

## Ideological Change for a More Just Society

Caveat: This paper is based on the assumption that humans have caused a great deal of damage to the earth and that the effects of this damage are beginning to be felt around the world. If you do not share this belief this paper will probably come across as overdramatic liberal propaganda. I am sincerely sorry you feel this way.

I would like to begin by dispelling the idea that radical change in our social structure is not possible. Instead I propose that radical change is not only likely, but certain. Why is it that we believe that things will not change at the most fundamental levels, when human history has shown exactly the opposite? Our global society has been changing so radically that it is virtually unrecognizable from two-hundred years ago (a relatively tiny amount of time). There is virtually no good argument to support the idea of a tendency toward the status-quo, and yet whenever broad, far reaching, radical suggestions and projections are made, they are often discredited on the basis of impossibility. The fact of the matter is that our world is changing at a rapidly accelerating pace, and there is little reason for us to expect this to change. The real question then is not whether the world is going to change radically over the next few centuries, but whether humans will be able to adapt to and modify the course of this change in order to survive.

This will be our greatest test as a conscious species, but by the same token it could become our greatest triumph. However, if we are to succeed we must first acknowledge that our current political, technological, sociological, and economic ideologies are fundamentally flawed such that they are at the root of our current state of widespread unnecessary suffering. If these ideologies are not changed from their self-

destructive nature, at least in the minds of an active minority, I see little hope for our future. However, if we are able to turn the tide soon enough and embrace an ideology based on the five world order values – peace, social justice, economic well-being, ecological balance and positive identity – there is every reason to believe that the human spirit will triumph. This paper is my humble idea of which ideological changes are the most pressing and how they should be changed.

As a physicist, I am surrounded by people who have a deep seated, and in my opinion unjustified, faith that science and technology can solve any socio-ecological problem that could arise. This faith is based largely on the renaissance era motto, “progress through reason”, and is supported by the more modern but even less justifiable idea of infinite substitutability. Unfortunately, our planetary resources are finite and technological solutions have often created more problems than they have solved. Because of this, there are some who believe that science has taken us down the wrong path entirely and that we must reject it all together and return to a low-tech society – modern dark ages – in order to survive. However, I believe that technological solutions are not only necessary but absolutely essential for us to find our way out of this mess, but that the basic motives and principals behind science must be revised in order to prevent the creation of new problems. Most of all, there must be a reversal of values within the scientific community such that scientific understanding becomes secondary to social well-being. It is backwards to be sending men to the moon while people are starving on earth, “spin-offs” such as Velcro and UV sun glasses are not enough to justify this crime against the poor. If the entire scientific community agreed to find a way to meet the basic needs of all people in a sustainable manner before embarking on more philosophical

endeavors, like the question of existence, not only would we find solutions quicker but a redirected scientific community would leave the military industrial complex without a brain. This “terrestrial problems first” ideology could become a “Maslow’s hierarchy of needs applied on a species-wide scale” ideology in which humans move up the hierarchy as a species rather than individually. Though this idea may – at face value – seem farfetched and even communist, if we simply strived for such a world we would find ourselves in a fundamentally more equal society than the one we now inhabit.

However, if we are to embrace broader global equality we must first return this feeling to the local level. Not long ago the hunger and failing health of an individual was a community problem rather than an individual one, however, as our society has become increasingly individualistic we have forgotten the importance of community. In order for community to replace alienation as the pervading feeling of our current social structure, compassion must replace competition as the primary driver of social interaction. I refuse to believe that humans are essentially a more competitive than cooperative and compassionate species. Humans have not become the dominant species on the planet by competing with one another but rather by working together. Only relatively recently have we become individually competitive because we have allowed our social structure to pit us against one another other. If universal health care and a minimum income existed, there would be little reason for people to compete with one another for survival or security. In this way, these types of economic and governmental changes not only make a society more just, but indirectly make it more peaceful.

Furthermore, a tax-subsidy system that taxes ecologically and socially destructive practices heavily and subsidizes sustainable ones would encourage corporations to act

sustainably. A service based economy could make small luxuries available to both high and low income groups, depending how much the individual was willing to sacrifice, and would have the benefit of forcing corporations to internalize many of the costs which society is currently forced to pay. However, current consumer culture has been convinced that corporate control and the status-quo are in their best interest. Not until these lies have been exposed and people realize that free-markets and trade liberalization are benefiting primarily the elite upper class, will radical economic change take place. Hopefully, as the elite become even richer, the rest of us will recognize this injustice and begin to reject the current economic ideology in favor of a more just system.

Moving to the global arena, I believe that it is essential that we steer the globalization process away from corporate dominated economic globalization towards a globalization based on justice and transparently accountable democratic institutions. In order for these institutions to have any power at all, the sovereign nations of the world – especially the U.S. – must relinquish some of their power to the international institutions like the World Criminal Court, the United Nations, and a trade organization based on human justice rather than trade liberalization. With this power the primary goal of these institutions should be peace and the first step toward this end should be the destruction of all nuclear and other weapons of mass-destruction. Once this is done, but not before, a UN like organization could create a credible global agreement for shared security to replace the current war system and ensure lasting peace.

However, if we do not release the ideas of free-market capitalism, deregulation and trade liberalization, we will never be free and there will never be peace. Furthermore, if we do not realize a unified fragile interdependent world, the world will

die. If we do not reject the ideas of consumerism and recommit ourselves to the principals of democratic citizenship, little will change. And finally, if we do not embrace the principal of the equality of all people, there will never be justice. These are the values and ideologies that must change because if they do not only ineffectual piecemeal changes will take place on our way to destruction, but with them the socio-structural changes necessary to save humanity will follow almost automatically.

As to how we should go about making these ideological changes, we must continue to talk, continue to write, continue to debate, and continue to educate. We must do what we can in our lives to affect positive change. We must find jobs where our full potential is utilized and our efforts are not wasted nor misdirected. We must recognize that there is only so much that one person can do and always try to do just a little more. We must remain humble, thoughtful and open-minded. We must continue to fight and we must never lose hope.

Increasingly I feel that at the moment when we decide to accept our mistakes and begin to build a more just society two outcomes are possible. It will either be too late, for we will have already created the circumstances for our inevitable destruction or we will emerge into a new and prosperous age of maturity in which, having pushed ourselves to the brink of destruction, we will march toward Maslow's highest need: transcendence.