



PROUT
JOURNAL
Neo-Humanistic Views and Proutist Analysis

Volume 9, No. 1, Spring 2002

"PROUT is very important for grass roots groups and for all who yearn for a liberation which starts from economics and opens to the totality of personal and social human existence."
-- **Leonardo Boff, Brazilian author and one of the founders of Liberation Theology**

"Sarkar's theory [PROUT] is far superior to Adam Smith's or that of Karl Marx."
-- **Johan Galtung, Founder UN Institute of Peace Studies**

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NEO-HUMANISM

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Editorial

New prospects for a post 9/11 world.
by **Ac. Vimalananda Avadhuta**

"When a social wave loses its strength and cannot carry society forward, as it comes close to collapse, if a new wave could rise, it would create an epoch of fascinating transition." -P.R. Sarkar

Humanity is caught in a peculiar scenario. Immediately following the collapse of communist global forces more than a decade ago, First-World governments and their business[continue](#)

Economy

Real Men and the Economy:
Florida orange growers reject employee subservience.
By **Brian Hammer**

Two ideological camps determined much of history last century—those who carried the banner of democratic freedoms and private enterprise, and those who sought control of the economy and society through central command structures. The former is known as...[continue](#)

Science

Civilization, Science and Spiritual Progress by P. R. Sarkar

There is a subtle difference between civilization and culture: culture is the expression of the intellectual realm of humanity, while civilization is the expression of material development of life. People may be civilized in material development but[continue](#)

Health

Nature Therapy: Our Seven Friends by Ac. Jyotirishananda Avt.

"Nature Cures--not the physician"--Hippocrates. The purpose of the entire creation is to get and give happiness. Ideally, there is no scope for any disease, pain and suffering, unless we disobey the laws of nature or ignore the body's signs of distress. The fundamental law on which this[continue](#)

Spirituality

Towards a Wisdom Based Society By Roar Bjonnes

Contrary to popular opinion, the urgent need of the hour is not another deluge of information technology. What the world needs now is a comprehensive East-West integration—an internet of meaning, a global highway of wisdom. People crave not only more computers, but also inner rapture, peace and justice. We yearn for a fusion between the finest forms of[continue](#)

Politics

Venezuela: Not a Banana-Oil Republic after All.....By Gregory Wilpert

It looks like Venezuela is not just another banana-oil republic after all. Many here feared that with the April 11 coup attempt against President Hugo Chavez, Venezuela was being degraded to being just another country that is forced to bend to the powerful will of the United States.....[continue](#)

Culture

The Olympics and Cultural Hegemony By Levi Obijiofor and Sohail Inayatullah.

The Olympic Games are taken seriously by many countries. Aside from the economic sphere, it is another avenue for the West to display its "superiority" over the rest of the world. How is this achieved?[continue](#)

Ecology

Ethics, Food, and Spirituality by Roar Bjonnes

In my early 20s, I visited a slaughterhouse. Unlike most of my fellow agronomy students, I was not so excited about what I learned about modern butchery practices. Rather, I thought: "If I can walk through these halls of death and feel fine about what I see, I will continue to eat meat. If not, I shall stop eating beef, pork and chicken immediately."[continue](#)

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Understanding Sarkar

The Indian Episteme, Macrohistory and Transformative Knowledge

by Sohail Inayatullah, Brill, Boston, 2002, 366 pages, \$53

Sohail Inayatullah takes us on a journey through Indian philosophy, grand theory and macrohistory. We understand and appreciate Indian cyclical and spiral theories of history, and their epistemological context. From other civilizations, we explore the stages[continue](#)

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| Home | <h2 style="text-align: center;">What is Prout</h2> <p>PROUT is an acronym for PROgressive Utilization Theory, a socio-economic philosophy that synthesizes the physical, mental and spiritual dimensions of human nature. The goal of PROUT is to provide guidance for the evolution of a truly progressive human society.</p> <p>PROUT is an alternative to the outmoded capitalist and communist socio-economic paradigms. Neither of these approaches have adequately met the physical, mental and spiritual needs of humanity. PROUT seeks a harmonious balance between economic growth, social development, environmental sustainability, and between individual and collective interests. Combining the wisdom of spirituality with a universal outlook and the struggle for self-reliance, PROUTist thinkers and activists are creating a new civilizational discourse and planting the seeds for a new way of living.</p> <p>A few basic tenets of PROUT are:</p> <p>Spirituality and Progress Human beings are on an evolutionary path toward realizing their higher consciousness. True progress is movement that leads to self-realization and spiritual qualities such as compassion and love for all beings. Material or intellectual gains do not necessarily constitute progress unless they contribute to deeper, spiritual well-being.</p> <p>The progressive orientation of society is maintained by making continual adjustments in the use of physical resources and mental potentialities in accordance with spiritual and Neo-humanistic values. Human beings are encouraged to construct economic and social institutions to facilitate the attainment of our highest potentialities.</p> <p>Economic Democracy Political democracy and economic democracy are mutually inclusive.</p> | |
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PROUT advocates economic democracy based on local economic planning, cooperatively managed businesses, local governmental control of natural resources and key industries, and socially agreed upon limits on the individual accumulation of wealth. By decentralizing the economy and making sure decision-making is in the hands of local people, we can ensure the adequate availability of food, shelter, clothing, health care and education for all.

A decentralized economy can better ensure that the ecological systems of the earth are not exploited beyond their capacity to renew themselves. Environmental stewardship is a requisite for people who are dependent upon these systems for their own survival and well-being.

Basic Necessities Guaranteed to All

The basic necessities of life must be a constitutional birth right of all members of society. People cannot attain their highest human potential if they lack food, shelter, clothing, health care and education. Meaningful employment with a living wage must be planned to ensure adequate purchasing capacity for all basic necessities. The standard of guaranteed minimum necessities should advance with increases in the economy's productive capacity.

Leadership

For a benevolent society, it is essential that leaders are morally principled and dedicated to serving society as part of their personal progress. Authority should not be centered in the hands of individuals, but should be expressed through collective leadership. The viability of political democracy rests on an electorate possessing three factors:

- 1) education,
- 2) socio-economic consciousness,
- 3) ethical integrity.

Freedom

Individuals should have complete freedom to acquire and express their ideas, creative potential and inner aspirations. Such intellectual and spiritual freedom will strengthen the collectivity. Restrictions should only be placed on actions clearly detrimental to the welfare of others. Constraints need to be placed on the accumulation of physical wealth, as excessive accumulation by a few results in the deprivation of many.

Cultural Diversity

In the spirit of universal fellowship, PROUT encourages the protection and cultivation of local culture, language, history and tradition. For social justice and a healthy social order, individual and cultural diversity must be accepted and encouraged.

Women's Rights

PROUT encourages the struggle against all forms of violence and exploitation used to suppress women. PROUT's goal is coordinated

cooperation, with equal rights between men and women. PROUT seeks the economic, social and spiritual empowerment of women throughout the world.

Science and Technology

Scientific knowledge and technology are potential assets to humanity. Through their proper use, the physical hardships of life decreases and knowledge is gained about the secrets of life. Time is freed for cultural and spiritual pursuits. However, the development and utilization of scientific knowledge must come under the guidance of spiritual and Neo-humanist values and ethical leadership. Without this, technology is often abused by profiteers and the power-hungry, resulting in destruction and exploitation.

World Government

PROUT supports the creation of a world governance system having a global bill of rights, global constitution and common penal code in order to guarantee the fundamental rights of all individuals and nations, and to settle regional and international disputes. As the global economy becomes decentralized, it will be advantageous to also have a global political system.

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| Home Editorial Economy Ecology Politics Science Culture Health Spirituality Book Reviews Publications Contact Editor Links | <h1>PROUT's</h1> <h2>Neo-Humanistic Worldview</h2> <p>Neo-humanism expands the humanistic love for all fellow human beings to include all of creation -- plants, animals and even inanimate objects. Neo-humanism provides a philosophical basis for building a new era of ecological balance and human kinship.</p> | |

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| Home | <div data-bbox="509 653 1425 732" data-label="Section-Header"> <h2>Introducing Prout Journal</h2> </div> <div data-bbox="561 772 1372 812" data-label="Text"> <p>Prout Journal is published by Proutist Universal Inc.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="453 871 1482 1098" data-label="Text"> <p>Humanity has reached a turning point, a defining moment in its history, and the path we follow will profoundly effect future generations. Some contemporary thinkers and activists believe the ecological crisis is the most critical issue humanity now must resolve. For others it is the growing disparity between rich and poor. Yet others believe we need a change of perception--a profound shift of the spirit.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="453 1178 1456 1367" data-label="Text"> <p>At Prout Journal we believe each of these concerns are important, and that all are interrelated. On our website, you'll find articles about ecology, economy, culture, ethics, spirituality, science, politics, health, and more. We will attempt to treat these issues as interlinked facets of envisioning and constructing a more balanced global society.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="453 1398 1456 1623" data-label="Text"> <p>Prout Journal intends to give special attention to spirituality and its role in social change. Ultimately, spiritual ignorance is the root cause of pollution of the earth, destruction of cultures, and exploitation of labor. Only through an expansion of consciousness can humanity gain the wisdom and compassion needed to build a more integrated and harmonious society.</p> </div> | |
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| Politics | <p>"When a social wave loses its strength and cannot carry society forward, as it comes close to collapse, if a new wave could rise, it would create an epoch of fascinating transition." -P.R. Sarkar</p> | |
| Science | <p>Humanity is caught in a peculiar scenario. Immediately following the collapse of communist global forces more than a decade ago, First-World governments and their business interests engaged in a unilateral victory march over the globe, seeming to bear out the Darwinian dictum that the big fish will feed on the small. People protested, almost helplessly, throughout the globe, and in all possible ways. One of the highlights of these protests was to be a showdown demonstration against the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and their respective global policies in Washington DC on September the 29th. Then on September 11, as if from nowhere, the fanatic caught us by surprise.</p> | |
| Culture | <p>The vulnerability of the mightiest nation on earth shook the world. From then on, amidst varying opinions and calls for restraint, we have witnessed a clash between the forces of the self-centered and the dogma-centered extremes. For we may call capitalism a self-centered economic system in that it rewards those who seek to maximize personal gain. And we may call extremist political Islam dogma-centered in that it requires subjects to adhere to rules and rulers without question.</p> | |
| Health | <p>The growth of capitalism has resulted in an obscene wealth disparity, the economic and psychological exploitation of billions of people, and widespread degradation of the natural environment. Extreme religious factions have been used to justify suppression of women, murder of civilians, and the brutal oppression of minority groups within nations.</p> | |
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In accordance with the interpretation of a handful of elites, these actions have been carried out in the name of God.

As Proutists, we see the need to cultivate a new brand of leadership in society, one not beholden to moneyed interests, dogmatic clerics, or the hunger for power and domination. The founder of Prout, P.R. Sarkar, termed such morally inspired leaders and advisors "sadvipras." Sarkar believed that sadvipras are needed to ease the transition from old, worn-out and corrupt systems of social organization toward fresh approaches to political and economic life.

The materialist visions of a communist world order gave way a decade ago. The mixed economies of India and other countries have failed their people many times over. We may try yet another version of capitalism, but why? The tenets of capitalism are out-of-date and, in today's world, dangerously egocentric. The collective human psyche is already moving on, envisioning a more balanced economic system. Grass roots movements the globe over are promoting a new non-capitalist culture of coordination and cooperation similar to the Proutist political economy first outlined by Sarkar almost fifty years ago.

People everywhere are awakening to a life made beautiful by sublime purposes. Millions are exhausted by the madness of consumerism. Others are weakened by poverty and despair. As a result, capitalism faces a serious ideological crisis. Expanding the domain of capitalism and applying a cosmetic neo-liberal fix may mesmerize a few for a while. But underlying any appealing mask will lurk the selfish interests of the cunning few. The desires and conscience of awakened humanity will not be neglected. New leaders the world over have arisen to lead humanity toward a more constructive political and economic agenda, an agenda also reflected in the principles of Prout.

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| Economy | <p>Real Men and the Economy: Florida orange growers reject employee subservience By Brian Hammer</p> | |
| Ecology | <p>Two ideological camps determined much of history last century—those who carried the banner of democratic freedoms and private enterprise, and those who sought control of the economy and society through central command structures. The former is known as Liberalism, the latter Communism.</p> | |
| Politics | <p>Little remains of the numerous conflicts between these two camps owing to the collapse of Communism beginning about ten years ago. The victory of private enterprise, with its claim of being based in the cherished reality of human freedom, covered the victory with a moral and humanistic cast. “The End of History”, as Francis Fukuyama entitled his 1992 book, does appear to be here—and just in time for the 21st century.</p> | |
| Science | <p>Others would say that the history of human freedom has only started—and that there are alternatives to the behemoths of both large-scale enterprises like corporations, the type of private enterprise at issue here, and government authority over society as dominant motifs.</p> | |
| Culture | <p>One such alternative was advertised on television throughout much of 1999. The ad promoted something called “Florida’s Natural” orange juice as a product of a “co-op of Florida growers whose only business is making juice. They own the land, they own the trees, they own the company.” This co-op message, plainly and clearly delivered, stuck out from the usual glut of slick and clever corporate self-promotion as immaculately as a white gown amongst dark business suits for those as accustomed as most Americans are to a steady (albeit forced) diet of corporate messages only.</p> | |
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Further checking revealed that the co-op, called CitrusWorld, Inc., based in Lake Wales, Florida, comprises 12 grower organisations owning close to 60,000 acres of citrus groves, with a 540-acre citrus fruit processing center capable of extracting juice from over 10 million pounds of oranges every 24 hours. The juice is sold in liquid and frozen forms as a broad variety of juice products. The co-op also has a processing plant in Fullerton, California, and has recently planted over 15,000 acres of new groves in South Florida.

