

World Goodwill

NEWSLETTER



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IDENTIFYING WITH THE WHOLE

ONE OF THE “BUZZ WORDS” which is being heard more and more often at the moment is “globalisation”. It is mainly heard in connection with economic phenomena, although it has implications far beyond the realm of economics, simply because our current political and social systems are largely determined by decisions based on economic criteria. It is therefore important to attempt to grasp the meaning of globalisation if we are to understand some of the changes which it is producing in society.

A trend which is less heralded in the mainstream media, perhaps because by its nature it operates on a much smaller scale, is that of “localisation”, which lies at the opposite extreme to globalisation. Both trends indicate a crisis of identification within the human family; which group should I identify with – my neighbourhood? my town? my region? my country? a supra-national entity, such as the EU? or finally, the whole human race? The tension between the two extremes, the local and the global, may cause psychological discomfort and confusion, which in their turn may lead to conflict. Although this struggle in consciousness can be a painful one, it is nevertheless a hopeful sign, for this breaking down of old certainties is caused by a growing sensitivity to other nations and cultures, and a consequent recognition of all that we have in common; yet at the same time, we also recognise the amazing diversity present within humanity, and the particular qualities which our own cultural background can contribute to the whole. So we find that we must simultaneously hold in mind both unity and difference, without allowing either to dominate.

What happens when one aspect does exert dominance has become distressingly evident in history. If difference is regarded as more important, then a town or region or country becomes isolationist, repudiating the values of others. This can easily lead to discrimination against “foreigners” within its borders, and disregard for the affairs of others outside its borders, which may be violently enforced. If unity becomes the dominant aspect, then an unhealthy regimentation may descend upon the group, and it may lead to attempts to impose this standardisation on others outside. There has been a complex and dynamic interaction between these two aspects throughout history, with few societies achieving a healthy balance for long. As we are only now moving into a time when global consciousness is becoming widespread, we should be on the look out for the tell-tale signs of dominance of one or other aspect in our global neighbourhood. We must find a way between a world where homogenisation has drained the life from the rich soil of human diversity, and a world where difference is used as an excuse for barriers and hatred. If goodwill is our guiding principle, then we can together build a future of right relations in which our common humanity and our glorious diversity are in beautiful equilibrium.

IN THIS ISSUE

RE-THINKING GLOBALISATION	2
THE GREAT INVOCATION	4
LOCAL NETWORKS OF GOODWILL	5

RE-THINKING GLOBALISATION

Never before have so many people had so much in common, but never before have the things which divide them been so obvious.

Our Global Neighbourhood, p.41

Many readers will be familiar with the statement, “The Earth is one but the world is not”, found at the beginning of the first chapter of *Our Common Future*. It underlines very simply the fact that the flows of matter and energy within Nature recognise no boundaries, while the flows of those things which are specifically human – money, manufactured goods, culture (as it is transmitted electronically) – are not yet so free. Rather, these flows encounter various obstacles, many of them created over time by humanity. Some of the obstacles, such as currencies and languages, have their roots in the historical evolution of human communities; others are of more recent origin, such as trade tariffs and quotas. Normally, these obstacles coincide with national frontiers, although increasingly, with the growth of regional trading areas, regional “frontiers” are becoming more important. This move towards wider frontiers is perhaps a herald of the eventual dissolution of all frontiers in a united world; for what are frontiers if not an expression of separateness, a value which we must leave behind if we are to live in peace together. Yet the ending of a separative consciousness cannot be achieved by the elimination of difference, producing an enforced uniformity. Instead, the challenge is to forge a united world in which the diversity of human cultures is celebrated in the context of our common humanity. Can globalisation *in its current form* lead eventually to this goal?

The need for vision

As with other complex issues, producing a clear definition of globalisation is not easy. A definition offered by E.N Mbekou and G. Nziki suggests that it is “a complex interlinking of the production of goods and services organised on an international scale. It is based on technical innovation and progress in the transport and communications sectors assisted by an international financial market which allows speedy movement of financial investments which greatly exceed the flows in the real economy.”¹ They go on to cite the importance of the progressive dismantling of trade barriers to this process. The futurist Hazel Henderson, in her book *Paradigms in Progress*, adds changes in militarisation; work, employment and migration; human effects on the biosphere; and mass consumption and culture, as factors which should also be considered. It seems evident that to see globalisation as “only” an economic phenomenon is to under-estimate the far-reaching changes which it may produce in the political and social fabric of any nation. Given such a complicated set of interacting factors, it is hardly surprising that people feel anxious about the future: blue-collar workers in the richer countries worry that their jobs will be transferred

abroad; governments worry that their currencies may come under attack; and many who are active in the development field worry that globalisation will do nothing to reduce social disparities and may even increase them.

