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## The pursuit of wisdom and democracy

By Vigdor Schreibman

Shifting away from a philosophy of greed, which cannot produce anything but the "direst consequences,"<sup>1</sup> the deep driver of genuine progress is the evolutionary process revealed by the cosmos, which is ultimately governed by what Peirce has described as "**creative love**": the movement that "projects creations into interdependence and drawing them into harmony."<sup>2</sup> The very same interdependence, drawing the people into harmony, is projected by the democratic movement of "the People" from whom "all power derives" under the Republican form of Government.<sup>3</sup> The drive to democratic power is thus a drive to the harmony of "creative love" that evolves from the cosmos.

Democracy offers the potential of unvanquishable power but the attainment of such power by the people in a democracy can occur only to the extent that a true democracy is realized, that is, by attainment of **a genuine union of true individuals**, as described by Mary Parker Follett, the sage philosopher of democracy. It was not undisciplined freedom but the pursuit of "**a more perfect Union**" that defined the paramount purpose of The Constitution of the United States!

The shift toward a true democratic paradigm -- the paradigm of community wisdom known in the Greek language as "DEMOSOPHIA" -- may seem impossible in a state that at present is largely driven toward chaos and barbarity. At the same time, paradoxically, true democracy is envisioned as inevitable in a social system of increasing complexity such that only the development of a democratic **People Science**, described by systems scientist, Dr. Alexander N. Christakis, the "**science of human relationships**" envisioned by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the "**science of man**" described by distinguished social theorist and a popular teacher of anthropology, Ernest Becker,<sup>4</sup> can assure survival of civilization by realization of the ancient promise of democracy.

In the "Information Age" the challenge of democracy is to adapt the ancient Athenian Agora to Cyberspace. This brings into view, **The New Agora of Philanthropolis**, that Dr. Christakis and I have proposed.

Conversely, to the extent that a state remains or is driven toward chaos and barbarity, disassociation, disintegration, anarchy, or mere separation, democracy is bereft of power and civilization, itself, is impossible.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Vincent G. Potter, S.J., Charles S. Pierce *On Norms & Ideals* 176 (1997).

2 Potter, *infra* at xvii-xviii, 179-80.

3 [City of Eastlake v. Forest City](#) 426 US 668, 672 (1976).

4 E. Becker, **The Structure of Evil** (1968), *An Essay on the Unification of the Science of Man*. Becker was winner of the 1974 Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction, author of **The Denial of Death**.

5 See e.g., José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* 75-76 (W.W. Norton ed. 1993); Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* 109-118 (1987).

## Normative planning and the pursuit of wisdom



Professor Hasan Özbekhan,<sup>6</sup> was the preeminent pioneer in this field of knowledge and creative action. Below is a summary review of published authorities in normative value-driven planning in the Pursuit of Wisdom.<sup>7</sup>

H. Özbekhan, “[Toward a General Theory of Planning](#),” in PERSPECTIVES OF PLANNING 47-155 (OECD Report, Jantsch ed. 1968); *explained in* A.N. Christakis, A New Policy Science Paradigm, FUTURES, Dec 1973; *applied in* H. Özbekhan, “The Future of Paris,” in ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON, PHILOSOPHICAL TRANSACTIONS SERIES A, at 287, 523 (1977). H. Özbekhan, prophetically described the problem situation in these words::

**“What we witness appears to be an endeavor to extend various fragmented self-interest spaces, through a search of common interests. Maybe this represents a slow,**

**glacially slow, and seemingly unconscious attempt to break the hold that the idea of nation-state has taken; it has full dominance now over our minds, over our ability to conceive of other new ways of establishing larger and wider social bonds. For the moment, no evolutionary leap seems to be in the making in this field. Nevertheless, we are forced to conclude that the introduction of ecological balance into our normative scheme requires that the notion of social bonding be viewed as transcending the idea of nation and extending to the planet as a whole.”**

The threat to planetary life arising from the absence of an instinctual concern for survival of the species in the long term has been described by two scientists, Van Rensselaer Potter and Richard Grantham (1999), as “**evolution's fatal flaw**”! However, human civilization is wising up to the potential for conscious evolution of the transcendent planetary sociocultural enterprise.<sup>8</sup>

**“All politics is local” but clearly not in the interdependent Global Era.** An integrated planetary psychology, “**Think globally and act local**,” resonates with the holistic goal advocated by Özbekhan. **Google** now draws from 89.8M, 2:25AM EDT to 28.6M, 10:10AM EDT pages (05/13/10), on that topic.