Cooperatives in this country have existed since its founding. President Washington's cabinet contained a co-op advocate. Subjecting co-ops to damnation by faint praise as just another way to do business (something implied by President Reagan, for example) misses the point, however. Co-ops are not just another way to do business. They are the next step forward in human freedom and democracy. A step that will take us beyond the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and all other efforts aimed at lifting people out of the socially repressive aspects of monarchies and the Middle Ages.

Who Own Americans?

In the typical corporation, whether employing a few dozen or a few hundred thousand people, control is centralized at the top in the hands of a small number of relatively wealthy shareholders and high-level executives. All others are, to use a Prout term, "subordinated" to their desires and decisions. The vast majority of people working in these structures, including mid- and lower-level managers, are under their control either directly or indirectly. To use the language of government, they lack the freedom to govern themselves within the corporate structure. True freedom to decide is reserved for a few. This consolidation of authority makes corporations "private" in spite of the fact that the buying and selling of shares on the open market makes them seem to be "public" entities.

Thus, though ideologues of the modern system of thought called Liberalism like Francis Fukuyama, Milton Friedman (who wrote *Capitalism and Freedom*), and a multitude of others claim that we live in the freest of conditions, reality is something else when we look at how the private sector is set up along lines that could be called more fettering and authoritarian than free or democratic. It is more accurate to say that we lose our freedom—and democratic rights—when we go to work, and that private enterprise is a mechanism that institutionalizes this loss. On the door to every corporation should read the inscription, "Democracy not allowed. Leave your rights at the door."

The New Synthesis

Co-ops resist the deprivation of freedom inherent in corporate enterprise. Rather than centralize decision-making, they decentralize it so that all members partake in key decisions, either directly or through a board of directors that they themselves elect. It is like the difference between being told by your parents what to do (even at age 50 or 60) and being able to decide for yourself. Or between being told how to

vote by party apparatchiks and weighing the virtues of various candidates and voting for yourself.

In dialectical terms, co-ops transcend the mediation and alienation inherent in both the large-scale private enterprise of Capitalism and the centralized government control of the economy of Communism. The former interpose a relatively small number of powerful corporate shareholders between employees (including most managers) on the one hand and significant decision-making power and other legal benefits like rights to profits on the other. The latter interposed the state, party apparatchiks and bureaucrats.

Even trade unions, said to be the most advanced form of labor organization in modern industrial societies, fail in this regard. They maintain the mediation between employer and employee rather than unify employer and employee in worker/manager ownership, as co-ops do. The welfare state, the ambition of the modern Liberal Left, especially on the federal level, also fails to overcome this mediation.

Both unions and the welfare state also have to contend with the caprices of political democracy, which has no principled commitment to improving prevalent economic conditions. Often-lost battles for better income, better working conditions, a shorter work week, mandatory health insurance and the like will continue until this mediation is overcome, as will, most likely, extreme economic disparity.

Psychological Deprivation

Cooperatives overcome the contradiction between the promise of freedom and its extensive denial in the economy. They also advance humanity psychologically and socially. Insofar as they extend decision-making and other benefits beyond a small circle of key share-owners and executives to working members as a matter of right, based on recognition of human freedom and rationality, they are psychosociologically embodiments of a more mature condition of humanity.

Corporate enterprise, to compare, is a system that prolongs childhood and adolescence for the majority since it reserves substantial freedoms and rationality for a few key players. By consolidating organizational power and subordinating others beneath them in employee status, these few potentates also instill a psychological condition of subservience in those beneath them, a condition broken only at the risk of being fired. In the sense of being autocratic-dictatorial, large-scale private enterprise, like that in large corporations governing many people, resembles the Communism it reviles and the monarchies it overthrew. Its whole structure contains an intrinsic, fundamental social inequality, not simply differences in opportunities to accumulate wealth. This social inequality is not remedied by either equal civil or political rights since it is an essential part of modern economic dynamics and the civil rights system.

In Freudian terms, employee status resembles the infantile oral-

receptive stage of character development.

“By the oral-receptive character Freud means the person who expects to be fed, materially, emotionally and intellectually. He is the person with the ‘open mouth,’ basically passive and dependent, who expects that what he needs will be given to him, either because he or she deserves it for being so good, or so obedient, or because of a highly developed narcissism that makes a person feel he is so wonderful that he can claim to be taken care of by others” (Fromm).

Employees of course work for a living, but they are essentially passive recipients of the orders of executives and owners. As a result of their work and status they expect to be taken care of via paychecks and benefits and to be relieved of the responsibility for decision-making characteristic of the mature personality. Many people operate from the oral-receptive stage of existence; many others who are mature and capable however are forced into this state by anti-democratic, authoritarian economic structures.

This category of character applies even more to the consumer mode of existence, by which people select from among the products and services offered them by others. Consumption of course is to a large degree oral-receptive by nature, but it can be more pro-active if organized cooperatively. In consumer co-ops consumers decide for themselves which products should be sold in their stores and have active, direct relations with manufacturers rather than submit to the tender mercies of middlemen. Large-scale private enterprise utilizes both socio-economic roles—the employee and the consumer—to impose or reinforce the psychological condition of dependence. Psychologically more mature conditions—independence, pride, and greater self-respect—are systematically stunted.

The main structural difference between corporate and communist enterprise is that in the former a relatively small number of business owners and managers, instead of the monolithic state and its agents, accumulate economic decision-making powers and rights over the majority of society. In both cases, however, working people are administered like cattle or machines, not full-fledged participants in company policy-setting procedures. Compare Bill Gates giving orders down the ranks to tens of thousands of employees with yourself discussing freely and deciding democratically in a cooperative you own jointly with other working members, and you will begin to get the idea about what is at stake.

Cooperatives are not just another business option—they are another species of economy altogether because of the way they affect and embody freedom. To the extent that freedom is a part of our humanity, co-ops reflect our humanity far better than either large private enterprises controlled by a few key players or Communism.

And since, according to some philosophers, deliberative freedom, and not blind obedience or deference, is an element of morality, co-ops can

better embody morality, too. This makes them a moral imperative, not just a business or political choice of convenience. The moral, humanistic economy of choice is mainly cooperative.

The moral and humanistic superiority of cooperatives is currently no shield against private enterprise, however. Dan McSpadden of the marketing department at CitrusWorld declined to answer questions about the co-op in large part because of the possibility that corporate juice manufacturers would use the information against the company. A very real possibility considering the competitive—or, in less polite terms, carnivorous—ethic of the private sector.

How Americans Lost Economic Freedom

The stage for the subservient position of most Americans in the economic structure was set at the nation's founding. Then the economy was largely agrarian. Self-employment was the norm.

According to historian Joyce Appleby, the ideological ambience of the young economy was strikingly characterized by “the association of America's prosperity with free labor —the free and independent labor of farmer-owners and their families” (italics added). Family farms were the expected norm—not employeeship, which to Americans of that time may have appeared closer to plantation slavery or European serfdom than independence.

Nevertheless, there was no prohibition or restriction on the exchange or accumulation of property. It is the right of exchange and accumulation, otherwise known as the free market, that led to the accumulation of productive property in fewer and fewer hands and the consequent demotion of free and economically independent Americans to dependent hired-hand status. Most modern Americans have lost a freedom and independence that earlier Americans once had. Rather than making people free, the “free” market, for most people, removes it.

Modern politics by both Left and Right is a continuation of what Prout terms the “subordination” inherent in employeeship.

The Left, after promoting the welfare state, government regulation and strong unions for several decades last century, has now widened and significantly shifted its focus to promote environmental protection, civil and cultural rights for racial and ethnic minorities, and gay agendas, using the free market as its economic engine.

The Right of course still promotes private enterprise and bitterly opposes any infringement on it. Entrepreneurial ventures and small family enterprises may receive support, but not in principle at the expense of corporations and shareholders. The freedoms the Right promises via the economy are radically curtailed when they concern employees, which most Americans are. A large number of supporters of the Right are thus under an illusion about their own politics, and myopically assume only government can be the enemy of liberty.

Neither Left nor Right promotes as a matter of principle the “insubordinate” kinds of economy embodied in small entrepreneurial ventures, small family enterprises and cooperatives.

The current stage was set for the Left, or New Left, during the 1960s, when it made its fateful break from the communist-influenced economic thinking of the Old Left. The African-American civil rights movement came to serve as a paradigm for other social groups who in turn adopted the garb of the oppressed, including women, gays, and other racial and ethnic groups.

In opting for civil rights like desegregated schools and social venues as well as, later on, other rights against civil discrimination, the New Left effectively abandoned the Old Left’s goal of dictatorial control of the economy. As a result the condition of employeeship continues, though it would have anyway and in more extreme form under government-controlled enterprise favored by communists had they come to power. In other words, the subordinated socioeconomic status of most Americans continues with the acquiescence of the main trends of the New Left. Unions, for all their value to working people, also perpetuate this subordination.

What Is to Be Done

Cooperatives like CitrusWorld stand as a repudiation by example to both the corporate private enterprise politics of the Right and the welfare state/minority civil rights focus of the New Left. Though no political, educational, social or religious leaders are taking up liberation economics via the cooperative cause at the moment, this is what is to be done if the majority of Americans, including minorities, are to taste true freedom, and greater dignity, in the economic sphere.

According to Prout, to free the maximum number of working citizens from subordination the cooperative movement should include the manufacturing, service and finance sectors, not only agriculture. An economic result of this step upward in dignity will be reduced economic inequity, another goal of Prout. Since co-ops greatly widen the population of owners, they will decentralize wealth into the hands of tens of millions more Americans—and not by taxation, which is unreliable for this purpose and is highly vulnerable to special interest lobbying and the political centralization of power over society in the federal government.

CitrusWorld sells their fine-tasting orange juice and other products around the country and overseas under the brand names of Florida’s Natural (orange, grapefruit, apple, orange-pineapple and others), Bluebird, Texsun, Adams and Vintage, and are licensees of other brands. You can find their website at <http://www.floridasnatural.com>.

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| Politics | <p>In my early 20s, I visited a slaughterhouse. Unlike most of my fellow agronomy students, I was not so excited about what I learned about modern butchery practices. Rather, I thought: "If I can walk through these halls of death and feel fine about what I see, I will continue to eat meat. If not, I shall stop eating beef, pork and chicken immediately."</p> | |
| Science | <p>A few days later I read a poem by the great Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca that captured my experience: "The hogs and the lambs lay their drop of blood downunderneath all the statistics; the terrible bawls of the packed-in cattle/ fill the valley with suffering..."</p> | |
| Culture | <p>Lorca is right. Mass slaughter, however modern and humane it claims to be, causes immense animal pain and suffering. Thus, my walk through these assembly lines of death, not the health statistics, was pivotal in my choosing a vegetarian diet. The distress animals have to endure--before they end up as anonymous, unrecognizable bricks in the supermarket freezer--made me realize that my food and my spiritual values were intimately linked.</p> | |
| Health | <p>Can our concern for the welfare of animals be part of a genuine environmental ethics based on spirituality? Let us find out if animals and plants have rights, and if so, what these rights should be based on.</p> | |
| Spirituality | Mind in Nature | |
| Book Reviews | <p>For science, viruses represent the smallest collection of molecules recognized as "life." Maybe in the near future, science will recognize the sentience of smaller groups. For now, viruses personify the boundary between life and non-life. According to Tantra, however, there is</p> | |
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Consciousness at every level of evolution. Even stones and crystals are expressions of Spirit or Cosmic Consciousness.

While modern science disagree with premodern Tantra about Consciousness in matter, the so-called Santiago theory, developed by Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana, proposes that awareness is intimately linked to the process of life. Hence, the brain is not necessary for the mind to exist. A worm or a tree has no brain, yet they have a mind. The simplest forms of life, these researchers claim, are capable of perception, maybe even cognition.

Native Americans and other indigenous peoples also experience "mind" in nature. But are these animistic beliefs the same as the cognition of Varela and Maturana? In their best seller, *The Secret Life of Plants*, Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird report that, when killing a tree, tribals would have a heart-to-heart conversation with it. They would let the tree know what would happen, and finally ask forgiveness for this unfortunate act of violence. The authors also documented scientific experiments on plants with a modified lie detector. The instrument would register when a plant's leaves were cut or burnt. When a plant "perceived" it was going to be killed, it went into a state of "shock" or "numbness." This possibly prevented it from undue suffering.

Such tests may sound outrageous to materialists, but to the ancient peoples, to Indian yogis and Western mystics, the notion of Consciousness or "mind" in nature is not farfetched. To them, there is Spirit and creative will everywhere--and, to the yogis, in particular, there is in all beings an inherent longing for greater expression. This longing drives evolution forward. Unfortunately, all natural forms cannot express their "suffering" when damaged or destroyed. Therefore, says Indian sage and Tantric philosopher, P. R. Sarkar, we must pay respect to, conserve and properly utilize all natural resources.