The size of the issues involved makes it difficult to step back far enough to perceive an overall pattern. Nevertheless, the need for a clear vision of better possibilities for the whole human family is evident, and this point is lucidly made by the Commission on Global Governance, in their excellent report, *Our Global Neighbourhood*: “A time of change when future patterns cannot be clearly discerned is inevitably a time of uncertainty. There is need for balance and caution—and also for vision. Our common future will depend on the extent to which people and leaders around the world develop the vision of a better world and the strategies, the institutions, and the will to achieve it.” This will, employed by all those who recognise the situation, must be the *will-to-good*, which is spoken of in the writings of Alice Bailey as *the magnetic seed of the future*.

A problem of integration

One thing which may be said about the many factors involved in globalisation is that, while they may be interdependent to some degree, these interdependencies are not well understood. Complicating the picture still further are the obstacles previously mentioned, which might be said to produce eddies and cross-currents in the flows of money, information, people and goods. Globalisation might thus be regarded as a problem of *integration* – how can the peoples of the world achieve closer and better relationships with one another through these flows? For this to be achievable, people must have some control over their direction and strength. And it is here that the problems with globalisation in its current form begin to emerge.

First of all, perhaps the main driver of globalisation is the flow of money; or more specifically, what is known as international finance capital. This capital is in the hands of institutional investors, viz. banks, transnational companies (TNCs), and most importantly (in terms of sheer amounts), the trio of pension funds, mutual funds and hedge funds. These investors are in the business of creating more money from the money they already have, and are therefore always on the look out for investment opportunities. While financing the construction of buildings, factories, roads and other aspects of physical infrastructure offer some scope for this, these offer returns on capital which are only available in the medium to long term. And besides, according to William Greider, author of *One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism*, we

are currently in a situation where there is far more capital available than can be profitably invested in industry and infrastructure – in fact, we already produce more goods than can be absorbed by consumption. Institutional investors must therefore find other ways to make more money, and so a large part of their capital is invested in various types of financial derivatives, which are, to put it crudely, bets about the future price of various assets – anything from copper to wheat to the Japanese Yen.

So a large quantity of human ingenuity is spent in investing very large sums of money, based upon speculations concerning the future. Two key points to note are that these speculations are usually focused on the *near* future, i.e. they are short-term, looking no further than a few years or even months down the road; and there is no sense in which they are co-ordinated, with a view to ensuring the overall health of the world economy – in fact, if the bets are to be “successful”, there must be losers as well as winners. As recent events in South-East Asia have shown, currency speculation may lead to hardship for whole nations. It’s then that the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which does have certain responsibilities concerning the health of the world economy, is often asked for assistance.

In defence of currency speculators, it has been argued² that their speculations are based upon careful economic and political analysis, and that all they are doing is identifying a country where the economic fundamentals are not sufficiently healthy to justify the value of the currency. They are therefore only pointing out a change in the value which would need to happen anyway. But should such a small number of unelected people be able to have such a significant impact upon the daily lives of millions? For the effects of a currency crash can affect practically every aspect of a government’s policies, simply because there is suddenly much less money to spend on behalf of its citizens.

A transformation of attitudes

Even if speculators were more enlightened in their approach, it does not seem just that they should command such power. Is there any way of ameliorating their actions? One suggestion is a tax on foreign-exchange transactions – one variant of which is the Tobin tax, named after the economist James Tobin, who put forward the proposal in 1978. However, as the *Economist* points out, such a tax might discourage long-term cross-border investment³. But even a successful tax would only be a brake on short-term thinking and greed; ultimately what is required is a transformation of the attitudes of all those involved in the financial markets, so that their actions are governed by goodwill. The good of the whole in the long term would then be the aim of all financial dealings. In the words of Alice Bailey,

Love and understanding will eventually follow upon a practical expression of goodwill as a factor in every type of human relation and as a mode of contact between groups, between nations and their minorities, between nation and nation and

also in the field of international politics and religions. The expression of true love as a factor in the life of our planet may lie very far ahead, but goodwill is a present possibility and the organizing of goodwill an outstanding necessity.

