

II Cambridge, 15-17 September 2005: *The Moral and political foundations of social justice in an interdependent world*

Attendance

Twenty-six participants, including two persons working at the United Nations in New York.

Themes and questions included in the agenda

Theme 1: What are the causes of the current aggravation of inequalities and of the apparent neglect of the idea of social justice?

- *Are there in the spirit of the time, in the dominant philosophical and political culture, features that contribute to the erosion of the concept, practice, and appeal of social justice?*
- *Has the notion of social justice been transformed since its formation by the European Enlightenment and the socialist movements issued from the industrial revolution?*
- *Is there a weakening of the belief in **Homo aequalis** and a resurgence of **Homo hierarchicus**?*
- *What is the prevalent perception of the notions of equity and equality in the circles of power and intellectual influence?*

Theme 2: What would be the consequences of a continuation of the trend towards more inequality in the distribution of income and wealth among social groups and classes and among countries?

- *Would more inequality –within countries and among countries- become morally acceptable and politically tolerable if the reduction of poverty, as envisioned in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and in the Millennium Development Goals, were to be achieved?*
- *Or, would it create in any case dual societies and a dual world?*
- *How such societies would be maintained and which order would prevail in such a world?*
- *Which conception of social justice is implied in the goal of striving for a peaceful and prosperous world community?*

Theme 3: What is the rationale for advocating the pursuit of social justice in today's world?

- *Are pragmatic reasons such as the prevention of social unrest, or the requirements of a broad-based economy morally sufficient and politically convincing?*

- *Is justice in all its forms both an individual virtue and a critical ingredient of any society?*
- *Should the call for social justice be anchored in a conception of human nature, or in natural law, or in the demands of Reason as in the Kantian categorical imperative, or in the requirements of a revealed religion, or, “simply” in the exigencies of the sympathy and responsibility that every human being –and most particularly those in a position of power – should feel for the “Other”? Apart from revisiting the moral foundations of social justice, should greater attention be given to the implications and limits of widely accepted values, such as competition and economic openness?*
- *Could social justice be conceived as the other face of individual liberty and economic freedom?*

Theme 4: What are the means for pursuing social justice in an interdependent world and globalized economy?

- *What is the margin of maneuver of national governments with regard to the shaping of their economic and social structures and policies?*
- *Could an accurate picture be drawn of the influence on social justice of the various international and transnational forces, arrangements and institutions that are now present on the world scene?*
- *Which international or global institutions could be re-oriented, or strengthened, or created to give a new impetus to the promotion of social justice in the world?*

Highlights of the debate

Two substantive introductions were made.

Social justice is a concept and a rallying political slogan born in Europe with the enormous economic and social changes associated with the industrial revolution. It dominated the Western political consciousness and practice in the decades following World War II, when the conjunction of social-democratic and Christian-democratic currents created solid majorities on the left and center-left of the political spectrum. At that time, far-reaching distributive and redistributive measures were taken to reduce inequalities and inequities, and social justice was seen as inseparable from the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. There were serious problems, however, including the following: in its relations with its colonies and then with the Third World the West had a rather poor record in putting in practice what it proclaimed being universally fair and just; communist regimes, notably the Soviet Union and China, were having totalitarian policies on behalf of equality and social justice;

European democracies themselves had sometimes difficulties harmonizing social justice with economic justice in its entrepreneurial dimension, putting excessive reliance on public initiative and control; and, perhaps partly for this very last reason, the concept of social justice never took a strong hold in the Anglo-Saxon political culture.

The great ideological and political transformation that swept the world at the end of the 20th century and which was the advent of neo-liberalism or globalization pushed aside social justice both as an ideal and as a legitimate framework for policy making. Freedom, most particularly economic freedom, became the overarching political objective. Distributive and redistributive policies became tentative and their financing through progressive systems of taxation were questioned. Income related inequalities increased in most countries – “developed” and “developing”- and inequalities in the distribution of opportunities for access to employment and essential social services, also increased. This is a trend that started in the mid 1980s and which is continuing. And social justice has largely disappeared from the political language. At the United Nations, only a few non-governmental organizations are referring to it. At the same time, progress is on the whole still being made on matters of equality of rights – notably the rights of women and the rights of minorities -, on issues of social equality – although the new emerging class of cosmopolitan capitalists and managers is rapidly securing its own privileges – and, most importantly, on questions of economic freedom and economic justice as the spreading of the basic tenets of the market economy gives to a growing number of people the possibility to exert an activity and to be rewarded financially and socially for such activity.