Seeing the Other in Me

Poets and sages also observe a deep "grief" in nature. Buddhists associate this with the wheel of reproduction. If nature's creations truly experience pain or grief, at least when killed, our conservation efforts and our ecological outlook must, in some way, acknowledge this innate suffering. Thus, nature becomes sacred to us. To paraphrase eco-psychologist James Hillman, as our mind is enlarged to include nature; the world becomes us. We feel empathy with the slaughtered cows; we know that if we destroy the rainforest out of ignorance or greed, we destroy a part of ourselves.

Are such feelings just mythology and the fantasy of poets? Are they simply the readings of human emotions into other, lower beings? Or is it possible to know the natural world--the rose, the lizard, the butterfly--because these life forms are already part of our inner self?

For philosophers and mystics such as Aristotle, Spinoza, Aurobindo and Sarkar, the Self and the Other are essentially made of the same stuff. And since, as Sarkar notes, Consciousness is everywhere, even

in so-called inanimate objects as rocks, sand or mud, we can perceive Oneness in all creation. In principle, all expressions of nature have an equal right to exist and to express itself, namely because everything created is ultimately Cosmic Consciousness.

The Holonic Universe

This sentiment is echoed by Norwegian eco-philosopher Arne Naess, whose "biospherical egalitarianism" is advocated by the deep-ecology movement, which he founded. But evolution is irreversible; amoebas eventually evolve into apes, but apes never transform into amoebas. He also acknowledges "higher" and "lower" expressions of Consciousness in nature. In other words, there is an inherent hierarchy in nature. Thus, it would not be anthropocentric to say that a dog has feelings, nor that a human and a dog are spiritually One. It would, however, be anthropocentric to say that a dog has the same psychological depth of feeling as a human, and thus the same rights.

Ironically, many followers of Naess' deep-ecology and other earth-centered ecologists do not acknowledge the higher and lower expressions of nature. However, for Naess all reality consists of "subordinated wholes or subordinated gestalts." All reality, as Arthur Koestler proposed, is composed of "holons."

Contemporary mystic and philosopher Ken Wilber first popularized the concept of holons in his pathbreaking book *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*. He explains that atoms and cells, even symbols and ideas, can be understood as "neither things nor processes, neither as wholes nor parts, but only as simultaneously whole/parts." That is, everything is a holon or a whole that is part of another whole. Reality then, is neither just parts, as materialistic scientists want us to believe, nor "one egalitarian, mystic whole," as many New Agers believe. These notions are extreme and only partly true.

The Hierarchical Wholeness of Being

In Sarkar's reconstruction of the traditional Tantra cosmology, one can distinguish both egalitarian and hierarchical contexts. Evolution, he says, proceeds from Cosmic Consciousness by creating matter and then increasingly complex life that can express higher and higher levels of consciousness.

On this evolutionary ladder animals follow their instinctual dharma, or inner nature, while humans can rise above their basic instincts and choose to follow a higher, spiritual dharma.

Within this evolutionary system, there are levels of cooperation, but the system as a whole is hierarchical. These notions are supported by systems sciences, which say that wholeness needs hierarchy. Each hierarchy is composed of increasing orders of wholeness (thus Wilber calls it "holarchy"). In an evolutionary context, the new stage of development has extra value relative to the previous stage. An oak sprout is more complex and therefore endowed with a fuller expression of consciousness, than an acorn. A monkey has a more evolved nervous system and mind than an insect, and a human has a more

evolved brain and intellect than an ape.

With potential dire consequences, many earth-centered ecologists equate hierarchy with the higher exploiting the lower. But the ecological universe could not exist without hierarchy, and humans, for better or worse, are stewards of the natural world. Hence, we need to acknowledge both unity and oneness as well as high and low expressions of consciousness in our ecological worldview.

Consciousness and Complexity

Humans, unlike animals, can regress to a state of evil and harm both the human and animal family. How does the holonic theory explain this? Wilber explains that the more complex a holon is, the more potential for problems. An atom does not get cancer, a liver or a lung does. An ape cannot construct an atomic bomb, but a human can.

Because humans are more conscious, we can also express more complex and more problematic traits. But the cure for our environmental problems is not to think how humans can become more like animals. The cure lies in a progressive expansion of our inner potentials.

The cure for any disease--be it physical or mental, in human, animal or plant--is not to negate the system but to cure or root out the sick holons. Thus, we kill cancer cells, not the person. We attempt to prevent the body from becoming cancerous in the first place. It is better to reduce pollution rather than clean up the environment afterwards.

We need to emulate nature in advancing what Riane Eisler calls "actualisation hierarchies". Thus, a self-actualized humanity can integrate itself with nature, learn to realize our oneness with the "other," learn to recognize that being on top of the evolutionary ladder does not give us the right to rob and exploit those lower than ourselves. Because of the pathological expressions of hierarchy--such as fascism, Nazism, communism, or corporate multinationalism--new thinkers are suggesting a new and supposedly healthier model, or heterarchy, where rule is established by an egalitarian interplay of all parties.

Atoms may have a heterarchical relationship amongst themselves, but their relationship to a cell is hierarchical. There is a movement toward greater complexity and higher consciousness in evolution, while at the same time there is, on a deeper level, ecological cooperation and spiritual unity amongst all beings. In other words, there is both heterarchy and hierarchy.

To simply say that all of us--leaf, tree, monkey, and human--are equal partners in the great web of life reduces the wondrous complexity of creation to a lowest common denominator, serving neither nature nor humans well. There is unity of consciousness amongst all beings, because we all come from, and are created by, the same Spirit. But nature is also infinitely diverse, and we need to embrace this variety. One way this variety is expressed is in terms of depth of consciousness.

A dog has more capacity for mental expression and self-consciousness than a fir tree. Both are manifestations of Cosmic Consciousness, both have mind, and both have equal existential value, but because of the difference of depth and quality of consciousness, the dog is higher on the natural hierarchy of being than the fir tree. So when we develop our ecological ethics, we must value and account for both the "low" and the "high" expressions of nature. In other words, the answer to all dilemmas and problems, ethical, medical, or environmental, lies in how we, as humans, can actualize our divine potentials and use spirituality as a guiding light for all our worldly actions and interactions.

Cuisine and Consciousness

For Sarkar, nonhuman creatures have the same value to themselves as human beings have to themselves. Perhaps human beings can understand the value of their existence, while an earthworm cannot. Even so, no one has given authority to human beings to kill other creatures. However, to survive, we cannot avoid killing other beings. Thus, Sarkar suggests that food should, if possible, be selected from amongst those beings with a comparatively low development of consciousness. If vegetables, corn, beans and rice are available, cows or pigs should not be slaughtered. Secondly, notes Sarkar, before killing animals we must consider deeply if it is possible to stay healthy without taking their lives.

Eating plants is therefore preferable to eating animals. As George Bernard Shaw once said: "Animals are my friends ... and I don't eat my friends." It is also ecologically more sustainable to eat lower on the food chain. Vast land areas used to raise livestock for food could be far more productive if planted with grains, beans, and other legumes for human consumption. Only about 10 percent of the protein and calories we feed to our livestock is recovered in the meat we eat. The other 90 percent goes literally "down the drain."

All beings are the children of Mother Earth, but ultimately all of creation (including Gaia or Mother Earth) is the offspring of Spirit (Wilber) or Cosmic Consciousness (Sarkar). Sometimes it is difficult to know what the use of an animal or a plant is; therefore, we may needlessly destroy ecological balance by killing one species without considering its complex relationship to other species.

A forest's value, for example, is more than just X number of board feet of lumber. It serves as nesting and feeding ground for birds and animals; its roots and branches protect the soil from erosion; its leaves or needles produce oxygen; and its pathways and campgrounds provide nourishment for the human soul. As a whole, the forest ecosystem has an abundance of ecological, aesthetic, and spiritual values, which extends far beyond its benefits in the form of toothpicks or plywood.

If we embrace the Divinity in all of creation, the expression of our ecological ethics--the way we select our food, the way we treat animals

and plants--may become an inspired and personal act of spirituality.

Unfortunately, this ethics was not widespread when in 1974 I walked through the slaughterhouse and, at the end, refused to eat the "free hot dogs".

While the shadows of McDonald's golden arches continue to cover the world, I believe it is important to broadcast the needless slaughter of cows and the chopping of trees. Indeed, it has become more evident than ever before how important it is "to live lightly" on the earth. That means, says Wilber: "it is better to kill a carrot than a cow." By adhering to this simple, ethical principle, we can better live in harmony with ourselves and the Other, with other humans and other beings in the natural world.

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| Economy | Civilization, Science and Spiritual Progress by P. R. Sarkar | |
| Ecology | <p>There is a subtle difference between civilization and culture: culture is the expression of the intellectual realm of humanity, while civilization is the expression of material development of life. People may be civilized in material development but as far as mental development is concerned, they may not be culturally endowed. In the absence of intellectual development, it is not possible for individuals to be properly civilized.</p> | |
| Politics | <p>How does the development of civilization take place? Civilization has an intimate relationship with science; they progress together. But when scientific progress surpasses civilization, the latter meets its end. Take, for instance, the history of Egypt and Greece. As long as the scientific progress of these two countries did not supersede civilization, civilization prospered very well in both countries. But when science produced abundant</p> | |
| Science | <p>enjoyments the civilization of both countries was destroyed because science occupied a higher position than civilization.</p> | |
| Culture | <p>What is science? Science is that which teaches the proper use of material things. If science gradually attains a high state of development without a corresponding advancement in civilization, it only paves the way for destruction instead of benefiting humanity. So, the study and practice of science should not be given a higher place than civilization.</p> | |
| Health | <p>In India, from the Tantric period to the Gupta period, civilization and science progressed side by side, and science never enjoyed greater prestige than civilization. The Gupta period was the golden era of India. After the end of the Gupta era, scientific progress was overlooked; this</p> | |
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resulted in degradation and downfall. In the Pathan period, there was neither the development of civilization nor the progress of science, and as a result the progress of society was impeded. For the all-round progress and development of human society, both civilization and science have to be encouraged. Where there is development of civilization there is intellectual development as well. So, for both civilization and science, intellectual knowledge is indispensable.

Spiritual or intuitional development is possible through the happy blending of science and civilization. Even where there is no such blending, intuitional progress may be possible, but if science and civilization is harmonized, intuitional progress is accelerated. Therefore, a man of wisdom should progress by blending these two. It is useless to think of intuitional progress without this harmony.

What is our duty today? We shall cultivate science, but we must pay equal attention to the development of civilization. The progress of science today is greater than in the the days of old, but civilization in those days was certainly of a higher order. In the present age, civilization is waning since science is again supreme. But as developed as science is today, if civilization is again elevated, humans can reach greater heights than ever.

--P. R. Sarkar (1921-1990) is the propounder of PROUT (The Progressive Utilization Theory). Considered a "renaissance man" in his native India, Sarkar is a spiritual teacher, philosopher and the author of more than 200 books on spirituality, economics, agriculture, bio-psychology, linguistics, and more. In the late 1960s, Sarkar established a large eco-village complex called Ananda Nagar in West Bengal, India. Ananda Nagar features schools, colleges, alternative medical facilities, and organic farms that serves the people in more than a dozen surrounding villages. He also established hundreds of neo-humanistic schools and kindergartens, as well as the relief organization AMURT. During the 1980s, while living in Calcutta, Sarkar composed 5018 songs, which today are popularized by well known Indian classical musicians and singers.

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| Economy | Nature Therapy: Our Seven Friends by Ac. Jyotirishananda Avt. | |
| Ecology | <p>"Nature Cures--not the physician"--Hippocrates. The purpose of the entire creation is to get and give happiness. Ideally, there is no scope for any disease, pain and suffering, unless we disobey the laws of nature or ignore the body's signs of distress. The fundamental law on which this physical and mental health depends, is a loving friendship between our self, our habits and our body.</p> | |
| Politics | <p>Today's society is based on exploitation and abuse. There is no harmony amongst people, nor within the individual, or with the environment. Rather than deeply blissful, human life is often hardship, which we endure. What we call 'healthy' in no way reflects the potential of vitality, joy and gratitude that nature offers us.</p> | |
| Science | <p>The fundamental task in recovering this sublime health and restoring the natural balance within is to build a relation of compassion with each and everything, especially with those factors that rekindle the life forces and which we should consider our real friends.</p> | |
| Culture | <p>First among these is our Supreme Friend, the universal Cosmic Entity, on whom the existence of the entire universe and everything within it depends. In our quest for health we can list seven factors as our foremost friends.</p> | |
| Health | <p>1. The Power of the Cosmic Entity: The movement of the entire universe is based upon one single force. The power which makes the planets, stars and galaxies move in their respective orbits is the same power that exists within a small cell and directs its varied functions. This is the Cosmic Entity, our Supreme Friend, and harmony with this force is the principal source of sentient health and infinite happiness.</p> | |
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2. The Power of Positive Mind:

The mind's abilities and speed are unparalleled. Even the latest computers cannot match the agility, power and creativity of the mind. But this incredible mental force can work in two directions—positive and negative. The moment we have a positive state of mind, all the cells and their biochemical processes in the body also function more positively. The treatment methods we use for our health and happiness may work in absence of a positive mind, but the result will be limited. In the absence of a positive mind, life will be full of misery and pain. On the other hand, a positive mind can bring about health and well-being beyond human imagination.