This same thought could apply equally to the other dimensions of globalisation. For example, perhaps the major investors of “real” capital in the world apart from governments are transnational companies (TNCs). It is they who build factories, extract minerals and generate energy on a global scale. Their decisions on whether or not to invest in a country can make a considerable difference to that country’s economy, particularly if it is relatively small and fragile (i.e. developing). The current low levels of overseas development aid, which for most developed countries falls far short of the target of 0.7% of GNP, makes private investment even more important. TNCs can therefore require favourable conditions of governments, such as tax breaks and purpose-built infrastructure; and they will want to feel reasonably certain concerning the political stability of the country. Other factors such as the levels of corruption, bureaucracy, and effective regulation present in the business culture, the general infrastructure, and the skills of the workforce, will also play a part in the decision.

Unlocking human potential

Here we have repeated a situation in which the decision of a small number of rich people from the developed world can have significant consequences for large numbers of those less well off – and not only for people in the country in which they choose to invest, but also for workers in their factories in developed countries, who may find their labour is no longer required. And once again, profit is the primary motivation. This is not to deny that some TNCs behave in an exemplary fashion when investing in developing countries, adhering to higher environmental and labour standards than the law of their host country requires. But some commentators on globalisation warn of a potential “race to the bottom” as countries “reduce wages, taxes, welfare benefits and environmental controls to make themselves more ‘competitive.’”⁴ And even those who extol the virtues of globalisation speak of a “better division of labour between countries, allowing low-wage countries to specialise in labour-intensive tasks while high-wage countries use workers in more productive ways”⁵, which has an inherently separative ring to it, as if some countries are destined to be “low-wage”, and others to be “high-wage”. A globalisation motivated by goodwill would focus instead upon the importance of unlocking the creative potential of every human being through education, without regard to country of origin, and would place capital at the service of this goal.

The need for goodwill is evident also in the area of trade. At the moment, the world has a number of free-trade areas, such as the internal market in the EU, ASEAN (which includes seven countries of South-East Asia), NAFTA (Canada, Mexico and the US), and Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay). There is also

the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which attempts to free up the conditions of global trade. Provided that the possibility of conflict between the separate trading areas can be avoided, then hopefully they can eventually merge, and can harmonise their arrangements so that goods and services can flow freely throughout the world. But this must not be done in such a way that benefits any portion at the expense of the whole. In the preceding Newsletter on genetics, the issue of Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) was discussed, and it was evident that the developed countries stood to benefit from this arrangement. The fact that it is the WTO which enforces TRIPS does not inspire confidence that the WTO can be even-handed and just in other matters. Once again, the need for the ending of a separative, short-term approach is underlined.

As well as the free, unprejudiced flow of goods and services, the world would be a far better place if the free flow of individuals were possible. The world is currently very far away from this ideal, with passports, visas and immigration quotas blocking freedom of movement and residence. As goodwill increasingly qualifies international relations we may hope to see the gradual dissolution of these barriers, bringing in its wake a great flourishing of cultural understanding and cross-fertilisation. Yet globalisation as it is now operating will most probably act in the opposite direction for the bulk of humanity, with only a privileged few – the highly skilled – having the freedom to roam the world, while the poor and unskilled find any attempts at migration blocked. A similar disparity currently exists in the flow of culture through the media. In a talk given at the 1997 World Goodwill seminar in London, Eina McHugh, the Director of the Second World Summit on Television for Children, indicated that the United States “is believed to control over 85% of the world

trade in audio-visual media, but it imports only about 4% of its programmes from overseas. For children this may mean that they may have very few opportunities to watch material from other cultures or to learn about the experiences and perspective of children in other parts of the world.”⁶ She goes on to note that outside the US, the expensive process of making quality children’s programmes finds itself in competition with cheap imports of animated programmes from the US; thus there is the danger that children will be deprived of programmes which are relevant to their own culture. And of course this danger is present for adult programming as well. It would seem that globalisation, far from being a process which creates one world, is in danger of creating an even starker division between the world of the rich and powerful and the world of the poor and powerless. It is up to all people of goodwill to involve themselves in these issues, by supporting the many positive initiatives and organisations which acknowledge our common humanity, and regard the achievement of right human relations as the true goal of globalisation.