It seems that freedom, real or expected, make people tolerate high levels of inequality in income and wealth. A number of facts, however, should serve as warnings to those who are inclined to put social justice in the museum of failed ideals: at a certain level of income inequality those at the bottom of the ladder cease to enjoy and even to comprehend their rights and societies become fragmented; the same occurs at the international level when the gap that separates rich from poor countries is widening and its reduction is no longer seen as a priority; economic justice is in jeopardy when the concentration of economic, financial and political power in a few nations and private hands goes unchecked; wealth loses its legitimacy when the social duties attached to its possession are no longer fulfilled; high inequalities of all types, greed and selfishness on the part of the privileged and powerful lead to violence and to the militarization of the world. With social justice, democracy is also perishing. It is therefore urgent to rediscover practical ways of reconciling justice and freedom.

That inequality and poverty are indeed increasing was the starting point of the second introduction. There has been a shift of orientation in the 1980s and social justice was pushed aside. Four causes might be identified: economists moved from Keynesianism to monetarism and applied the Chicago school precepts first in the Chile of Pinochet and then in the United Kingdom of Margaret Thatcher and the United States of Ronald Reagan; the collapse of the communist system in 1989-1990 eliminated the only alternative or challenge to global capitalism; rapid and revolutionary changes in production eroded the power of labor in relation to capital and created new inequalities in knowledge and technologies; these in turn led to financial globalization and to changes in the role of States from the protection of their citizens to the serving of capitalist interests. Such developments were not written in History. They were facilitated by decisions. Yet, governments say that there is no alternative to neo-liberalism.

But there are deeper reasons for this ideological and political shift. In the pursuit of both liberty and equality tensions emerge when efforts to correct inequalities cause restrictions on individual liberty. For Locke, equality is equality before the law and justice is legal justice. The role of the state is limited to establishing and implementing the law. By contrast, in the Rousseau tradition, the goal is the collective good and individual liberty is always conditioned by this social good. Currently, Locke has been made much more extreme by Hayek, and if the debate continue – as for instance between Rawls and Nozick, it is Hayek and his view of the human condition and of the role of public authorities who is winning. Neo-liberalism is now mainstream. Instead of social contract, social responsibility and redistribution, as for instance in the European Charter, individual self-interest, access to wealth and power, competition and consumption are the basic values defining a good life. Social justice, together with compassion, altruism, solidarity, community are relegated in the domain of “soft” values. This is in sharp contrast with the “Golden Rule” and also with the “love thy neighbor” of Locke.

And yet the Golden Rule is common to all religions and is truly of universal understanding. It is therefore time to mobilize the moral resources of religions, traditions and philosophies. The initiative of Hans Kung to draft a “Declaration toward a Global Ethic” and to draw a universal moral code is replete with difficulties but should be pursued. Efforts in this direction should be multiplied. Economic power has to be used to serve humanity instead of being an instrument for domination. The world needs mutual respect instead of competition, modesty and moderation instead of consumption and greed. Nothing less than a change in consciousness is required to advance social justice.

The observation made in these introductory statements of *a general aggravation of inequalities since the last quarter of the 20th century* was not questioned. Some precisions were given with regard to the situation in the United States of America. Trickle-down economics represents the moral side of neo-liberalism. Yet, never has a theory proved so wrong. In the last two decades, per capita growth has increased by 85% in the United States. During the same period, the median wage of male workers has remained stagnant. Women had to join the labor force. People are working harder and the quality of their life-style is deteriorating. Only the top 5% of the population has benefited from the fruits of economic growth. Inequalities have of course increased and are now staggering, and absolute poverty has also increased.

Comments were also made on the situation in China. Commonly seen as a formidable emerging economic power, having integrated the world economy through adhesion to the World Trade Organization, having produced a new class of entrepreneurs and capitalists and reduced the proportion of its population in extreme poverty, modern China is also remarkable for its lack of care for its natural environment and for a wide opening of income and wealth inequality. Could it be that in China – as well as in most countries of Asia – the interest in the ideas of equality and social justice came and went with the influence of the Western currents of socialism and communism that were at odds with a culture (s) that is (are) fundamentally hierarchical? This question was raised again at the meeting on multiple modernities in Beijing. (see below, VIII).