3. Fresh Air:

Friend of every second, air has to be with us always. If for a few minutes we would be cut off from fresh air, nothing can save our existence. Just as we learn how to eat by studying nutrition, we must come to understand the proper use of fresh air to clean our body, make our mind peaceful, and revitalize our whole system.

4. Sunlight:

The rhythm of the sun is the discipline of our whole existence. If its temperature will start to drop, existence on this earth will be deeply affected. Our body's temperature is regulated every day by the sun's energy. The sun is the source of all our energy and can cure any imbalance of the body system. For thousands of years, the sun's temperature was the only hope for humans to survive the tremendous cold. The sun is the source for the life giving rains, the greening of the earth, the growing of our food, the strength of our health.

5. Water:

Water is the friend of every hour, whom we need in many different ways in our body to enrich our own health and environment.

6. Relaxation:

This is the only time when our body and mind get time to restore themselves. Though we have the physical strength, we can not work continuously because the body requires periodic rest to cleanse itself. When we relax our body, it starts to recharge and the mind recovers its strength. Rest lets nature supply us with energy and work through us. Thus relaxation is very important in maintaining our natural strength.

7. Positive food habits:

Most diseases are caused by eating the wrong foods in the wrong amount and at the wrong time. Controlling the quality, amount and timing of the food we use, it becomes friendly to our all round health and the source of our mental peace. At the time of sickness or discomfort, positive food habits can cure and restore our strength.

To deeply understand and live with these basic factors of healthful living is the fundamental duty of human beings.

No medicine matches the body's own capacity to revitalize itself. The body's complexity cannot be imitated by either science or machine. No medicine has the capacity to understand and fake the body's own ability to recharge itself. The fundamental principle of sentient health lies in increasing the body's own ability to heal itself. For this, nature has provided a sufficient amount of elements and if we utilize them we will not only remain free from illness, but also learn to appreciate at depth our divinely inspired life.

Nature cure and Yogic care

Wrong habits cause disease. Most people know that to eat too many sweets is not good, but out of greediness, in pursuit of a little pleasure, we eat and eat and eat, as long as there are dishes in front of us. By breaking the natural laws of self-control, we gradually weaken our nervous system, organs and general vitality.

Yogis have long understood that to remedy the excesses of the mind, physical and mental exercises are of vital importance. These will balance the different inborn psychic tendencies and fundamentally restore and protect one's health. Nature cure is not complete without this psycho-physical practice.

Ac. Jyotirishananda Avt. is the author of the book *Sentient Health: A Happy and Holy Life Through Water*, from which the article above is an excerpt. Ac Jyotirishananda is an internationally known teacher of yoga and meditation and has conducted numerous clinics and training courses on various aspects and practices of natural health. To order this book send an e-mail to : hongkong-sector@amps.org or write to:

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| | <p>Toward a Wisdom Based Society By Roar Bjonnes</p> <p>Contrary to popular opinion, the urgent need of the hour is not another deluge of information technology. What the world needs now is a comprehensive East-West integration—an internet of meaning, a global highway of wisdom. People crave not only more computers, but also inner rapture, peace and justice. We yearn for a fusion between the finest forms of humanism and the deepest essence of spirituality. We aspire for an outburst of rational humanism and spiritual wisdom—a common vision that can shape a more harmonious and integrated planet. As espoused by the sages, philosophers, and scientists of both East and West, this visionary fusion can foster a global renaissance of inner meaning and social values. Some social observers believe that the faint glow of this phenomenon can already be seen on humanity's horizon.</p> <p>This new, integral, spiritual humanism represents a synthesis between the Enlightenment of the East and the Enlightenment of the West. And what is the most important step to achieve this lofty goal? To establish spiritual practice as the cornerstone of human culture. Hence, it is not enough to simply popularize spiritual (and pseudo-spiritual) ideas as is done today through the ever-growing self-help marketplace which often spread ideas that represent religious dogmas or arcane, mythological belief systems. It is also not enough to preach the noble ideals of humanism. Instead, sincere spiritual practitioners will have to initiate an authentic, spiritual movement which can spearhead the integration of spiritual humanism in society.</p> <p>Obstacles are an inherent part of change. So, let us take a closer look at some of the challenges strewn in the path of this renaissance.</p> | |

Cultural World-views

Various integral philosophers and mystics—from Sri Aurobindo to Teilhard de Chardin to P. R. Sarkar—have proposed the novel idea that natural evolution is a tireless and ever-changing release of spiritual creativity. With each new, evolutionary stage, more complex beings evolve which enfold or include aspects of the previous stage.

The simplest way to explain this is; when Spirit (or Consciousness) creates life in the form of a cell, the cell includes atoms. Further up the evolutionary chain, an insect includes both cells and atoms. Thus, the more evolved beings on the evolutionary hierarchy include aspects of the lower beings. The more evolved the beings are, the more they are able to express the refinements of Spirit.

Ultimately—in evolution's most complex structure, the human being—the expression of Spirit reaches its highest, most elaborate manifestation. Through spiritual enlightenment, the human soul is able to reflect the culmination of the evolutionary journey by realizing the source of it all: God, Brahman or Supreme Consciousness.

Instincts, Sentiments & Rationality

Theoretical models can only represent the panoramic sweep of reality. On the individual level, for example, one can thus describe evolution as Spirit unfolding through four ways of expression: instincts, sentiments, rationality, and spirituality.

The hierarchy of living beings express themselves according to the above four levels, each one enveloping and including the other. All insects have instincts, but they do not have emotions or sentiments. Mammals, on the other hand, have both instinct and sentiments. Some, like monkey's and dogs, also exhibit a certain degree of rationality. Humans possess all four drives, including the capacity to experience and express spiritual knowledge.

According to Tantra, the thirst for spiritual knowledge is considered a latent human instinct. In highly evolved souls—such as ancient and contemporary mystics—these latent longings blossomed brightly and fully early in life. According to the spiritual, evolutionary view of Tantra, their full-fledged realization of the Divine is the cumulative effect of many lifetimes of spiritual practice.

An enlightened human can realize and act on the basis of his or her Divine, spiritual realization. On the other hand, we also know that humans can act in ways "lower on the hierarchy" than animals. Sometimes even highly evolved people exhibit regressive behavior, driven by certain instincts or sentiments. Many despicable human acts, based on such drives, are devoid of rationality or spirituality.

So what are these instincts? They are reactions stored in the mind through constant repetition of experience. The memory or "vibrational record" is left on the mind and thus forms the basis to produce certain behavior patterns. Some scientists call such instincts "accumulated

sentiments" or "habituated sentiments." Sentiments therefore represent the accumulated effect of instincts.

Insects are guided by their instincts. The actions of mammals, on the other hand, are born out of a combination of instincts, sentiments, and a certain level of rationality. In humans, a broader range of expression—from the basic to the sublime—is available. This gives us greater scope for expressing both destructive and constructive behavior. Hence the built-in dilemma of evolution: with more complexity comes the potential for more problems. Only the spiritual level—beyond instincts, sentiments and rationality—can be termed "perfection." It soars above the instinctual and mental laws of cause and effect.

Sentiments play a large part in human life. In the subtle anatomy of yoga, there are intricate maps of these various sentiments or vrittis, located in clusters around the various cakras, or subtle energy centers. These vrittis, which in essence are part of the mind, and thus also the brain, effect the subsidiary glands, which are substations between the brain, the nerves and the body. When driven by sentiments such as anger, jealousy, hatred, etc., we create suffering, both for ourselves and others. Yogis thus advanced psycho-physical (yoga postures), psycho-spiritual (visualizations, music, etc.), and spiritual (meditation) exercises to harmonize the physical body and the mind (the subtle body) with the spirit. Many modern health and integral psycho-therapies are, in effect, attempting to accomplish the same thing.

Rationality is one of humanity's greatest assets. It is our best tool in navigating past irrational dogmas and behaviors. However, rationality has its own limitations and pitfalls, which may bring about devastating changes in both the human and biological worlds. Rationality—as witnessed in the development of Western materialism—can become its own belief system and thereby negate the trans-rational (spiritual) and reduce reality to a one-dimensional level. Moreover, human rationality can often be rendered ineffective by lower propensities or pre-rational sentiments. This is often the case in New Age circles where pre-rational acts or beliefs (mythic rituals, channelling) are mistakenly described as trans-rational spirituality.

The Various Human Sentiments

As social beings, humans have—over thousands of years of history—developed various group sentiments. As with individual sentiments, many of these may be adverse to spiritual growth.

These main social sentiments are:

1. Geocentric sentiments: This refers to a group's attachment to the indigenous soil of an area or country. It is the fertile basis for many other insidious sentiments, such as geo-religion, geo-patriotism, and geo-economics. Geo-religious sentiments, for example, can be superstitions promoting the fanatic belief in the reverential quality of a certain mountain or river—the belief that all who die in that particular

area will be liberated or go to heaven. From a spiritual point of view, this is, of course, utter nonsense. In essence, all natural places on this earth are sacred and holy, all are created, maintained and transformed by the same source of Pure Consciousness.

2. Sociocentric sentiments: These sentiments promote the interest of a group—family, village or nation—at the expense of other groups or nationalities. Since the dawn of human civilization, such sentiments have been instrumental in human warfare, either tribal, racial, or religious. Based on such group sentiments many other divisive sentiments are developed: socio-patriotism, socio-religion, socio-economics, and so on. Sometimes one will find a mixture of these sentiments. Nazi-Germany's war in Europe, for example, displayed a vicious blend of socio-patriotism and socio-economics.

3. Anthropocentric sentiments: Humanism is a more expanded and far more progressive sentiment than the previous two. It can be an expression of genuine love and compassion for all people on the planet. However, such human sentiments often violate the interests and sentiments of non-human creatures, whether reptile, mammal or plant. Such human-centered sentiments today threaten the very fabric of the environment; indeed, the future existence of the human race.

4. World-centric sentiments:

More expansive than humanism, it also includes the biosphere. This rational and/or mythic belief system is sometimes disguised as spirituality. It is prevalent in certain world-centric eco-philosophies or neo-pagan views which use systems science or the Gaia-theory to point to nature or the Web of Life as the ultimate God or Goddess. As Wilber and Sarkar both note, this view is not necessarily wrong. From a biological or scientific point of view, Gaia or Nature is indeed a whole organism, but this organism, this nature, is itself not the whole Chain of Being (or cosmic creation). Nature, or the Web of Life, is only a biological expression of Cosmic Consciousness. Nature's intelligence is imbedded in Cosmic consciousness, not in matter. Similarly, human intelligence and awareness is imbedded in the soul, not the brain.

5. The Spirit-centered worldview:

All animate and inanimate beings are an expression of Cosmic Consciousness. This awareness forms the transcendental foundation for creating harmony between the three worlds of Body, Mind, and Spirit in society. Various spiritual traditions name and divide these levels differently, but all the levels of consciousness must be integrated in order to achieve a state of true Spirit-centeredness.

The Spirit-centered, or transpersonal, world-view, acknowledges and incorporates the other world-views. But—and this is crucial—it also sees their limitations. In other words, while supporting all the positive ideals of humanism, we should also work toward overcoming its inherent flaws. We may support the world-centric view of system-science, but we must also acknowledge that it cannot teach us anything about spirituality. The Spirit-centered world-view thus includes

all the other world-views in a grand panoramic circle of understanding. Sarkar termed this as Universalism. It is a world-view that includes the whole universe—stars, planets, continents, humans, plants, animals. Embracing the whole circle of life, this spiritual, extrasensory outlook begins and ends with the very essence of Cosmic Consciousness. It simultaneously sees both Earth and Heaven. It beholds both the One and the Many.

Roar Bjonnes is editor of Prout Journal and contributing editor of New Renaissance. His articles on ecology, economics and spirituality have appeared in numerous magazines, books and academic journals in Europe and the United States.

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| | <p>Understanding Sarkar The Indian Episteme, Macrohistory and Transformative Knowledge by Sohail Inayatullah, Brill, Boston, 2002, 366 pages, \$53</p> <p>Sohail Inayatullah takes us on a journey through Indian philosophy, grand theory and macrohistory. We understand and appreciate Indian cyclical and spiral theories of history, and their epistemological context. From other civilizations, we explore the stages and mechanisms of social change as developed by seminal thinkers such as Ssu-Ma Ch'ien, Ibn Khaldun, Giambattista Vico, George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Oswald Spengler, Pitirim Sorokin, Michel Foucault and many others. They are invited to a multi-civilizational dialog on the nature of agency and structure, and the escape ways from the patterns of history.</p> <p>But the journey is centered on P.R. Sarkar, the controversial Indian philosopher, guru and activist. While Sarkar passed away in 1990, his work, his social movements, his vision of the future remains ever alive. Inayatullah brings us closer to the heart and head of this giant luminary. Through Understanding Sarkar, we gain insight into Indian philosophy, comparative social theory, and the ways in which knowledge can transform and liberate.</p> <p>Buy the book through your local bookstore or online from Amazon.com.</p> <p>Comments on Understanding Sarkar</p> <p>"The next generation of South Asians will consider themselves fortunate that scholars like Sohail Inayatullah have helped to keep open a humane and plural vision of the future for them".</p> <p>--Dr. Ashis Nandy, Director, Center of the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. Author of The Intimate Enemy and Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias.</p> | |

"A superb book. Deeply inspiring and provocative. The Sarkar-Inayatullah combination makes very good reading indeed. Inayatullah introduces the fascinating world – in time, in space, and in social space – of P.R. Sarkar".