...world globalisation will be an accomplished fact when the globalisation of conscience becomes a daily reality.

Beatrice Kersten

- 1 *The ACP Courier*, No. 164, July-August 1997, p. 80
- 2 Cf. for example, “Mahathir, Soros and the currency markets” in *The Economist*, September 27th 1997, p.122.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 From “One World”, in *The Economist*, October 18th 1997, p.134.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 From “The Future Public: The Responsibility of Children’s Television.” Seminar transcript available free on request from World Goodwill.

THE GREAT INVOCATION

From the point of Light within the Mind of God
 Let light stream forth into the minds of men.
 Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God
 Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.
 May Christ return to Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known
 Let purpose guide the little wills of men –
 The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the race of men
 Let the Plan of Love and Light work out
 And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth.

This Invocation or Prayer does not belong to any person or group, but to all Humanity. The beauty and the strength of this Invocation lies in its simplicity, and in its expression of certain central truths which all people, innately and normally, accept – the truth of the existence of a basic Intelligence to Whom we vaguely give the name of God; the truth that behind all outer seeming, the motivating power of the universe is Love; the truth that a great Individuality came to earth, called by Christians, the Christ, and embodied that love so that we could understand; the truth that both love and intelligence are effects of what is called the Will of God; and finally the self-evident truth that only through *humanity* itself can the Divine Plan work out.

Alice Bailey

NOTE: In some translations of the Great Invocation the name by which the Coming One is known in different religions is used, e.g. the Lord Maitreya, Krishna, the Imam Mahdi or the Messiah.

LOCALISATION — BUILDING COMMUNITY NETWORKS OF GOODWILL

Unity and right human relations—individual, communal, national and international—can be brought about by the united action of the men and women of goodwill in every country.

Alice Bailey

Although the forces of globalisation operate on a world scale, their effects can reach down into the smallest community. Perhaps as a response to this, there are now emerging a number of initiatives from the community level which seek to develop self-reliance and build upon a clear understanding of local social and environmental conditions. This trend has been named “localisation”. Everywhere, in both the developing and the developed world, people of goodwill are uniting to create a better future for their communities. This spontaneous emergence in the face of difficult circumstances is inspiring proof of the largely untapped potential of human creativity, and it gives support to the idea of “subsidiarity”, i.e. the case for a more systematic devolution of political and social decision-making right down to the level at which it can be appropriately exercised.

Roger Roy, an International Development Adviser at the United Nations Development Programme, spoke about some of these community-based initiatives at the 1996 World Goodwill Forum in Geneva¹. He suggested that some of their key features are:

Conceptual frameworks for action which are inclusive and readily understood by all participants;

Increased self-reliance and the stimulation of micro-enterprises and income generating activities through local capacity-building;

Emphasis on the use of national and international volunteer workers;

Sensitivity to the role of women in development;

Non-dominant leadership by village people and urban dwellers with emphasis on decision-making through consensus building and informal structures;

Innovative local solutions to problems concerning human and natural resource sustainability. Creative problem solving which combines international and local modern technology with traditional knowledge and skills;

The voluntary dissemination of knowledge and skills to other similar communities in need, thus multiplying the positive effects.

He went on to indicate that these initiatives demonstrate three principles of goodwill, viz.:

The value of sharing scarce resources and traditional knowledge and skills;

Cooperation that builds and sustains the prosperity of communities and the health of the local environment;

The principle of responsibility, whereby community members take group action to strengthen peace and happiness.

Among the initiatives which he cited, there is the Programme for Artisan Development in South Asia, involving local community-based organisations (CBOs), local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the United Nations Volunteer Programme (UNV). One of its practical successes was the introduction of a Bhutanese technique of loom weaving to Indian artisans, which reduced back strain and so made more productive work possible. Another initiative is the Indian Agro-Forestry Project, which involved a local CBO called RORES (Reorganisation of Rural Economy and Society), a national Indian NGO Myrada, and a Canadian NGO, HOPE International Development Agency. This project was conducted in around 75 villages in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Areas of the state which were barren wasteland due to long periods of drought were brought back to life, lifting local communities out of poverty. According to Mr. Roy, both of these projects had an important impact on the thinking and ultimately the policies of provincial and local governments, concerning the real economic and environmental priorities.