Still on the diagnosis of an aggravation of inequalities across the world, it was noted that a majority of European countries remain attached to the welfare state political philosophy. In spite of the pressure coming from the United States and from the dominant school of economists, not to mention international managers and consultants, the European political elites have not blindly embraced the neo-liberal agenda. It is indeed true that inequalities in income and wealth have not – not yet? – reached in Europe the level of the United States, retorted another participant, but the models are not very different. Social democrats as well as conservatives have their eyes riveted on stock markets. European transnational companies operate in the same manner than their American or, for that matter, Indian or South African sisters. Also, Europe and the United States do not have a fundamentally different attitude towards the South. In general, one should not attach too much importance to political nuances among the powerful. President Nixon did not destroy the Great Society project and, internationally, a lot of negative things happened during the Clinton presidency. There is a new view of the world, shared by many, ignoring issues of justice both domestically and internationally, and it is this view that benevolent public intellectuals have to deal with.

This is not to say that all members of the Triglav Circle share similar judgments on this “new view of the world”. To remain within the focus of this particular meeting, some see inequalities as regrettable when pushing those at the bottom on the brink of poverty, but are not prepared to question the type of market economy that produce such inequalities. Inequalities are unavoidable. They are probably even desirable for social harmony. They are in any case the price to be paid for economic freedom, entrepreneurship and technological innovation. Inequities however, perceived differently at different times and in different societies, have to be corrected through appropriate public policies, notably by creating as much equality of opportunities as possible and by protecting the most vulnerable members of society, but welfare or “providential” states have exposed their limits. Individual responsibility, the capacity to take risks, dynamism, are virtues. Private charity, in particular from religious organizations, will always be necessary to complement public policy, but to transform compassion into a rationale for public action can easily lead to complacency and paternalism.

Others see the dominant political culture as a return to the early days of capitalism. Today as yesterday –“yesterday” meaning pre-crisis of 1929 and pre new-deal for the United States and pre-rise of the communist, socialist and social- democrat parties in the case of Europe – the owners of capital and managers of corporation have the upper hand on defining the objectives of society and distributing the fruits of economic activity. Capital and the corporate ethos, with the strong help of the media and the active complicity of the governments, dominate labor and the masses of the people who are treated as consumers. As at the end of the 19th century, the world is open to this powerful class and ideology, but with incomparably stronger technical and political means, and counter-forces have not yet coagulated. There is indeed a difference between inequalities and inequities, but history – and the current situation in many parts of the world – show that a lack of interest of governments and the ruling elites in the reduction of inequalities is bound to generate severe inequities. And compassion is in fact the disposition of the heart – equivalent to benevolence, or empathy -- without which social justice, and justice in general, are abstract notions. By their protests, critiques and proposals, organizations of the civil society are indispensable. But they are not sufficient. Only public institutions and laws, including international laws and regulations, could achieve a new balance between capital and labor.

Another difference of perspective that surfaced at this meeting was the relative importance attached to the national and international dimensions of social justice. There are inequalities, notably of income, among the inhabitants of a country that are assessed through a variety of measurements, in particular the

method of the Gini coefficient. Using such measurements, international comparisons are made of levels of inequality affecting the population of different countries. Thirdly, the relative position of the countries themselves on the international scene is identified, for instance through their share of world trade, or through the proportion of total foreign investments they receive, or, more qualitatively, through indicators of participation in the management of the world economy, and judgments are made on the degree of fairness or unfairness of the prevailing international arrangements.

The heirs of the traditional European left are most concerned about inequalities and inequities within their own society. A reason for this focus is that there are at the national level clearly identifiable policy instruments for addressing breaches of social justice. The new citizens of the world, willing to transcend nationalities and cultures to privilege the notion of human family, are most interested in inequalities between people across borders. They deplore the emergence of a new privileged class associated with the rise of global capitalism and paralleled with the growth of a new proletariat made of unskilled and often migrant workers. And there are those who are particularly focused on the gross and long lasting injustices that mark the relations between the “North” and the “South”, the “developed” and the “developing” or “least-developed” parts of the world.