--**Johan Galtung**, President of Transcend: A Peace and Development Network and author of over seventy books on peace studies, futures studies, international relations, Gandhi, and social theory. Formerly, Professor of Peace, Political Science and Sociology at the Universities of Bern, Saarland, Hawaii and Witten-Herdecke.

"Dr. Sohail Inayatullah is the leading example of a new generation of global thinkers, actors and visionaries. While firmly attached to and informed by the culture into which he was born, and passionately and yet rationally committed to facilitating the future of South Asia, Sohail Inayatullah is also a global -- it is not too much to say, cosmic -- figure as well, carrying in his very person the tensions and hopes of a future which is at the same time both local and global".

--**James Dator**, Professor of Political Science and Director of the Hawaii Research Center for Futures Studies, University of Hawaii. Secretary-General and President of the World Futures Studies Federation, 1982-1990.

"In addition to the service he is rendering by bringing to a wider audience the thoughts of a very important thinker, Sohail Inayatullah provides an extraordinary contribution to social theory with an unusual combination of analytic rigor and boundary challenging imagination".

--**Professor Michael Shapiro**, University of Hawaii is the author of numerous books on political and social theory including, Reading the Postmodern Polity, Reading 'Adam Smith', Violent Cartographies and Cinematic Political Thought, For Moral Ambiguity: National Culture and the Politics of the Family 2001.

"In this scholarly and inspiring work, Sohail Inayatullah brings to life the contributions of the remarkable Indian visionary, theorist, and social activist Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar. Skillfully blending his understanding of both Eastern and Western scholarly traditions, Inayatullah looks at history from a non-eurocentric perspective that also takes into account the thinking of some of the best known Western macrohistorians. This book is not only highly instructive; it also never loses sight of what Sarkar called neo-humanism – the consciousness that we are part of an interconnected whole and that a good society is one that manages to represent harmoniously the spiritual needs of its individuals".

--**Riane Eisler**, author of The Chalice & The Blade, Sacred Pleasure, and Tomorrow's Children.

"Sarkar's writings on historical processes offer a refreshing alternative to the orthodox interpretations of Toynbee, Hegel and Marx. He makes Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations seem parochial in comparison. Dr. Inayatullah skillfully weaves Sarkar's comprehensive overview of cultural life-cycles into a coherent whole, through which the full sweep and scope of the fundamental forces that shape history can be rendered. Despite the magnitude of the canvas upon he paints, his is

a work of systematic and focused scholarship. This book should be required reading for anyone looking to understand macrotheories of social change from a non-eurocentric, holistic, and synergistic perspective".

--**Dr. Tim Dolan**, Associate Professor of Political Science at Southern Oregon University and Director of the Master in Management Program.

"Sohail Inayatullah is the world's leading scholar of Sarkar's thought. His latest book, *Understanding Sarkar*, is sweeping in scope - quite literally a philosophical tour de force. By contrasting Sarkar's ideas to some of the greatest minds in human history, Inayatullah has achieved a remarkable philosophical integration that is both breathtaking in its vision and relevant in its possibilities for creating societal change. Indeed, if you want a better grasp of Sarkar's comprehensive worldview, I can think of no better source than Inayatullah. Brilliant".

--**Roar Bjønnes**, co-founder of Center for Sustainable Villages, writer, editor of *Prout Journal*, and contributing editor of *New Renaissance*

"Dr. Sohail Inayatullah's book offers an excellent entry point for those wanting to explore the fascinating and challenging ideas of P. R. Sarkar. At the same time *Understanding Sarkar* provides those who have studied Sarkar with wonderful new ways of seeing and connecting the vast expanses of his works. We owe much to Dr. Inayatullah for this splendid effort".

--**Craig Runde**, Director of New Program Development, Eckerd College, St. Petersburg, Florida

"In a time when "global" is equated with "western", Sohail Inayatullah takes us through the door of Indian thinking to a world view that is global in the true sense of the word. Going beyond naive Western idolization of Asian philosophies and avoiding the pitfalls of dogmatic, sometimes fanatic, adherence to tradition faith characteristic to many Eastern mentalities Inayatullah examines P.R. Sarkar's world in pursuit of a universality that is yet to be realized within the potential of human civilization. Those, wishing freedom from culturally ingrained mental habits, should consider this work as essential reading".

--**Dr. Partow Izadi**, senior scientist in evolutionary futures, global education and systems theory, University of Lapland, Finland.

"This is a companion volume to Inayatullah and Galtung's masterly synthesis of macrohistory and macrohistorians, that includes P R Sarkar. Here the practice as well as the theory of Sarkar enters the grand sweep, enriching and legitimating the story. Their respective models have elements in common but few contain all Sarkar's elements of spiritual practice, humanity, and humility - even if potentially ferocious. He lived, fought and spread his theory into a movement. Isolated perhaps from the writings of the other great minds, Sarkar seems to have an uncanny understanding of the emerging insights of genetics on our social behavior (evolutionary psychology or neo-Darwinism) and of social construction".

--**Alan Fricker**, President, Sustainable Futures Trust, Wellington, NZ



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| | <p>The Olympics and Cultural Hegemony</p> <p>The Olympic Games are taken seriously by many countries. Aside from the economic sphere, it is another avenue for the West to display its "superiority" over the rest of the world. How is this achieved? Levi Obijiofor and Sohail Inayatullah take us into the hidden meanings of the world's greatest sporting event</p> <p>By Levi Obijiofor and Sohail Inayatullah.</p> <p>A wide-eyed TV commentator in Australia remarked at the end of a pulsating Olympic semi-final soccer match between Nigeria and Brazil in which the former triumphed: "This is unbelievable! Nigeria of all countries!"</p> <p>In similar tones, headline writers in the West's leading press described the victory over Brazil as an "upset". This phrase, especially as it relates to the Olympic Games, is significant.</p> <p>At the heart of such journalism is the misleading construction of the Olympics as an apolitical event. We are misled not in the sense of being blind to favoritism—but through propagation of the assumption that the Olympics represent all of humanity's triumph, that winning athletes represent the culmination of human excellence. The deeper meta-level of politics, in which the Olympics are essentially a massive Western exercise in cultural domination, is avoided.</p> <p>But this should not be a surprise since "civilization" has come to mean Western civilization. Indeed, the Olympics are about the ascension of the West. The Olympic flame passing on unextinguished from ancient Athens to the modern era is about the unproblematic transmission of Hellenic values to global culture. The flame should not be doused, meaning that the values of the West should not be challenged. Like Mount Olympus, they should stand tall above all other peoples, values and visions.</p> | |

The Olympics Are Western

The Olympic Games have for years been dominated or hijacked by sporting events that are basically Western in origin. When a non-Western athlete or team excels in an Olympic event which is traditionally Western, the feat is perceived as an upset. Or there are genetic factors that are brought in to account for it. Those long-distance runners from Kenya, we are told, have many hills to climb as they herd their sheep. Effort, traditional family structures, traditional training techniques, and cultural importance given to specific bodily skills are overlooked.

These rationalizations apply mostly to sportsmen and women from the non-West. Contest therefore is not on the ground of sports but on the ground of political constructions, in terms of valuing certain sports, histories, and cultures over others. If this is not the case, why do we have to have the Winter Olympics, arguably designed for the West and the countries “blessed” with winter to have their own games? No one remembered to design another Olympics for those countries that, by reason of geography, have only dry and rainy seasons. Can't we also have a Steaming Olympics, a Dry Olympics, or even a Wet Olympics? We cannot, since the Olympics, even as they claim universality, are particular. Athens, we should remember, does not experience the monsoons.

By promoting the image of the Olympics as global and by ensuring that every country participates in the events determined by Western authorities in the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the West is indirectly promoting its own values. The tragedy however is that many members within the IOC are from the non-West. Yet decisions about the summer Olympics still almost always seem to leave the non-West with no viable alternatives. Of course there are options such as boycotting future Olympic Games if the inclusion of traditional sports from the non-West are rejected by the IOC.

Marginalization

The dilemma is that non-participation in the Olympic Games means marginalization in the international economic and political spheres. Avoiding the Olympics relegates a country to the dustbin of nationalistic history. If one plays and loses badly, as most of the non-West do, a deep-seated cultural inferiority complex arises. All that is left to do is to join, to be “developmentalized”.

If one plays and wins, beating the West at their own game, speculation is rife about the use of performance-enhancing substances, as with China's women's distance running, or simplistic reference to genetic advantages.

The West, originators of the Olympics, just can't take defeat as a fact of life. At stake is not sports but cosmology, worldview, and most recently nation. Thus, to invest resources in preparation for the Games every four years is to play “catch-up” with the West. Above all, participation in

the Games is participation in another form of forced marketing of Western values.

Unfortunately, non-Western countries have been “infected” with this ideology under the guise of sports development. How many non-Western countries spend as much money developing their traditional sports as they do developing those of the West?

Neglected Sports

Traditional sports from the non-West are not recognized and have been kept out of the Olympics because the West have not “blessed” them as genuine sports. Yet some in the non-West, for example, strive to compete in such Western sporting events as beach volleyball, horseback riding, rhythmic, gymnastics, and synchronized swimming. With ballroom dancing now an Olympics sport, let us hope that non-Western nations do not begin to invest in this sport. Yet, if they don't they will continue to lag in the medal count, which could also be considered another GNP indicator count.

But what if non-Western nations focus on sports in which they have a comparative advantage? How, for example, would the IOC react to suggestions to include traditional events like... drum dancing, hand fishing, tree climbing with bare hands, palm wine tapping and consumption, a 100-metres sprint race pushing discarded car tyres or rims, running with an egg delicately placed on the head, a sack race, trap shooting with slings or catapults but no guns (what the West can do with a gun a skilled African marksman can do with the catapult), wood chopping or kabadi—traditional wrestling—as in Pakistan? What about camel riding in order to accommodate the Maghrebs of the Sahara region? and so on....

With all these included in a refined Olympics, will the West continue to dominate? As a Somali proverb states, “What you lose in the fire you must seek in the ashes.” Is such a level playing field possible?

The future option for the non-West in the Olympic Games must be either to build on its own model of traditional sports or to utilize its numbers in the IOC to force a change. The non-West cannot continue participation in an Olympic Games where winning on Western terms is its essence. To do so is to promote inequity and further humiliation.

Winning in Order to Win

More characteristic of the Olympics than winning on Western terms has been the aggrandizement of winning itself. It is more important than cultural exchange and refinement of the human spirit, contrary to Olympics propaganda claims. To illustrate the point that winning and losing have become the two key Olympics words, let us return to the 1992 Barcelona Games.

Asked why his colleagues on the U.S. basketball team (the “Dream Team”) were not staying in the same Olympic village as other athletes to make friends, one of the players reportedly said, “We are here to win

gold, not to make friends”.

The same theme was evident in several advertisements during the Atlanta Games, as recorded by Roy MacGregor of The Ottawa Citizen. Here are a few: “You don’t win silver, you lose gold”; “If you’re not here to win, you’re a tourist”; “Second place is the first loser”; and “No one trains for second place”.

These sentiments run counter to the views of the founder of the modern Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin, who said that “the important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part”. By promoting the importance of winning, Olympics sponsors are propagating the message that winners are superior, that winners are from the West, and that the non-West are losers and are therefore inferior to the West.

Each culture has its own sports. Some are individualistic, some competitive, some based on ancient myths. By giving official credence only to the sports of one culture, our sports bio-diversity is lost.

Beyond the Sovereign Nation

The context of sports is domination. Winning is all that matters. Winning boosts a nation’s image, turns winners into instant millionaires, and unifies long-time domestic enemies. More than that it reinscribes the nation as the natural and only form of governing sovereignty. West, nation, and winning become natural and synonymous. Can we imagine an Olympics where there are different sorts of “territoriality”? Perhaps a line-up of nations, ethnicities, individuals, communities, transnational corporations, and even civilizations.

Can we imagine a situation where there is excellence and challenge but not in the context of “winning”? The desire to win also encourages men and women to cheat and bypass the most sophisticated drug testing kits available, ultimately harming their own bodies.

Women and Sports

The Olympics are also primarily about traditional male values. Women’s sports, like the Yugoslav girls’ game of lastis (where girls play with an elastic rope and jump up and down in infinite variations), is one example. Women, also, as we know from studies on competition, would prefer a negotiated score in which all parties are happy. For example, if the game is drawn, many women are satisfied with that conclusion while men would prefer a “sudden death” (with all the metaphorical meanings behind it).

Olympic sports, from a feminist perspective, have either developed from a warrior tradition such as fencing or from from leisure time, that is, when women were taking care of the home economy. Indeed, the origin of the Olympics lies in preparing men for war. As with the non-West, the inclusion of women has been in the terms and values of male Western games. Women’s terms and values have been excluded largely in the same sense non-Western culture has.

Lobbying for Change

Olympics as apolitical, humanity's struggle for global excellence? We don't think so. But bringing these issues up is not easy. As with religion and politics, deconstructing the Olympics can be seen as an unpatriotic task. It might be argued that there is no Western hegemony, so let non-Western nations lobby the IOC for their own sports, or don't give the Olympics so much attention.

The Games are only a matter of individual athletes in friendly competition. But can non-Western nations lobby for alternative sports? Can they develop a global following even if the sport being played has some cross-cultural appeal?

