffering and hope, because it is only from this great popular stream that the necessary changes can arise for the authors and for the nations. And even if my attitude gave and still gives rise to bitter or friendly objections, the truth is that I can find no other way for an author in our far-flung and cruel countries, if we want the darkness to blossom, if we are concerned that the millions of people who have learnt neither to read us nor to read at all, who still cannot write or write to us, are to feel at home in the area of dignity without which it is impossible for them to be complete human beings.

We have inherited this damaged life of peoples dragging behind them the burden of the condemnation of centuries, the most paradisaical of peoples, the purest, those who with stones and metals made marvellous towers, jewels of dazzling brilliance - peoples who were suddenly despoiled and silenced in the fearful epochs of colonialism which still linger on.

Our original guiding stars are struggle and hope. But there is no such thing as a lone struggle, no such thing as a lone hope. In every human being are combined the most distant epochs, passivity, mistakes, sufferings, the pressing urgencies of our own time, the pace of history. But what would have become of me if, for example, I had contributed in some way to the maintenance of the feudal past of the great American continent? How should I then have been able to raise my brow, illuminated by the honour

which Sweden has conferred on me, if I had not been able to feel some pride in having taken part, even to a small extent, in the change which has now come over my country? It is necessary to look at the map of America, to place oneself before its splendid multiplicity, before the cosmic generosity of the wide places which surround us, in order to understand why many writers refuse to share the dishonour and plundering of the past, of all that which dark gods have taken away from the American peoples. I chose the difficult way of divided responsibility and, rather than to repeat the worship of the individual as the sun and centre of the system, I have preferred to offer my services in all modesty to an honourable army which may from time to time commit mistakes but which moves forward unceasingly and struggles every day against the anachronism of the refractory and the impatience of the opinionated. For I believe that my duties as a poet involve friendship not only with the rose and with symmetry, with exalted love and endless longing, but also with unrelenting human occupations which I have incorporated into my poetry.

It is today exactly one hundred years since an unhappy and brilliant poet, the most awesome of all despairing souls, wrote down this prophecy: "A l'aurore, armés d'une ardente patience, nous entrerons aux splendides Villes." "In the dawn, armed with a burning patience, we shall enter the splendid Cities."

I believe in this prophecy of Rimbaud, the Visionary. I come from a dark region, from a land separated from all others by the steep contours of its geography. I was the most forlorn of poets and my poetry was provincial, oppressed and rainy. But always I had put my trust in man. I never lost hope. It is perhaps because of this that I have reached as far as I now have with my poetry and also with my banner.

Lastly, I wish to say to the people of good will, to the workers, to the poets, that the whole future has been expressed in this line by Rimbaud: only with a *burning patience* can we conquer the splendid City which will give light, justice and dignity to all mankind.

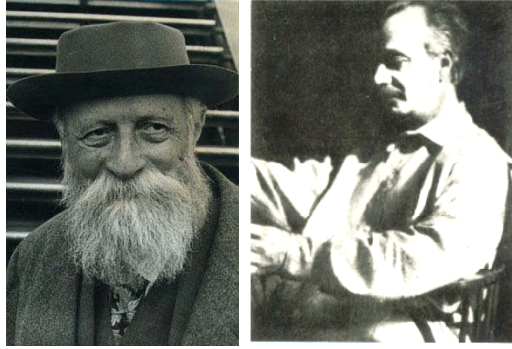
In this way the song will not have been sung in vain.

From [Nobel Lectures, Literature 1968-1980](#), Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993 Copyright © The Nobel Foundation 1971

The reading of the chapters that follow does not presuppose the reading of the chapter that has just finished. (And most of it was not even needed in order to write them). Maybe the reading of the next chapter's title that contains the word "overcloudcuckooland" needs some explanation: By "overcloud scenarios" we mean the philosophical remark that Aristophanes used an overcloud world to make some problems solvable in the way Plato said that geometrical truths apply to ideal shapes not to actual but we do exercise with problems with ideal mental shapes in order to be taught some lessons in how to also solve problems in the actual world. With this remark this chapter completes full circle in the sense that the above rationale was also part of the structure of the book reviewed in page 1 of this chapter. The Aristophanian nature of the next chapter, maybe, suggests that we save for the present chapter, thus for its next, final, page, the (not so very) "antipodal" kind of perspective for what we are going to see there. But we repeat that nothing there presupposes anything from here. Let's also repeat that nothing in the next page applies to US without applying to Europe; any such discrimination, as we have said on p.60, is long obsolete in 2011 (or had been even longer obsolete without being acknowledged as such).*

**But many many points from Mumford's full set of pages mentioned in p.9 were needed and heavily used for their writing. In exactly the same way the "soundtracks" of chapter 2b were needed and used in the writing of 2a (and of course they do not presuppose the scenarios of 2a to be listened to, to be enjoyed, to sing and to be let sink! In short, they were not soundtracks to the scenarios, but on the contrary the scenarios were "videoclips" to them.*

The non clash of civilizations in the ...



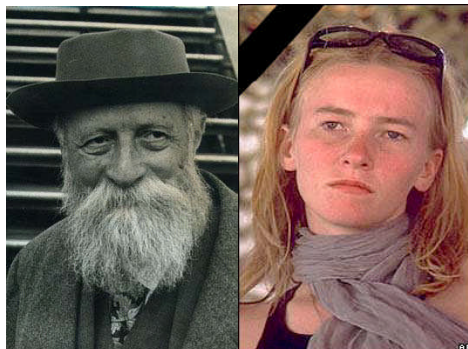
...days of “Eclipse of God”and of “Pity the Nation”

“Pity the nation that is full of beliefs and empty of religion. Pity the nation that wears a cloth it does not weave, eats a bread it does not harvest, and drinks a wine that flows not from its own wine-press. Pity the nation that acclaims the bully as hero, and that deems the glittering conqueror bountiful. Pity a nation that despises a passion in its dream, yet submits in its awakening. Pity the nation that raises not its voice save when it walks in a funeral, boasts not except among its ruins, and will rebel not save when its neck is laid between the sword and the block. Pity the nation whose statesman is a fox, whose philosopher is a juggler, and whose art is the art of patching and mimicking. Pity the nation that welcomes its new ruler with trumpeting, and farewells him with hooting, only to welcome another with trumpeting again. Pity the nation whose sages are dumb with years and whose strong men are yet in the cradle. Pity the nation divided into fragments, each fragment deeming itself a nation.”

Kahlil Gibran

Robert C. Byrd’s “I weep for my country”:
(Senate Remarks in March, 2003)

“I believe in this beautiful country. I have studied its roots and gloried in the wisdom of its magnificent Constitution. I have marvelled at the wisdom of its founders and framers. Generation after generation of Americans has understood the lofty ideals that underlie our great Republic. I have been inspired by the story of their sacrifice and their strength. But, today I weep for my country. I have watched the events of recent months with a heavy, heavy heart. No more is the image of America one of strong, yet benevolent peacekeeper. The image of America has changed. Around the globe, our friends mistrust us, our word is disputed, our intentions are questioned. Instead of reasoning with those with whom we disagree, we demand obedience or threaten recrimination. Instead of isolating Saddam Hussein, we seem to have isolated ourselves. We proclaim a new doctrine of pre-emption which is understood by few and feared by many. We say that the United States has the right to turn its firepower on any corner of the globe which might be suspect in the war on terrorism. We assert that right without the sanction of any international body. As a result, the world has become a much more dangerous place...”



Days of Helpers of God and of Human Shields