It was pointed out that there are many connections between the various forms of inequality and injustice that are unfolding at the national, international and global levels. One is the treatment by the ruling elites of the great uncertainty that is brought about by the liberalization – notably financial -- of the world economy. To deal with uncertainty, corporations and the public institutions that support them have chosen to maximize their own freedom of action while restricting drastically the margin of maneuver of others. Outsourcing, the attacks on security of employment and long term contracts for employees, the insistence on “flexibility” of the work-force, are among the elements of this strategy. Companies minimize their commitments to increase their freedom. A hierarchy of maneuverability is created, with the most powerful having the least commitments and the poor and marginalized having the most insecurity. People might have jobs, but no certainty and no security. Such circumstances cannot create families that will produce citizens with good values and the likely consequences for the future are disrupted family structures and unstable communities.

The point that the world view, or “revolution” launched in the 1980s was indeed the product of decisions (the Copenhagen seminars had emphasized the distinction between globalization as a *process* and globalization as a *project*) was explicated from several angles.

In the United States, the business community took the decision in the 1970s to organize itself politically to disseminate its views, notably on the openings of foreign borders to trade and investments and generally on the primacy of market values versus welfare values. It was a complete success from the Reagan administration and onward. Worldwide, employers organizations such as the chambers of commerce, prestigious gatherings of the rich and powerful such as the annual meetings of the World Economic Forum, (started in Davos, Switzerland, at the beginning of the 1990s) and very official meetings such as those of the Group of Eight, disseminated across the world and across social classes the credo of neo-liberalism. As often noted at meetings of the Triglav Circle this credo has an immediate and strong appeal as it emphasizes freedom and promise for all the amenities and the riches enjoyed in a country, the United States of America, which for masses of people is a new El Dorado.

Also controlled by large corporations, the media, notably those with a global reach, have played and continue to play a powerful role in propagating this neo-liberal doctrine. Televisions, newspapers, advertisements convey to millions and millions of people across the planet the sentiment that consumption is the road to happiness and that peoples and nations are successful if their income and national product increase. Is there a chance that the mass media world could be the vehicle for another message, a richer more humanist message? Can responsible journalism be an ally for countervailing powers? One answer to these questions was not optimistic. Media managers have to look at the “bottom line”; they have to sell advertising and this is done by proving that the public is using/buying their media products; and the public wants entertainment; then, “serious” stories with a “dull” content are hard to sell. The relation between corporations and media may not be seen as a conspiracy, but there is certainly a very strong alliance, even symbiosis, between these two powers. Another answer was more nuanced. Not everywhere are the press and the television totally controlled by corporations. Some governments remain interested in educating citizens, rather than consumers. The example of a South Korean television program on “the five virtues” was mentioned. The interest of young people in particular in issues pertaining to the common good, notably the protection of the environment, is generally underestimated. Those who are looking at the “market” for media programs will hopefully realize that the good, the intelligent and the serious is of interest to viewers. And, the concentration of media power could still be resisted and broken.

International institutions also participated, sometimes very actively, to the spreading of the neo-liberal orthodoxy. It was noted that in such institutions – for instance the World Bank, or the IMF, or the OECD – members of their secretariats are always inclined to adhere to mainstream views. When a new

orthodoxy emerges, usually carried by the dominant powers of the time, conformism and ritualization of the language quickly follow. Key concepts and key words have then to be used, giving a sense of belonging to the group of those who “know”, who have “understood”, and securing recognition and promotion. After all, the courage to dissent and to stand against the current are not attributes that large institutions, whether national or international, public or private, expect from their members. In the United Nations, which, because of its mandate and universality of its membership, ought to be the best placed international organization to reflect a plurality of views on human affairs, the keywords of the day are “reform”, “accountability”, “efficiency” and “operational activities.” The substantive work of the Secretariat, notably its research capacity, has for years been given a low priority and intellectual and political conformism has grown accordingly. As noted in the previous Triglav gathering the quest for social justice is no longer part of the language of the United Nations.