Our argument is that resources are limited and media exposure is even more limited. And the Olympics do matter. It is a billion-dollar industry. One only needs to look at the effort socialist nations gave to the Olympics to see their value in prestige. Challenging the Olympics is bothersome because most of us have bought the idea of the Olympics as universal, as the purest of all human expressions. To locate it in other discourses is to undo primal tribal-national emotions.

Still, there is beauty in seeing athletes run faster, swifter and stronger. Competition and keeping scores do lead to excellence. A Zen of sports where the process is more important than the outcome is only part of the story. Outcomes are important. There is a charm in seeing individuals of many cultures mingle together for two weeks. Even if the flags of nation-states reinforce the ugliness of patriotism, the Olympics do create an internationalism even if they do not create a universal humanism.

Cultural Enshrinement

Thus, we argue not for the elimination of the Olympics but for its transformation, and generations ahead, we need redefinition of the Olympics concept. New indicators of performance and achievement instead of the simplistic medal tally might be useful.

Bruce Wilson, for example, argued that chatter about Australia surpassing its 1956 record in 1998 should be seen in the context of a 32 million Australian dollar sports investment, nearly a million dollars per medal won. Perhaps we need a ratio after the medal tally like medal/investment in sports. Burundi or Namibia might then be the real winner of the Olympic Games. Why not an indicator such as medal/GNP also?

We also need an Olympic Games for the non-West and women where there is neither victor nor vanquished, where excellence is achieved without domination. Ultimately, that is the solution, an alternative Olympics where traditional games and the cultural stories behind them are enshrined. Hawaii already has a day for traditional Hawaiian sports. These are critical because they teach the young ancient ways of knowing, of relating to the environment.

Sports teach us about each other, about our myths. They create inner

and outer discipline. They concentrate the mind. They are also a way toward intergenerational solidarity, where the old teach the young. Above all, sports, as originally conceived, should promote a culture of peaceful co-existence and friendliness. Unfortunately, all these ideals have changed. Today, competitors weep openly when they lose and when they win, making it difficult to understand the essence and spirit of the occasion. Sportsmen and women also sometimes trade abuses and punches with one another and with officials. Sometimes limbs are broken and lives are lost, not through accidents but through deliberate acts of hatred.

Would these alternative Olympics be globally televised against the mystique of Athens? Of course not. At least not until Asian and African nations begin to control their own mass media. Challenging the Olympics is ultimately about taking back one's history and body from nations and giant media firms that own athletes and monopolize sponsorship of them. It's also about fighting media imperialism and all forms of imperialism thrown up by multinational sponsoring organizations. It is about fighting patriarchy and the modern nation-state system. Finally, it is about creating a new future, a planetary civilization beyond West and non-West.

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| | <p>What is dogma? By Andy Douglas</p> <p>In her 1993 book "Shame," Bangladeshi writer Tasrима Naslin draws upon the bloody conflicts generated by clashing religious beliefs: In 1992, hard-line Hindus in India, claiming that the Moslem Basri mosque at Ayodhya was built upon a holy Hindu site, tore the mosque to the ground. Naslin uses this actual event as a stepping-off point for her fictional story, in which Muslims in Bangladesh retaliate for the Ayodhya incident by hunting down and killing local Hindus.</p> <p>Shame sharp-focused on the dangers of an outlook circumscribed by limiting sectarian boundaries. Characters in the book behave as if a rubber band is bound tight around their minds, engaging in tit for tat violence, unable to see beyond their immediate "tribal encampment." As an ironic coda of life imitating art, a fatwah was levied against Naslin by a Bangladeshi fundamentalist Muslim organization.</p> <p>The book was striking, but perhaps did not reach much of a Western audience. The spectre of dogma sprang into far greater relief for many, especially in the US, following the incidents of September 11th. Nineteen men who had a particular belief in God and his sanction of their actions crashed a plane into twin towers, killing thousands. It is said they were acting on their belief that female virgins waited in heaven for martyrs as reward for their actions.</p> <p>Dogma is no new thing; it may be as old as thought itself. The very antiquity of beliefs often grants them, in believers' minds, a special legitimacy, and at the same time, renders them more intractable.</p> <p>The term "dogma" started out as a religious one, originally used in the Catholic Church to describe an assertion of metaphysical truth,</p> | |

accepted as doctrine. The dictionary definition broadens this: dogma is something held as an established opinion, a definite authoritative tenet. These days the word has acquired an even more negative connotation, as an idea which is held to against all reason.

It is not always easy to say what is or is not dogma, nor perhaps should one lightly do so. One man's dogma is another's cherished ideal. Intellectuals need to take care in espousing their values and ideas, and especially in criticizing others'. There are important social, cultural, and historical factors at play in determining what people believe and why. Such ideas have to do with creating civic cohesion, with ensuring survival. But, and here lies the rub, they may also deal with one group of people exploiting another. The 20th century served as mute witness to countless instances when belief gelled into totalizing ideology, with catastrophic results.

Still, as a jumping off place for understanding, perhaps we can generalize a little, in trying to circle in on what dogma consists of. We might say that dogma often has a backward looking nature, not keeping pace with social changes. It is often passed on from generation to generation. It may be highly emotionally loaded. It is often at the root of fundamentalism. It may lead to behaviors which are selfish or exploitative. And it is often embraced collectively.

"Crowds of silent voices whisper in our ears, transforming the nature of what we see and hear. Some are those of childhood authorities and heroes, others come from family and peers. The strangest emerge from beyond the grave. A vast chorus of long-gone ancients constitutes a not-so-silent majority whose legacy has what may be the most dramatic effect of all on our vision of reality." - Howard Bloom.

Prout founder P. R. Sarkar has written a good deal about dogma and its effect on society. He offers this concise definition: "Dogma is an idea with a rigid boundary line, which won't allow you to go beyond the periphery of that boundary line. Thus dogma goes against the fundamental spirit of the human mind. The human mind won't tolerate anything rigid. It wants movement -- not only movement, but accelerated movement."

This definition moves us beyond the dictionary one, and also asserts certain psychological truths. It posits a directed, fluid concept of human existence. In another book, Sarkar compares human existence to a flowing stream, as opposed to a stagnant pool. If the human mind craves expansion, then dogma not only creates division and conflict, but is also fundamentally opposed to this movement.

Movement towards what? Towards a knowledge of the self. Sarkar lambasts philosophies which are based on materialism, because they are "anti-human." Rather, he encourages broadness of vision - physical, intellectual and, particularly, spiritual development. Humanity's evolutionary future lies in the expansion of consciousness.

Examples of dogma, both past and present, abound: In the Middle Ages, clerics joined knights fighting in the Crusades. Forbidden to spill blood, they eschewed swords, and instead walloped their enemies on the head with a hammer.

Hard-line Israeli settlers, believing God has commanded them to settle Palestine, daily encroach further into Palestinian lands, upping the ante of tension in that contentious region.

One area in which dogma has particularly pernicious effects is the status of women. In India, for example, the practice of sati allowed for the burning of Hindu widows on their husband's funeral pyre. Yet this was brought about by a distortion of scriptures, according to Sarkar. Priests misquoted a scripture which said women shall lead the funeral procession, twisting it to say the widow shall walk into the fire. Although nowadays sati has been banned, its legacy lingers, with the practice of in-laws pouring gasoline over unwanted widows and setting them afire.

Or consider this quote: "A man should certainly not cover his head, since he is the image of God and reflects God's glory; but woman is the reflection of man's glory. For man did not come from women, but woman was created for the sake of man."

Although it is common to view Islam as the religion most constricting to women, the above is not something out of Shariya law, but instead comes from 1 Corinthians. A strong anti-intellectual, anti-scientific bias often accompanies dogmatic belief. "I ain't got no learnin' and never had none... Glory be to the Lamb!

Some folks work their hands off'n up to the elbows to give their young-uns education, and all they do is send their young-uns to hell..." This was uttered by a Pentecostal preacher at the time of the Scopes trial, the famous debate on evolution being taught in the schools in the U.S. at the turn of the last century.

Many fundamentalists' ideas are rooted in a dogmatic and literal adherence to scripture, even when science has convincingly challenged the legitimacy of their notions. (Of course, science, too, must be scrutinized for signs of dogma.)

In an essay entitled "The Roots of the Moral Majority," David Harrel notes that Christian fundamentalists have clung tightly to a number of beliefs and practices. These include anti-evolutionism, school prayer, militarism, the inerrancy of Scripture, and pre-millennialism (the belief in the "rapturing" of believers up into heaven, and a period of reign of Christ on earth).

American Christian fundamentalists have in recent years entered the political arena, although, as Harrel notes, they did so only "when it seemed to them that the very structure of society was seriously threatened by modernism and liberalism."

Responding to Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell's claims of impending

moral doom in American society, Harrel quotes William Fore of the National Council of Churches: "It is true that the nation needs spiritual reform...that our society has fallen into a moral cynicism that feeds corruption....Falwell is partly right, and this makes him far more dangerous than if he were totally wrong." Sarkar distinguishes between religion and spirituality. Spiritual practices strengthen and free the mind, offering direct communion with the highest reality and a sense of universal connectedness, while religion is based on tradition and belief, and often merely leads to sectarianism.

Dogmatists often believe that they are doing God's will, that their beliefs are divinely anctioned. And yet, says Sarkar, "People who follow dogma-centered philosophy exploit others in the name of providence for their own self-interest. For example, the proponents of dogma often claim that they have been blessed with divine revelation. They say that they had a dream in which God appeared before them and commanded them to do particular work, and on this pretext they exploit others to the full."

And, "there are many philosophies which tend to crudify the human mind, and make people violent and inconsiderate. They make people believe that they are God's favourite children, whereas the rest of humanity are cursed. Although these views have philosophical sanction, they do not enjoy the sanction of the A'tman." Here Sarkar refers to the deepest layer of human existence, the soul, which, according to his spiritual philosophy, is in congruence with Cosmic Consciousness.

Religions, Sarkar says, know how to twist their teachings to deny the truth and adapt to different circumstances, in order to secure the interests of a special, privileged class. They "sentimentalize" the minds of people, and through the use of stories, myths and parables, create superiority, inferiority and fear complexes.

Yet dogma is not simply a religious phenomenon. Tenets of economic thought can be clung to as fiercely, as blindly, and often with as bloody consequences, as religious ones. The instances of harmful adherence to social and economic dogmas and hegemonic doctrines are too numerous to mention. As just one example, Stalin, attempting to force the round pegs of economic reality in the Soviet steppes into the square holes of his Marxist doctrine, slaughtered tens of millions.

How can dogma be evaluated? Is it possible to judge another's beliefs? How is one to avoid the accusation of cultural bias? In matters of human rights, for example, especially when criticism comes from Western sources, leaders of non-Western countries retort that their internal affairs are their own business. Human rights, they argue, are not universally interpreted in the same way, and cultural beliefs in certain notions of human nature or governance excuse any violations. With the efforts of the United Nations, the World Court, and numerous non-governmental organizations working for the protection of human rights, the world is now struggling towards a consensus on the

necessity to codify and protect these rights. Belief, of course, cannot be legislated. But behavior can.

Skepticism, said Santayana, is the chastity of the mind. Is a skeptical stance, then, the way to begin to evaluate belief systems? It is possible to go too far, as many postmodernists do, discounting all beliefs as constructed, and proceeding to deconstruct them. There are those who argue for a cultural, and indeed, a philosophical relativism. Yet this too often becomes paralyzing, as every inch of ground begins to shift beneath one's feet. Sarkar is not arguing for skepticism, per se. He sees definite truths in life.

A vigorous intellectual life, promoting the questioning, debate and free exchange of opinions and information is the first step. In other words, rationality. Beliefs, Sarkar says, may be evaluated based upon their degree of rationality. And this rationality needs to be further rooted in a universal outlook, which will promote the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of every human on the planet. Furthermore, as Sarkar argues in his book *Neo-Humanism*, plants and animals should be included in these considerations, since they also have existential value.

Ethics also play a role in shaping the parameters of belief; a person established in morality will be less likely to embrace beliefs which are harmful to others. According to Sarkar, "to counteract the malevolent effect of dogma-centred philosophies, the two most important factors are the development of rationality and the spread of education. Merely attending school and university classes will not necessarily have the desired effect. Stress should be placed on education which produces a high degree of rationality in the human mind, and this type of education should be spread amongst the people. So, to counteract religious dogma we have to adopt a two-fold approach. First, the path of logic and reason must be adopted...

Simultaneously, the spiritual sentiment must be inculcated in human minds as this is more powerful than the religious sentiment. For this people should be properly educated in the way of spirituality."

Each person must weigh the relevant ideas, consider them rationally, experiment with them, and decide for themselves. At the same time, the practical effort to open one's heart and expand one's consciousness lays the groundwork for an outlook free of exploitative tendencies. It is crucial that the ideas of compassion, universal brother- and sisterhood, and the linking of one's spirit with a greater reality, become more than simply ideas. Their beauty and truth must be realized through practice. This combination of rationality and spirituality will open the door to an expansive, dogma-free existence.

