

GLOBALIZATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

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Ladies and gentlemen,

I am not an expert in cybernetics, and least of all in cyberspace and their social function. I am a historian. Therefore I would like to share my reflections with you regarding our informational future in its human dimension in the process of globalization.

It is in this context that I deem it possible to put the theses of my statement within a somewhat different philosophical framework than is usually accepted.

"If there is a future, I would like to know where it is". This is what was asked by St Augustine. Indeed, where is it?

The answer would seem evident: the future is within ourselves. But mankind, in order to begin building life on new foundations, cannot rid itself of its principal contradictions: intellectually man has reached breathtaking heights in terms of science and technology whereas his social behavior has remained that of a barbarian replete with blood and lies. This contradiction holds mankind in a vast grip which blocks development of its ethical function.

Suppression of the ethical function leads to the washing out of distinction between the good and the bad to a strictly technocratic treatment of the individual by the state and of nature - by the individual.

1. Informational systems

Let me start with expressing my deep conviction that information lies at the basis of life and that development of the human society is measured by stages of informational epochs and not by economic-political schemes. Nature is a kind of energy backup for information and the spirit is information – received, adapted, systematized and processed by the human brain.

It is man's gift which allows brain to create culture – material and spiritual. An atom, a molecule, a nation, a society, a human being, a country, the Universe are by and large information systems. Matter only fills them in and serves their development and self-improvement, changeover of information from one form into another, etc..

Information is endless in its manifestations. What a great man leaves behind is only information – be it paintings by Leonardo, music by Mozart and Tchaikovsky, Don Quichote by Cervantes, Eugene Onegin by Pushkin or the Dead Souls by Gogol. The fall of the Roman Empire was the end of an informational system which passed its peak and began degrading.

So, information is primary, and matter and spirit are secondary. It is spirit, a better organized information, which is more efficient and projected onto some or other specific matter. For example, atomic or hydrogen bombs could not have exploded if there were no human brain, the ideal information synthesizer. That would not be possible, but man touched on the energy of enormous, world-creating power and as a result humankind became mortal because it raised hand against the primary nature of information.

Humans are mortal – information is immortal. Mankind's immortality is in perpetuity of information, in its lasting image – culture.

2. Man in the informational environment

Here I proceed from the following considerations:

Man was born in the first environment – nature. Then, having acquired and processed information which was available to him: language, alphabet, crops and stockbreeding, science, arts, dwellings, etc. – he lived in two environments: first, nature proper and

second, in artificial nature.

From the informational point of view, the second nature, that is the whole world created by human hand and brain, is ruled by letters, hieroglyphs, figures, musical notes, lines and colors. Early in the 1980s the total value of means of informatics – i.e. computers, radio and TV sets, telephones, fax and Xerox machines, etc. surpassed the cost of producing energy resources, which means that man stepped over into a new, yet unknown epoch. One speaks now of internetization which might as well signify the end of the first stage of globalization of the world space of international life. Let us conditionally call the coming informational epoch 'an epoch of the second alphabet'.

The second alphabet begins a new renaissance era. Convergence through information of culture, religion, music, science and a way of life has set in. As a result of advances in science and technology society is gliding from a managerial revolution to an informational stage and probably to an intellectual revolution.

Universal dissemination and mastering of the second alphabet make it possible to process both huge information fields as much as tiny ones at personal and family levels. The second alphabet, or our transition into the third informational environment so far is akin to ancient Egyptian scrolls, a primitive kind of writing. In due time, perhaps in the 21st century, the second alphabet will bring forth its Shakespeares, Pushkins, Leonardos and Newtons.

3. What will happen to us?

So, in the coming century toward which we are directing our glances, we are not going to live in the world of socialism, or capitalism, or convergence of the two systems. It will be a principally different choice, and it is being made by our actions today. This can be a world of common sense and rationalism, a world of competence and responsibility and, which is more, a world of unconditional sovereignty of the individual.

Industrialization will fade out little by little. Already now the growth of super cities, the megalopolises is slowing down. New principles of an informational civilization will not need cities to such an extent as in the past. The collectivity connected with industrialization will certainly stay. But its scale and forms will be substantially changed.

Interstate borders will be wiped out, there will be no need for visas or customs. Militarization will be lost in the Leta.