What can be done then to help reviving the ideal and practice of social justice? Or, should one refer to justice, without qualifier, so as to avoid socialist connotations that are off-putting to some liberals and to most conservatives? John Rawls, who is a liberal but definitely not a neo-conservative, constructed *A Theory of Justice* on the basis of “Justice as Fairness” and in his work “social justice” is sometimes used as a synonym of “justice”. In any case, for those who are concerned with the state of the world and with the strategies of the actors with the power to influence and create events, the struggle for more social justice is not separable from the struggle to enrich, or reorient, or replace the dominant ideology. And, in this struggle, it is the vocation of the Triglav Circle to focus on ideas and on values, and to assume that societal changes, desirable or undesirable, require changes in mindsets.

Then, to repeat the question, how to revive the idea of social justice? Or, put differently, what sort of moral basis for social justice ought to be put forward? Several elements of answer were given to this question.

Social justice is good economics and good for development. A fairly equal distribution of income stimulates the demand for goods and services, equal access to education provides a competent work force, and a general sense of equity in society favor social cohesion and therefore development. It was said that development with equity calls for five priorities: education, from basic to university level; healthcare; land reform, and, in general, access to the means of production; access to infrastructure, i.e. water, sanitation, electricity, transports; and appropriate labor market policies. It was also said that this classical argument of a direct affinity between equity and prosperity is perhaps true *in abstracto* but is not supported by facts, or that, at least, there is considerable

counter evidence to such link. Brazil, for instance, has a very skewed distribution of income and wealth and a high rate of economic growth. So does the United States. European countries that have managed during the last decades to keep a fairly equal distribution of income have also experienced mediocre rates of economic growth. China, during the last ten/fifteen years, has had a phenomenal growth and a huge increase of inequalities. It seems that the link between social justice and development is in the normative realm and indeed there are examples of societies successfully pursuing both, but equity, unfortunately, is not a condition for the material prosperity of a nation, or of the world.

Social justice is good for peace and security. It seems indeed true that liberal democratic and social democratic regimes, in their realization of a harmonious mix of freedom and social justice, have little risks of violent internal conflicts and little propensity for aggressive external policies. In such cases, justice, prosperity and peace coexist happily. But beyond this, the link between social justice, or development, and peace is tenuous. To remain within the contemporary world scene, several of the worst conflicts of the post cold war period involved countries which were neither particularly unequal in their distribution of income, wealth and opportunities, nor particularly underdeveloped. A case in point is the former Yugoslavia. And the same could be said of the countries of the African continent having experienced extreme violence. It would also be too simple to explain terrorism by situations of inequality lived as inequitable or by poverty. Objective or perceived injustice, in a broad sense, national or personal sense of humiliation, retaliation for an offense or aggression (again real or perceived), fanaticism, are probably among the explanations for acts of terrorism. It was also said that “horizontal” inequalities and injustices, namely those that are between groupings defined by race, ethnicity, culture, or religion, or even region, might explain extreme forms of political violence.

Social justice is an intrinsic part of the social contract that ought to keep together members of a community. Social justice presupposes a community. Humans are vulnerable as individuals and look to community as a source of protection, security and opportunities for personal and social relations. If not coercive, such community has to be based on equality of rights and on equity in the distribution of income, wealth and opportunities for personal and social fulfillment. When these conditions are lacking or in decline the social contract is broken and numerous social problems, including absence of civic virtues, crime and violence ensue. One underestimates the depth and universality of the sense of the fair and the unfair that people have across cultures and continents. In fact, the sense of fairness is one of those common features that allows us to speak of a human family. Thus, the current neglect of the concrete dimensions

of social justice is immoral and politically dangerous. There are already obvious signs in different parts of the world of communities deprived of social justice and kept together by coercion, manipulation and fear. It might be noted that in his foreword to the Declaration adopted by the Copenhagen Summit the Secretary General of the United Nations spoke of a “new social contract at the global level(...) reflecting a sense of solidarity within nations and between nations.”