Educators and systems scientists know that knowing “does not lead to doing.” People need outside assistance to break through outdated values handed down by their dead ancestors or learned through socialization in early life and in their places of work and play. The popular program — **Giving Voice to Values** — is exactly what is need to help our students and savvy business entrepreneurs, as well as leading **social and political activists**, take action.

6 Background paper by Heiner Benking, “An inquiry and outlook based on the original Prospectus of the Club of Rome on the occasion of 40 years work on the Predicament of Mankind and the UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen in December 2009,” online at URL: <http://weturn.org/40years-Problematique.pdf>

7 For a values-directed future for Planetary Civilization, see the **LoD Values Transformation Matrix**

8 B.H. Banathy, Guided Evolution of Society: A Systems View ¶ 8.2 (2000).

The educator and knowledge management facilitator must allow the participants to construct the value content they alone choose, albeit, the ultimate value choice must be explicit not implicit, within the context of the driving value that the system is devoted to support. The so-called "neutral" education or process management is a myth that must be avoided, especially in this domain of conscious evolution of the transcendent planetary sociocultural enterprise,<sup>9</sup> where the very future of human civilization is at stake.

At its core the quest for a disinterested process of, knowledge management is an inadequate foundation, "For Betterment of Humankind." As Jantsch observes,

**this goal is the work of a, *partisan* viewpoint, which starts from the assumption that man has become the chief actor in the process of shaping and controlling the system. It may be called the *anthropomorphic angle of view* which, by definition, cannot be "objective." Nor would it be possible at all to form the notion of an integral education/innovation system without a purposive, and thus "subjective" view in mind.**<sup>10</sup>

It must be emphasized, the ultimate value choice must be explicit for the pursuit of wisdom. Compare e.g., H. Özbekhan, "Planning and Human Action," in HIERARCHICALLY ORGANIZED SYSTEMS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE 123, 183-84 (P. Weiss ed. 1971) (discussing the absolute necessity to explicitly clarify normative values as a part of the planning and decision-making process); with C. ARGYRIS, REASONING, LEARNING, AND ACTION ch. 5 (1982) (discussion the critical importance to organizational effectiveness of explicit clarification of the governing values and organizational norms-in-use); with G. LODGE, THE AMERICAN DISEASE ch. 2 (1984) (discussing the critical importance of reasoned analysis and synthesis in the selection of any ideological strategy linking values with action); with R. ACKOFF, Re-CREATING CORPORATION 162 (1999) (observing "One who seeks to increase wisdom must be concerned with the value of outcomes .... This means that effective decisions must be value-full, not value-free."); and with A.N. CHRISTAKIS, A RETROSPECTIVE INQUIRY OF THE PREDICAMENT OF MANKIND PROSPECTUS OF HE CLUB OF ROME 17, 31 (1993) (Disclosing persistent conditions in 1970-93 of "Growing irrelevance of traditional values and continuing failure to evolve new value systems.").<sup>11</sup>

**(N)ormative planning is done with reference to ends and their value content, and is aimed at the clarification of the consequences of proposed action(s) within a hypothetical time interval and some whole environment or situation. When such consequences have been made clear, the normative plan determines whether they will ultimately be "good" or "bad" for some whole environment, and not merely for individual sectoral generators of the plan--be the latter a person, an organization, a city, a region, or a nation-state, etc. The traditional argument against normative planning has been that since values are given, they automatically enter into any form of planning. The fact that they exist is perfectly true. The trouble is that they exist implicitly; they are never consciously reviewed; and we can no longer be sure that our inherited values (or their current interpretation) will, in fact, yield consequences that are good for some definable "whole" situation. Hence, it**

9 B.H. Banathy, *infra*, note 8.

10 E. Jantsch, "Inter-and Transdisciplinarity University: A Systems Approach to Education and Innovation," POLICY SCIENCES, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Dec 1970): pp. 403, 408-410.