Autonomization of the individual will probably bring forth new forms of collectivity and of individualism. Expectedly, biotechnology will lead us in the first quarter of the next century into an era of optimization based on precise methods to determine and meet needs and wishes both of an individual and of the world community as a whole.

Since especial value in the eyes of man will be given to arts, handicraft skills and services, any man will be able, with the help of new technologies, to engage in the work which will bring him the joy of creation and discovery.

Technology of optimization will secure stable, social rules. Science and culture will ensure man's relative harmony within nature and society and, to a degree, intrinsic harmony. There will come a fuller understanding of the spiritual life phenomenon which will be determined more and more by psychogenetics which, in its turn, will open the door to yet another era. We shall approach an epoch of global change in which struggle for survival will disappear.

Wisdom and goodwill will replace ignorance and greed and will become a real moving force in society; peace, life and happiness

will acquire the highest, tangible value in the eyes of people. The new society's religion will be humanism. Today these statements sound banal, usually resorted to for political speculation. Tomorrow they may start acquiring real and not political content.

In my opinion, internetization will inevitably lead to a new, principally different stage of material and spiritual advancement of civilization on a global scale. I call it ecodevelopment.

From the economical point of view ecodevelopment is a process of the world economy gradual transition towards the maximum use of biotechnology in production without waste as it happens in life, thus achieving harmony between society and nature.

From the social point of view this is an effort to merge knowledge and humanism which will make it possible to create a system of self limitations and, eventually, eradicate famine, poverty and destitution.

From the philosophical point of view this a departure from barbarity in which we still live since mankind has not stopped taking human lives.

From the political point of view this is fraternity and co-operation among peoples and states overcoming social, national and other strife.

The ecodevelopment principles should be laid down at the basis of an overall strategy of world development – both short- and long-term. Otherwise all our disputes about the fate of man, the beauty and joy of living, the lasting value of the arts will prove fruitless and beyond the point.

This is how I view the vector of civilized countries' development in the first half of the 21st century. But not all is fine as it may seem. I must come back to my misgivings mentioned above.

1. One certainly may be tempted to forcefully draw the developing countries onto the informational field of the developed countries. That is possible. But, honestly, I fear that such jumps would lead to serious psychological dislocations. Moreover, a chauvinistic hysteria may result from the interference with the natural course of events leading inevitably to conflicts, bloodshed and degradation.

2. Even if I do not share the apocalyptic ideas at all, I am concerned about the consequences of 'internetization'. I ask myself: can it be that the development of information nets in the 21st century, while putting the wealth of information at man's disposal, will weaken him spiritually?

The individual, comfortably ensconced in his armchair at home, can summon practically the whole world onto his screen – any event, great or small – and they will be all at the call of a small, soulless button. I am afraid that the analytical, diagnostic and prognostic functions will be in the domain of machines even if they are biomachines. One would only hope that love, childbirth, dissemination of goodness and justice, conscience and enjoyment are to remain the privilege of man.

Apprehensions are not without ground that a gradual universalization of life and of its values, a kind of 'unification' of a way of life will come about. Not globalization, which is inevitable, but rather universalization and unification. To a degree it stands to logic; but will it not mean triumph of all-embracing individualism and a particular form of growing wild, a time of squeezing out everything human from a human being?

There arises a legitimate, difficult question: what will happen to culture? Will it continue its mission of a guardian of common human ideals and values, or will a strictly technical civilization take the upper hand?

Will the national cultures dim in the third informational environment? How will they develop in cyberspace in which time flies at an incredible speed? For time is but the speed of information transfer.

The world is one and single and multifaceted. And for that reason it is colorful with all the races and nations. There has never been,

and I hope that there will never be, a single culture for all living on the earth. There was and there will be a culture which is made up of thousands of ethnic cultures.

All people will gradually become patriots of the planet earth. Everybody will soon feel to a degree not so much a Russian, a French, a Japanese, an American or a Nigerian, but rather an earthling because the biosphere is one and only for all. So is the earth, and the world ocean and the atmosphere.

And the main question is: will the second alphabet of electronic means of information become the common denominator of culture and, perhaps, of a monoculture?