Social justice is simply in the best interest of all. Self-interest calls for fair arrangements with one’s fellow human beings. If we expect fairness we must act fairly. Collectively, the current path leads to suicide, including through wars and the destruction of the environment. In such statement, the current form of globalization is seen as a dominant force having pushed aside social justice and promoting crude values of competition, social Darwinism and exploitation of the weak and of nature. Actually, said another participant, enlightened self-interest is a minimum requirement that is still not good enough to confront the challenges humankind faces, including the neglect of social justice. We need to go beyond the Enlightenment and the manner in which this movement saw the human condition. There is a conflict in the Western thought between a current represented by Jurgen Habermas who believes that the Enlightenment ideal has to be realized and a current led by Jacques Derrida who does not believe in such a project. It is necessary to go beyond the terms of such opposition. The Enlightenment has two major blind spots: the spiritual realm and nature. Secular humanism is indeed de-spirited and de-natured. Many liberal minds, including John Rawls, show too little concern for these limitations of a doctrine that, albeit its appeal and superb achievements, is at the origin of globalization and its flaws and excesses. The pursuit of social justice has to be more than self-interested.

Social justice requires the advent of a spiritual humanism. At a first level, this is the call for a mobilization of the spiritual resources of the world that was already evoked above in the Highlights of the February 2005 Triglav meeting. Needed is broad humanistic vision, a spiritual consciousness that is neither ethnocentric nor anthropocentric. Views of great thinkers of different traditions – Greek, Jewish, Christian, Islamist as well as Taoist, Buddhist, Confucian and Hindu –need to be retrieved. Part of this effort is for Western intellectuals to understand Islam, a religion whose scholars made the renaissance possible and which is part of the Western civilization. In another most important domain, this broad humanistic vision demands a better understanding of feminism by the great monotheist religions, particularly Catholicism and Islam, but also by other traditions such as Confucianism. To contribute to the shaping of a broad humanistic vision of life in society and in the world is the vocation of the Triglav Circle.

At a second level, perhaps even more demanding and yet in many ways simpler, spiritual humanism was defined as the humble, unassuming and yet relentless application of love as the organizing principle of all human relations, with the self, with others, with nature and with the universe. In pursuance of the debate initiated in February 2005, it was noted that, perhaps as a reaction to the spirit and excesses of the 1960s, love and all forms of affectivity have been relegated in the domain of the private and reduced to their sexual expression. And sexuality is increasingly part of the “marketisation” of all aspects of personal and social life. It is as if the dominant capitalist culture was anxious to promote the “chestless man” evoked by C. S. Lewis; as if the human person could be reduced to a life of consumption and aggression; as if empathy, altruism and benevolence were not fundamental features of human nature. When Reason is divorced from Love, and when both lose their links with the transcendental, materialism, despair and violence are on the horizon of humankind. Is it indeed hardly surprising that social justice is being ejected from a culture centered on technological progress, efficiency and competition. And, obviously, the current revival of religion in the form of various types of fundamentalism and millenarianism makes matters only worst. These religious movements ignore both Reason and Love and by reducing “God” to some anthropomorphic entity or some cover-up for aggressive objectives they comfort liberal humanists in their temptation to push aside religion and, with it, spirituality. Such temptation ought to be resisted, for all humanists, beyond their particular sensibilities and leanings (liberals, socialists, secularists, atheists, spiritualists, adepts of different faiths, and those refusing any qualifier to their humanism), have an enormous task to accomplish. If, for instance, the true meaning of words and concepts such as love and justice is not taught in schools and universities, it is difficult to expect society to be made of compassionate and responsible citizens.

In the same vein, it was emphasized that progress of justice in the world is impossible without progress in individual virtue, this virtue that might also be called the moral and spiritual quality of the person. Self-discipline, empathy and sympathy have to be nurtured. When Locke refers to love as the organizing principle of society, he speaks as a rationalist. Benevolence and altruism are the sentiments that give shape and force to social justice. And there is also a urgent need to redefine individual freedom. As long as freedom will be construed as the removal of all obstacles to the expression of the self, there will be no concern for the other and therefore no possibility of a harmonious society. To use the expression of Dag Hammarskjöld, freedom demands a “mature conscience”.