Another trend which has recently emerged that nourishes local development, is the growth in the availability of institutions willing to accept very small deposits and disburse very small loans, or *microfinance*. This gives poor individuals a much greater chance to profit from their skills and creativity. In some cases, microfinance institutions (MFIs) have been created specifically for this purpose – perhaps the best known of these is the Grameen Bank, set up by Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh; in other cases, such as the Bank Rakyat Indonesia, financial reforms and the introduction of new savings instruments have allowed an existing bank to provide credit to the poor. The institutions are not confined to the developing world; even America now has about 300 microcredit programmes. The experience of these institutions is that the poor are good credit risks and have high savings propensity. However, much remains to be done, as the vast majority of households in developing countries still do not have access to microfinance. And of course, providing people with credit is not the full answer to developing their potential. In the words of Sayeeda Rahman, “...in order to alleviate poverty for more than a billion people today, progress in the field of microfinance will have to be complemented with supporting programmes and services, notably taking into account the social and cultural dimensions of

development.”² Nevertheless, MFIs permit the poor to take a step towards taking control of their own circumstances.

In the developed world, another technique for increasing the local production of goods and services, the Local Exchange and Trading System (LETS), has also been increasing in popularity. This technique involves the creation of a local currency, which is then used as the means of buying and selling the goods and services which exist in the local community. The first LETS was devised and established by Michael Linton in 1983 at Comox Valley on Vancouver Island, Canada. There is no exchange of printed money in this system, though in another popular system local currency such as the Ithaca Hour (representing a standard rate of \$10.00 per hour at Ithaca, New York) or the Acorn used at Totnes, England, is printed and put into circulation.

Slowly at first this venture in non-profit making barter in services and commodities began to spread, and then in the 1990s it accelerated in most English speaking industrialised nations. In 1994 there were 164 operating LETS communities in Australia, 54 in New Zealand, about 350 in England in 1995, and about 20 in North America. There are now barter communities in all the Scandinavian countries, and in France, Germany, Holland, Spain and Switzerland.

A survey of Australian barter communities revealed that the three main reasons for founding them, in order of importance, were:

- to develop a greater sense of community within their area;
- to rebuild ‘localized’ economies which are more

Those who would like to help foster the growth of microfinance will be interested to know that there are at least two financial organisations based in the developed world which provide accounts specifically designed to channel funds into small loans to people in the developing world. For further information, contact:

Shared Interest Society Limited
31 Mosley Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 1HX
UK
T. +44 (0)191 261 5943 (24 Hours)
F. +44 (0)191 261 8759
http://www.oneworld.org/shared_int/

Triodos Bank
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11 The Promenade
Clifton, Bristol BS8 3NN
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Triodos Bank also has offices in the Netherlands and Belgium.

inter-linked and less reliant on external goods and services; and

to help those excluded from employment to participate in productive activity, use or extend their skills, and improve their self-esteem and quality of life.”³

Although these different approaches to the problems of economic uncertainty and lack of integration within local communities may seem fairly modest when contrasted with the forces of globalisation, this is to judge by the outer form and not the inner note. It is clear that the energy of goodwill lies behind these local initiatives, and that they constitute a genuine attempt to foster right human relations. As Alice Bailey said in 1947, in words which continue to be relevant, “When there is freedom from want, one of the major causes of war will disappear. Where there is uneven distribution of the world’s riches and where there is a situation in which some nations have or take everything and other nations lack the necessities of life, it is obvious that there is a trouble-breeding factor there and that something must be done. Therefore we should deal with world unity and peace primarily from the angle of the economic problem.”

1 “The Earth’s Resources and Poverty: Inseparable Companions?” Seminar transcript available from the Geneva office of World Goodwill; for address see end of this Newsletter.

2 *The Unesco Courier*, January 1997, p.11.

3 “Local Exchange And Trading Systems (LETS) In Australia: A New Tool For Community Development?” by Colin C. Williams, available on the Internet at <http://www.bendigo.latrobe.edu.au/arts/ijccr/1CCW.htm> (“one”CCW.htm)

HELPING TO BUILD RIGHT HUMAN RELATIONS

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