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| Politics | The Counter-Coup | |
| Science | <p>It looks like Venezuela is not just another banana-oil republic after all. Many here feared that with the April 11 coup attempt against President Hugo Chavez, Venezuela was being degraded to being just another country that is forced to bend to the powerful will of the United States. The successful counter-coup of April 14, though, which reinstated Chavez, proved that Venezuela is a tougher cookie than the coup planners thought.</p> | |
| Culture | <p>The coup leaders against President Chavez made two fundamental miscalculations. First, they started having delusions of grandeur, believing that the support for their coup was so complete that they could simply ignore the other members of their coup coalition and place only their own in the new government. The labor union federation CTV, which saw itself as one of the main actors of the opposition movement to President Chavez, and nearly all moderate opposition parties were excluded from the new "democratic unity" cabinet. The new transition cabinet ended up including only the most conservative elements of Venezuelan society. They then proceeded to dissolve the legislature, the Supreme Court, the attorney general's office, the national electoral commission, and the state governorships, among others. Next, they decreed that the 1999 constitution, which had been written by a constitutional assembly and ratified by vote, following the procedures outlined in the pervious constitution, was to be suspended. The new transition president would thus rule by decree until next year, when new elections would be called. Generally, this type of regime fits the textbook definition of dictatorship.</p> | |
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regime, perhaps under pressure from the excluded sectors of the opposition, or perhaps out of a genuine sense of remorse, and resulted in their call for changes to the sweeping "democratic transition" decree, lest they withdraw their support from the new government. Transition President Pedro Carmona, the chair of Venezuela's largest chamber of commerce, immediately agreed to reinstate the Assembly and to the rest of the generals' demands.

The second miscalculation was the belief that Chavez was hopelessly unpopular in the population and among the military and that no one except Cuba and Colombia's guerilla, the FARC, would regret Chavez' departure. Following the initial shock and demoralization which the coup caused among Chavez-supporters, this second miscalculation led to major

upheavals and riots in Caracas' sprawling slums, which make up nearly half of the city. In practically all of the "barrios" of Caracas spontaneous demonstrations and "cacerolazos" (pot-banging) broke out on April 13 and 14. The police immediately rushed-in to suppress these expressions of discontent and somewhere between 10 and 40 people were killed in these clashes with the police. Then, in the early afternoon, purely by word-of-mouth and the use of cell phones (Venezuela has one of the highest per capita rates of cell phone use in the world), a demonstration in support of Chavez was called at the Miraflores presidential palace. By 6 PM about 100,000 people had gathered in the streets surrounding the presidential palace. At approximately the same time, the paratrooper battalion, to which Chavez used to belong, decided to remain loyal to Chavez and took over the presidential palace. Next, as the awareness of the extent of Chavez' support spread, major battalions in the interior of Venezuela began siding with Chavez.

Eventually the support for the transition regime evaporated among the military, so that transition president Carmona resigned in the name of preventing bloodshed. As the boldness of Chavez-supporters grew, they began taking over several television stations, which had not reported a single word about the uprisings and the demonstrations. Finally, late at night, around midnight of April 14, it was announced that Chavez was set free and that he would take over as president again. The crowds outside of Miraflores were ecstatic. No one believed that the coup could or would be reversed so rapidly. When Chavez appeared on national TV around 4 AM, he too joked that he knew he would be back, but he never imagined it would happen so fast. He did not even have time to rest and write some poetry, as he had hoped to do.

So how could this be? How could such an impeccably planned and smoothly executed coup fall apart in almost exactly 48 hours? Aside from the two miscalculations mentioned above, it appears that the military's hearts were not fully into the coup project. Once it became obvious that the coup was being hijacked by the extreme right and that Chavez enjoyed much more support than was imagined, large parts of

the military decided to reject the coup, which then had a snowball-effect of changing military allegiances. Also, by announcing that one of the main reasons for the coup was to avoid bloodshed and by stating that the Venezuelan military would never turn its weapons against its own people, Chavez supporters became more courageous to go out and to protest against the coup without fear of reprisals.

Very important, though, was that the coup planners seem to have believed their own propaganda: that Chavez was an extremely unpopular leader. What they seem to have forgotten is that Chavez was not a fluke, a phenomenon that appeared in Venezuela as a result of political chaos, as some analysts seem to believe. Rather, Chavez' movement has its roots in a long history of Venezuelan community and leftist organizing. Also, it seems quite likely that although many people were unhappy with Chavez' lack of rapid progress in implementing the reforms he promised, he was still the most popular politician in the country.

The media and the opposition movement tried to create the impression that Chavez was completely isolated and that no one supported him any longer. They did this by organizing massive demonstrations, with the extensive help of the television stations, which regularly broadcast reports of the anti-Chavez protests, but consistently ignored the pro-Chavez protests, which, by all fair accounts, tended to be just as large. The television channels claimed that they did not cover pro-Chavez demonstrations because protestors threatened their lives. While this seems unlikely since the demonstrators usually unequivocally want their demonstrations covered by the media, they could have gotten protection, if they had cared to.

The Media

Nearly the entire media is owned and operated by Venezuela's oligarchy. There is only one neutral newspaper, which is not an explicitly anti-Chavez newspaper and one state-run television station. During the coup, the state-run station was taken off the air completely and all of the other media kept repeating the coup organizer's lies without question. These lies included the claim that Chavez had resigned and had dismissed his cabinet, that all of the demonstration's dead were "martyrs of civil society" (i.e., of the opposition, since the media does not consider Chavez supporters as part of civil society), and that Chavez had ordered his supporters to shoot into the unarmed crowd of anti-Chavez demonstrators.

The media never addressed the repeated doubts that members of Chavez' cabinet raised about his resignation. Also, the media did not release the names of those who were shot, probably because this would have shown that most of the dead were pro-Chavez demonstrators. Finally, the media edited the video footage of the shootings in such a way as to avoid showing where the Chavez supporters were shooting-namely, as eyewitnesses reported, at police and individuals who were shooting

back while hidden in doorways. Also, they did not show the pro-Chavez crowd repeatedly pointing at the snipers who were firing at them from the rooftop of a nearby building.

These media distortions in the aftermath of the coup drove home the point just how powerful the media is at creating an alternate reality. Those Chavez supporters who were at the demonstration and witnessed the events realized more than ever that power needs a medium and that those who control the media have much more power than they let on. This is why the television stations became a key target in the hours leading up to Chavez' reinstatement. The take-over of four of the eight stations was essential to Chavez' comeback because it showed the rest of the military and the rest of Venezuela that Chavez still had strong support among the population and that if the people really wanted to, they could fight for what was right and win.

Quo Vadis Chavez?

An aspect of the rise of Chavez to power that is often forgotten in Venezuela is that as far as Venezuelan presidents are concerned, Chavez has actually been among the least dictatorial. True, Chavez is a deeply flawed president with many shortcomings, among which one of the most important is his autocratic style. However, earlier presidencies, such as that of Carlos Andres Perez (1989-1993), the killing of demonstrators were nearly a monthly occurrence. Also, the outright censorship of newspapers was quite common during the Perez presidency. None of this has happened during the Chavez presidency.

President Hugo Chavez is an individual who raises the passions of people, pro or con, unlike anyone else. It almost seems that Venezuelans either love him or hate him. A more balanced picture of the president, however, would show, first, that he is someone who deeply believes in working for social justice, for improving democracy, and believes in international solidarity. Also, he is a gifted and charismatic speaker, which makes him a natural choice as a leader.

However, one has to recognize that he has some very serious shortcomings. Among the most important is that while he truly believes in participatory democracy, as is evidenced in his efforts to democratize the Venezuelan constitution, his instincts are that of an autocrat. This has led to a serious neglect of his natural base, which is the progressive and grassroots civil society. Instead, he has tried to control this civil society by organizing "Bolivarian Circles" which are neighborhood groups that are to help organize communities and at the same time to defend the revolution. The opposition easily stigmatized these circles, however, as being nothing other than a kind of SS for Chavez' political party. Another crucial flaw has been his relatively poor personnel choices. Many of the ministries and agencies suffer from mismanagement.

Finally and perhaps the most often mentioned flaw, is his tendency for inflammatory rhetoric. Accusations that Chavez divided Venezuelan society with his constant talk about the rich and the poor are ridiculous, since Venezuelan society was divided along these lines long before Chavez came to power. However, by trying to belittle his opponents by calling them names, such as "escualidos" (squalids), he made it virtually impossible for real dialogue to take place between himself and his opponents. |

The crucial question that Chavez-supporters and opponents alike are now asking is whether Chavez has grown through the experience of this coup. In his initial statement after being freed from his military captors, was, "I too have to reflect on many things. And I have done that in these hours. . I am here and I am prepared to rectify, wherever I have to rectify." Right now, however, it is too early to see if he really is going to change his ways, so that he becomes more productive in achieving the goals he has set for Venezuela.

While Chavez' many progressive achievements should not be forgotten, neither should his failures be overlooked, most of which have important lessons for progressives everywhere. The first lesson is to keep the eyes on the prize. Chavez has become so bogged-down with small day-to-day conflicts that many people are no longer sure if he remembers his original platform, which was to abolish corruption and to make Venezuelan society more egalitarian. While greater social equality is extremely difficult to achieve in a capitalist society, it is fair to say that Chavez' plans have not had enough time to bear fruit.

He has a six-year social and economic development plan for 2001-2007, of which only a small fraction has so far been implemented. However, on the corruption front, he has fallen seriously behind. The second lesson is that the neglect of one's social base, which provides the cultural underpinnings for desired changes, will provide an opening for opponents to redefine the situation and to make policy implementation nearly impossible. By not involving his natural base, the progressive and grassroots civil society, Chavez allowed the conservative civil society, the conservative unions, the business sector, the church, and the media to determine the discourse as to what the "Bolivarian revolution" was really all about.

The third lesson is that a good program alone is not good enough if one does not have the skillful means for implementing it. Chavez has some terrific plans, but through his incendiary rhetoric he manages to draw all attention away from his actual proposals and focuses attention on how he presents them or how he cuts his critics down to size.

Finally, while it is tempting to streamline policy-implementation by working only with individuals who will not criticize the program, creates a dangerous ideological monoculture, which will not be able to resist the diverse challenges even the best plans eventually have to face. Chavez has consistently dismissed from his inner circle those who criticized him, making his leadership base, which used to be quite

broad, smaller and smaller. Such a narrow leadership base made it much easier for the opposition to challenge Chavez and to mount the coup.

Whether Chavez and his opposition have learned these lessons remains to be seen. Venezuelan society is still deeply divided. One has to recognize that, at heart, this conflict is also a class conflict. While there certainly are many Chavez opponents who come from the lower classes and numerous supporters from the upper classes, the division between Chavez supporters who come from the lower light-skinned classes and the opponents who come from the higher dark-skinned classes cannot be denied. What Venezuela needs, if social peace is to be preserved, is a class compromise, where social peace is maintained at the expense of a more just distribution of Venezuela's immense wealth. However, today's globalized world makes such a compromise increasingly difficult to achieve because free market competition militates against local solutions to this increasingly global problem. But perhaps Venezuela is a special case because of its oil wealth, which might allow it to be an exception. Such an exception, though, will only be possible if power plays, such as the recent coup attempt, come to an end.

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which is Caracas' main artery of transportation, for several hours.

Supposedly at the spur of the moment, the organizers decided to reroute the march to Miraflores, the president's office building, so as to confront the pro-government demonstration, which was called in the last minute. About 5,000 Chavez-supporters had gathered there by the time the anti-government demonstrators got there. In-between the two demonstrations were the city police, under the control of the oppositional mayor of Caracas, and the National Guard, under control of the president. All sides claim that they were there peacefully and did not want to provoke anyone. I got there just when the opposition demonstration and the National Guard began fighting each other. Who started the fight, which involved mostly stones and tear gas, is, as is so often the case in such situations, nearly impossible to tell. A little later, shots were fired into the crowds and I clearly saw that there were three parties involved in the shooting, the city police, Chavez supporters, and snipers from buildings above. Again, who shot first has become a moot and probably impossible to resolve question. At least ten people were killed and nearly 100 wounded in this gun battle-almost all of them demonstrators.

One of the Television stations managed to film one of the three sides in this battle and broadcast the footage over and over again, making it look like the only ones shooting were Chavez supporters from within the demonstration at people beyond the view of the camera. The media over and over again showed the footage of the Chavez supporters and implied that they were shooting at an unarmed crowd. As it turns out, and as will probably never be reported by the media, most of the dead are Chavez supporters. Also, as will probably never be told, the snipers were members of an extreme opposition party, known as Bandera Roja.

These last two facts, crucial as they are, will not be known because they do not fit with the new mythology, which is that Chavez armed and then ordered his supporters to shoot at the opposition demonstration. Perhaps my information is incorrect, but what is certain is that the local media here will never bother to investigate this information. And the international media will probably simply ape what the local media reports (which they are already doing).

Chavez' biggest and perhaps only mistake of the day, which provided the last remaining proof his opposition needed for his anti-democratic credentials, was to order the black-out of the private television stations. They had been broadcasting the confrontations all afternoon and Chavez argued that these broadcasts were exacerbating the situation and should, in the name of public safety, be temporarily shutdown.

Now, all of "civil society," the media, and the military are saying that Chavez has to go because he turned against his own people. Aside from the lie this is, what is conveniently forgotten are all of the achievements of the Chavez administration: a new democratic constitution which broke the power monopoly of the two hopelessly corrupt and discredited main parties and put Venezuela at the forefront

in terms of progressive constitutions; introduced fundamental land reform; financed numerous progressive ecological community development projects; cracked-down on corruption; promoted educational reform which schooled over 1 million children for the first time and doubled investment in education; regulated the informal economy so as to reduce the insecurity of the poor; achieved a fairer price for oil through OPEC and which significantly increased government income; internationally campaigned tirelessly against neo-liberalism; reduced official unemployment from 18% to 13%; introduced a large-scale micro-credit program for the poor and for women; reformed the tax system which dramatically reduced tax evasion and increased government revenue; lowered infant mortality from 21% to 17%; tripled literacy courses; modernized the legal system, etc., etc.