11 Applied in V. Schreibman, *Treason to the Constitution* (April 2010), in LoD, online at URL: [http://sunsite.utk.edu/FINS/loversofdemocracy/treason\\_to\\_the\\_constitution.pdf](http://sunsite.utk.edu/FINS/loversofdemocracy/treason_to_the_constitution.pdf)

**is absolutely necessary to question them and to reconsider them explicitly as a part of the planning process. As matters now stand, we simply do not know- nor can we know in so complicated a situation as ours -whether the values on which, for example, our present institutions are based will produce desirable consequences - desirable being defined in a new and unfamiliar context. And since individual entities are part of the whole inter-responsive system of reality, we cannot even determine on the basis of our current implicit values, if what we think is good or desirable for individual selves or entities is so. We cannot, because valuing the whole is not an explicit (often not even an implicit) value for us.<sup>12</sup>**

## **The structure of normative planning**

With regard to the structure of the plan,<sup>13</sup> H. Özbekhan described the “fundamental problem” in planning “to endow the plan's inner levels with explicit meaning, and to bridge the boundaries between plan and environment with that explicit meaning.” Nor can the above problem be solved by arbitrarily ascribing meanings to operational plans and trying to translate these meanings upward into strategies and then into norms. The hierarchical organization of plans prevents this because: <sup>14</sup>

**(a) the content and operations of normative plans *cannot* be deduced from the principles governing strategic plans;**

**(b) the content and operations of strategic plans *cannot* be deduced from the principles governing operational plans;**

**(c) the content and operations of operational plans *cannot* be deduced from the partial or sectoral requirements of the environment.**

**Hence we must conclude that, both in terms of control and in terms of meaning, it is the highest level in the plan's structure which dictates or determines the information content of the lower levels, whereas the contrary is not true.**

Marshall McLuhan, the sage of culture and technology, who coined the term “the global village,” will be remembered for his metaphor “the medium is the message,” suggesting that the contents of communications are subjected to the control of the medium itself. The “message” that McLuhan was referring to was not limited to its narrow sense, the explicit set of words or pictures built serially, block-by-block, and step-by-step. This is merely the concrete end of the process. In the world of electronic communications, McLuhan understood, “we have been forced to move from the habit of data classification to the mode of pattern recognition.” That message pattern is derived from the whole system of value-directed action that controls the medium.<sup>15</sup>

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12 H. Özbekhan, “Planning and Human Action,” in HIERARCHICALLY ORGANIZED SYSTEMS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE 184 (P. Weiss ed. 1971)

13 H. Özbekhan, “The Future of Paris,” in ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON, PHILOSOPHICAL TRANSACTIONS SERIES A, at 287, 523, 533-543 (1977); Phase III, adapted from Fitz, Crim, Troha, Creating a Regional Environmental Learning System, in RESEARCH LABORATORIES FOR THE ENGINEERING SCIENCES, III A SOURCEBOOK FOR THE DESIGN OF A REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING SYSTEM 4-25 to 4-37 (HEW Report, Warfield ed. Aug. 1979); the three fundamental planning categories, the Normative, the Strategic/and the Operational correspond to the terminology espoused by the Club of Rome, at p. 52 (CoR) proposal back in 1970.

14 See authorities cited, *infra*, note 12, at 192, ¶¶ 6-8.

15 [Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man](#) published in 1964. Originally published in 1964 by Mentor,

## Comments

On Monday, May 02, 2010, 9:34 PM [Jacqueline Howell Wasilewski](#)  
[JWash@AOL.com](mailto:JWash@AOL.com), wrote to **LoD** these words of wisdom:

Just piping up from my corner of the universe. One of my current hero-ines is Brenda Davies, a British M.D. working in Zambia who is "grandmother" to 100+ AIDs orphans (she is on her second generation and does micro-credit projects to set them up in businesses). Anyway ... she says:

**“Our integrity is a function of our truth as we know it, but we have to be willing to update our “truth” every second, so we have to create spaces where we can all update our truth together and enable our mutual integrity to rise exponentially.”**

I think this is what SDD [Structured, dialogic design] enables us to do.

To quote Steve Bhaerman, a.k.a. the “Cosmic Comic,” Swami Beyondananda ...

**“Stick to your story, and you’re stuck with it ... Our collective story has delivered us to this dangerous precipice ... Now our entire species faces the same choice: Your story or your life! ... Do we go down with our old story, or do we wise up and rise up with a new one?”**

Jackie ((^\_^))