Historically the time during which man has been conducting scientifically reliable monitoring is still too short. Nevertheless, we are to expect a crisis changing the cycle at any moment. Every major event may signal the beginning of a counter phase.

History shows that morally deficient forces and tendencies triumphed sooner or later in the societies where the process of historical choice was put in the reverse, as it were. It would be naive to presume that those processes have ceased. That is why a world built on some latest dogmas is possible; and in that instance it would not matter much whether people say prayers to capitalism, socialism or democracy; live with market or without it; in a rule-of-law state or in a totalitarian one as the world built on fanaticism regards a human as a renewable resource and by no means as the product of supreme creation and purpose.

4. Responsibility

And now turning to the main things. And here I revert to the problem of information. The democratic future of humankind depends, directly and indirectly, on prospects of its use. Democracy, a noisy, collectivity phenomenon, will begin to change its forms. Historically speaking, time can only be compacted through democracy and not by force, but rather by informational impact on our own kin tired of wars and violence.

Thus, amassing information means acquiring greater freedom. But let us ask ourselves: is the problem of responsibility of man becoming especially topical, particularly in the sphere of mass media? I had, to a certain extent, to do with the struggle for glasnost in the Soviet Union and Russia. Those were dazzling years of upswing of freedom or word. Alas, I cannot say the same about nowadays for it becomes evident that media under economic pressure fairly often present an unseemly sight of intolerance infringing on elementary human rights that demonstrates irresponsibility. I have to admit it with bitterness. At the same time democracy without freedom of press is inevitably transformed into totalitarianism – which is the nature of power and here, too, arises a question of responsibility.

In this connection I would like to bring the following to your attention. So far there is no world democratic constitution. That is de jure. But it exists de facto: that is to say in human rights.

I do not think that enough information has been amassed to allow the establishment of a world rule-of-law state. But it must be set up. Apparently this will take the whole of the 21st century. I believe that there will come a time when the problem of balance between freedom and responsibility must be dealt with in all seriousness. And, if a man dreams of ruling a state, he accordingly is to raise the level of his obligations.

The idea is by far not new. Thinkers, both of the olden times and of today, standing on the foundation of democracy have persistently tried to impress upon injudicious society that ignored responsibility, deforms freedom; that irresponsibility is inconsistent with freedom.

Let us remember Mahatma Ghandi who wrote about modern sins which are: politics without principles, commerce without morality, wealth without work, education without character, science without conscience and worship without sacrifice.

I happened to participate in the meetings of the Inter-action Council, an organization of former heads of states in which the problem of the need to adopt a UN Universal Declaration of Hu-

man Responsibilities was discussed as a priority topic. If we are to speak about the right to live, then we have a responsibility to cherish it and not to destroy one another; if we are to speak about the right to personal freedom, we have a responsibility first of all to respect the freedom of others; if we are to speak about the right to personal security, we have a responsibility to seek security for all; if we are to speak about the right to take part in the political life of our country, we have a responsibility to choose the best leaders; if we are to speak about the right to work on just conditions, we have a responsibility to work to the full capacity of our forces and capabilities; if we are to speak about the right to education, we have a responsibility to study ourselves and, where appropriate, to share our knowledge with other; if we are to speak about the fight to use the wealth of the earth, we have a responsibility to respect and spare nature.

This is the foundation for creating a society of humanism in conditions of globalization of life of the world community, the foundation of ethics.

Without devotion to humanism, mankind will never be able to create a society in which there will be no place for lying politicians and corrupted officials, for deceit and arrogance, for demagoguery

and populism, for blood-letting fight for power and property.

Despite all the difficulties of a special transitory period towards globalization of human life on earth, it is my belief that we are moving to the era of triumph of common sense, to social and ecological responsibility which will replace unrestrained egotism of today.

Evolutionary change must become a way of life of mankind and a capability to make them possible – a basic criterion of morality of the global system which is taking shape, of its vitality. To my mind history takes on some integrity even though there is no single concept of how to shape the world, but the probability of mankind getting free – and on that basis entering a humanistic civilization, a new informational epoch - is going to take real shape already in the course of the next century.

I personally think, I am even sure, that conditions of globalization of life of the world community and of internetization, adoption of the Declaration of Human Responsibilities becomes inevitable.

The two great declarations of human rights and of human responsibilities could form the basis of a great world constitution.