Chavez' opposition, which primarily consisted of Venezuela's old guard in the media, the union federation, the business sector, the church, and the traditionally conservative military, never cared about any of these achievements. Instead, they took advantage of their media monopoly to turn public opinion against him and managed to turn his biggest liability, his autocratic and inflammatory style, against him. Progressive civil society had either been silenced or demonized as violent Chavez fanatics.

At this point, it is impossible to know what will happen to Chavez' "Bolivian Revolution" -whether it will be completely abandoned and whether things will return to Venezuela's 40- year tradition of patronage, corruption, and rentierism for the rich. What one can say without a doubt, is that by abandoning constitutional democracy, no matter how unpopular and supposedly inept the elected president, Venezuela's ruling class and its military show just how politically immature they are and deal a tremendous blow to political culture throughout Latin America, just as the coup against Salvador Allende did in 1973. This coup shows once again that democracy in Latin America is a matter of ruling class preference, not a matter of law.

If the United States and the democratic international community have the courage to practice what they preach, then they should not recognize this new government. Democrats around the world should pressure their governments to deny recognition to Venezuela's new military junta or any president they happen to choose. According to the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS), this would mean expelling Venezuela from the OAS, as a U.S. state department official recently threatened to do. Please call the U.S. state department or your foreign ministry and tell them to withdraw their ambassadors from Venezuela.

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| Home | <h1>Politics</h1> <p>PROUT Indicators by Sohail Inayatullah</p> <p>How spiritual, progressive, neo-humanistic, ethical and compassionate is your organization or movement?</p> <p>BROAD CIVILIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION Does the movement - for example, social movements such as the feminist, ecological, ethnic, regional, and consumer -- have the necessary characteristics to create a new system?</p> <p>Do they have an authoritative text? - helps negotiate conflicting interpretations.</p> <p>Inclusive, visionary, transformational leadership? - steers one through the mundane, helps develop capacity, enables and ennobles.</p> <p>A theory of political-economy? - defines the practical world of living.</p> <p>Spiritual practices? - how to expand the mind and refine the body.</p> <p>Fraternal universal outlook? - deep inclusion of others.</p> <p>Theory of Being/Consciousness? - why are we here, what is our purpose.</p> <p>A clear Perceptor?- A founder that can cohere.</p> <p>The following are more specific questions to ask.</p> <p>SPECIFIC QUESTIONS AND CRITERIA 1. Leadership Is leadership moral, do leaders lead by example?</p> | |
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Does the leadership have "sadvipra" qualities; service, protective, entrepreneur and knowledge oriented?

Or is leadership moving toward these qualities? Is it a goal?

2. Neo-Humanism

What level is the organization/movement neo-humanistic in terms of ideology, practice and overall culture?

Principle of Social Equality.

Movement beyond geo-sentiment and socio-sentiment and toward humanism.

Movement beyond humanism and toward neo-humanism (respect for all: humans, plants and animals).

3. Use and Distribution of Resources

Are economic strategies distribution and incentive based?

Is there a progressive use of physical, intellectual and spiritual resources?

Does the economic ideology and practice ensure that basic needs are met (housing, education, health, clothing and food)? Or is this true only at the level of ideology?

Does economic ideology and practice allow for challenge - struggle - or is the economy concerned mainly with floors? Or is this true only at the level of economic ideology?

Does money leak out of local areas?

4. Inner and External Balance

Does the economic ideology and practice follow the principle of prama (dynamic balance at all levels)?

5. Gender

Are the ideas and practices gender balanced?

Is partnership a process and goal? In ideas only? In practice? In ideas and practice?

6. Spiritual Transformation

Do ideas go beyond consciousness-raising to consciousness transformation? That is, is there a spiritual dimension to social change?

7. Culture

Are local languages respected?

Is there cultural diversity?

Clearly, no movement and revolution fits all the above criteria. But we

can assess organizations based on movement toward these goals, or, if they clearly violate these principles. For example, the Taliban clearly violated the principle of gender partnership, even if their leadership practiced simplicity.

These points can also help distinguish between finer points of ideology and practice. For example, Malaysia claims to be engaged in capital controls in terms of helping local people. However, this has generally only been to ensure elite status of local billionaires (so they are not affected by currency speculation) and not poorer groups.

The Malaysian government also practices torture of dissidents. The recent Fiji coup claimed to be for local people, however, even if one accepts that, it was predicated on racism. Instead of challenging global capital, the Fiji revolutionaries chose the far more visible and problematic effort of attacking other local people. Similarly, the One Nation Party in Australia claims to represent ordinary Australians against Globalization. However, it too fails the tests of neo-humanism.

--Sohail Inayatullah, Ph.D., is a futurists and the author of many books and articles on the works of P. R. Sarkar. His most recent book is Understanding Sarkar, published by Brill, 2002.

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| Economy | Popular Uprising in the Barrio's of Argentina May Spell Hope for Argentinean Proutists By David Griffin | |
| Ecology | <p>Argentina was the poster child of U.S.-sponsored globalization in the 1990's. As Dani Rodrik pointed out in the New Republic, "The country undertook more trade liberalization, tax reform, privatization, and financial reform than virtually any other country in Latin America." So why were finance minister Cavallo and president de la Ru'a forced out of office in December? The people had had enough. Enough joblessness, enough austerity, enough service cuts, enough.</p> | |
| Politics | <p>Cavallo and de la Ru'a were all about cow tow-ing to the international finance community, particularly the IMF. They cut jobs, pensions, and government salaries. After massive protest in the waning days of 2001, Cavallo and de la Rúa had to resign. Since then [**three] more presidents have resigned.</p> | |
| Science | <p>The current president, President Eduardo Duhalde, has made several moves that "appall Washington's orthodox economic policymakers," says the Washington Post. "Duhalde has blamed the U.S.-backed free-market approach for his nation's troubles and proclaimed it a 'broken model,' raising the specter that Latin America's third-largest economy may turn away from globalization and spark a movement toward protectionism in a region where President Bush had hoped to forge a hemisphere-wide free-trade zone," said the Post in a January article.</p> | |
| Culture | <p>In truth, the Argentine economy has been tumbling since 1997. In order to service national debt, public enterprises were sold to foreign and domestic capitalists, and the new owners fired thousands of workers. Unprofitable mineral and energy operations were closed, essentially eliminating the economies of entire towns. Public workers were laid off</p> | |
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or just not paid. Education, health care and other social services were cut way back. Ironically, but not unsurprisingly, the Argentine bourgeoisie moved billions out of the country following the crash that followed rampant foreign investment in the country. By 2001, unemployment surpassed 50 percent in some parts of the country, and the majority of households fell into poverty.

Clearly, the neoliberal model of globalization, that requires countries to maintain high international credit ratings no matter what the domestic expense, was not working. It seems that Cavello and de la Rúa had bought in to a paradigm that the people of Argentina now know is flawed: that by allowing capitalist elites to get rich off Argentina, Argentina also would benefit; that the deluge of capital into the country would float all boats; that the profit potential of investors must always come before the needs of common people.

In the Barrio's, the unemployed had had enough, both with austerity programs designed to appease the IMF, and with party bosses and union bureaucrats who had done nothing to change their plight. The Unemployed Workers Movement (MTD) started as a grass roots movement in the urban and suburban barrios. The organization has a horizontal structure: the assembly makes decisions, and even negotiations with the government takes place in front of assemblies.

The MTD began organizing roadblocks in 2001 to have their voices heard. Thousands of men, women, and children participated. The blockades had great popular support, making it difficult for the gendarmes to arrest their leaders. The government had to negotiate. The MTD demanded locally administered state-funded jobs, food relief, the freeing of political prisoners, and investments in roads, water, and health facilities. The MTD didn't want temporary jobs, but stable employment at living wages. In General Mosconi, for example, the leaders of the MTD movement came up with over three hundred project ideas, some of which have been implemented. These include a bakery, organic gardens, water purifying plants, first aid clinics, and more.

The local unemployment committee in fact runs this town. In some suburbs, the unemployed movement also has displaced the local government, setting up a parallel economy and offering a vision to the nation of the capabilities of the unemployed to take command of their own destinies.

Interestingly, while the IMF--essentially an agent of U.S. capital--required Argentina to give up sovereignty on fiscal matters, the US government itself is at this moment exercising the right to deficit spending. George Bush sites the recession as justification for giving a Keynesian boost to our economy, but when Argentina was in much worst economic straits, it was Washington's position that budgets must be balanced, never mind that unemployment was through the roof and Argentines and the domestic Argentine economy were starving for lack of domestic spending. How does the U.S. government expect the Argentine middle class to react to this kind of hypocrisy?

One of the causes of economic depression and recessions in capitalist economies is the reduction of the money flow due to its concentration in the hands of a few. Since the majority under such circumstance has no purchasing capacity, the syndrome is self re-enforcing: the rich have no incentive to invest in an economy that promises no returns. This clearly happened in Argentina, which witnessed not only the flight of foreign capital, but also the withdrawal of billions of dollars from the country by the Argentine bourgeoisie. Now common Argentineans can't even get back the money they've deposited in banks.

Argentine Proutists have responded to the situation with proposals of their own. Perhaps now more than ever, disenfranchised Argentines are willing listen.

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| Editorial | Constitutional proposals for Venezuela By Prout Research Institute, Venezuela | |
| Economy | INTRODUCTION | |
| Ecology | <p>Prout is the acronym for the Progressive Utilization Theory, a new socio-economic paradigm proposed by the late philosopher and spiritual master Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar. It proposes the maximum utilization and rational distribution of all physical, psychic and spiritual resources, for the dynamic progress and equilibrium for all beings.</p> | |
| Politics | <p>Political democracy requires a population that is well educated, with a high standard of morality and a keen socio-economic consciousness. Otherwise money can manipulate elections and corrupt politicians. Corruption and mismanagement in the past has resulted in a crushing external debt that reduces social services to pay exorbitant interest.</p> | |
| Science | <p>Economic democracy means regional, democratic control of resources, ceilings on the super accumulation of wealth, employee ownership and cooperative management of medium-scale economic enterprises, and guaranteed employment with sufficient wages for purchasing basic necessities--food, clothing, housing, education and health care. An ideal constitution should guarantee these rights and prevent financial exploitation.</p> | |
| Culture | <p>Venezuela is today at a critical juncture: though wealthy in natural and mineral resources, millions of its people suffer in desperate poverty. Selfish greed has created a tremendous gap between the rich and the poor. Materialism is rapidly destroying our natural environment with no thought for the future. There is need for deep structural transformation. Prout offers a new socio-economic paradigm that provides social justice for all based on human and spiritual values.</p> | |
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Below are some very brief points that we believe should be included in the new constitution:

CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

1. Every person is guaranteed the five minimum necessities of life: food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care.
2. Every person has the right to a job with adequate purchasing power.
3. Cultural expressions and indigenous languages must be protected.
4. The country's bio-diversity and endangered species must be protected, and pollution of the air, water and land is prohibited.
5. Spiritual and religious practices for self-realization must be protected.
6. No expression of these rights can be allowed to violate cardinal human values.
7. Three socio-political principles must be guaranteed:
 - a) people should not be allowed to lose their jobs until and unless alternative employment can be arranged for them;
 - b) people should never be forced to convert from one religion to another;
 - c) no one's mother (native) tongue should be suppressed.
8. The penal code must be based on universally accepted cardinal human values such as the right to a decent life. Capital punishment is banned.
9. Quality education must be guaranteed for all and free of political interference. This includes objective knowledge, ethics, character building, creativity, spirit of cooperation and service, and self-knowledge.
10. We are all members of one human family without divisions. No person can be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, language, beliefs, sexual orientation, origin, or health status.

THE ECONOMY

Economic democracy is essential to eliminate poverty and continually elevate the standard of living of everyone. For this reason, the following policies should be implemented:

1. Private enterprise will be permitted and encouraged for small-scale businesses that produce non-essential items.
2. Most enterprises will be run as cooperatives. Industrial and agricultural, producers and consumers coops will produce essential

items.

3. Key industries will be administered by the government.

4. A ceiling on income and wealth will be established to prevent superaccumulation and economic exploitation.

5. Raw materials should not be exported out of the country. Rather they should be processed or refined in the local region and then sold for local consumption. The excess can then be traded or sold abroad.

6. The banking system should be run as cooperatives, while the Central Bank will be controlled by the government. Money should be based on proportional quantity of gold bullion.

7. In addition to the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of the government, there should be the addition of an independent financial department. This will monitor government spending and publicize the strengths and weaknesses of its programs. This department will keep the accounts of the other three branches and prevent corruption. All of these powers should function independently.

8. The first priority of the government shall be to guarantee the production of the five minimum necessities to all people at accessible prices. Each region of the country must be made self-sufficient in these five necessities.

9. Impoverished regions will be developed especially through the development of agricultural cooperatives, agro-industries and agrico-industries. This decentralization of the economy will create economic democracy, in which the local people will make all economic planning. Foreigners may not interfere in economic planning. Profits may not be exported out of the country, but rather should be re-invested for the development of the country.

10. Income tax should be abolished, rather tax should be placed on the production of goods.

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