The suggestion that “Love” should be an integral part of the public discourse and an organizing principle of society (including a desirable and probably

necessary world society) prompted three sets of criticism. Firstly, love, even taken very comprehensively to include Eros and all forms of Agape, or selfless love (the latter being very close to the Kantian “practical love”), remains an individual and unilateral act. It is, in essence, gratuitous. It does not result from an obligation. What is so given can always be taken back. But social justice requires a legalistic framework. It requires contractual arrangements, both legal and explicit as well as implicit, the latter being felt obligations by all parties concerned, and such obligations resulting from tradition and culture. Such a framework and rationale for social justice is less fragile than if it were to be based on sentiments. Like emotions, these are fugitive and reversible. Love can be followed by hate. Social justice demands a reflexive, deliberate and contractual approach to human relationships.

Secondly, love, as other sentiments and emotionally charged facets of human behavior, leads easily to deceit, pretense and hypocrisy. One should not neglect the wisdom of the old adage that “hell is paved with good intentions.” It is all too easy to affirm one’s love for mankind and at the same time to participate in actions and policies that are objectively at odds with the basic tenets of social justice. “Realism”, “constraints”, “exceptional circumstances”, “laws of the market”, “exigencies of the international competition”, “war on terrorism” are among the ready-made excuses for the bracketing of apparently noble but hollow sentiments. Many “good” and “loving” people are operating in the national and international organizations and governments that are justly criticized for promoting an unfair and ultimately coercive world order. Good people are perfectly able to adhere to bad and unjust policies. These people are actually very useful for “image” and “public relations”. And many crusades of all types have been conducted on behalf of shamelessly used lofty ideals.

Thirdly, say the liberal and secular humanist, simple and non-controversial notions such as human decency are sufficient to ground and justify concrete acts and policies aiming at social justice. Love is indeed a fundamental dimension of our common humanity, with metaphysical as well as biological facets. It is possible that practices of social justice are ultimately explainable by the actualization of this sentiment, Love. But it is not necessary or useful to so unfold a chain of causes or explanations for private and public acts of social justice. Not all controversies are enlightening. Good and fair policies can be designed and implemented by technocrats who would not recognize themselves in “spiritual humanism.” The Nordic countries, for example, practicing a high level of equality and social justice at home and being generous in their aid for developing countries, are known for their extremely sober approach to public affairs. The Development Minister responsible for convening the Copenhagen Seminars used to say that the rationale for the Official Development Assistance given by Denmark was a matter of “human decency”,

or, simply, “it is the right thing to do.” Sentiments, including love for humankind, might be there at their root of social-democrat humanism, but it should remain at the level of personal motivation.

Such questions on the best approach to an enrichment of the public discourse are at the core of the debates of the Circle. And they will continue to be raised, albeit in different guises and forms. At this particular gathering, a number of replies, or rejoinders, were given to those with moderate taste for spiritual humanism.

To emphasize love or empathy as the foundation of a good society and a peaceful world is not to profess “angelism” and to assume that a perfect humanity is possible. It is essentially to refuse fatalism and to work for a better world with a purpose and an ideal. It is to recognize that human beings are capable of transcending their selfishness. Fraternity is based on love and fraternity is mutual. Solidarity is also a rejection of individualism. And, in general, one should avoid the temptation of dualism and of dichotomies which are too simple and dangerous. Love and law are not alternatives. One should try to formulate the argument in favor of creating a socially just world system from both the love and the social contract perspectives, so that they can then be blended into a single stronger argument. And love should not be seen only as charity but as a broad source of human flourishing.

If love is synonymous with empathy, many objections of liberal humanists to the use of sentiments in public life fall by the wayside. There are indeed habits of the heart that are also habits of the mind. For example, civic republicanism was a vigorous tradition of the United States and a major source of the conception of social justice that prevailed in this country. Jefferson was an eminent representative of this culture. The assumption was that people can practice civic virtue and empathy with their fellow citizens if they are exposed early enough to these habits of the mind/heart in families and in schools. It was noted that there are signs of a revival of this culture in the United States, for example in the new urbanism that insist on neighborhoods and small communities.

Love and reason are certainly not enemies. To the contrary, the pursuit of rationality leads to territories that can be mapped only by psychology and metaphysics. A simple example is the attachment bond between parents and a newborn child. It has been established that this bond is crucial to the neurological development of the brain. Mother love is critical to such development in the first few years of life and, without it, certain capacities do not develop and the child is permanently damaged. What children learn from that bond and love has a great influence on their adult behavior and relationships. A

sense of self, an ability to live in community, a sense of responsibility, depend on that mother love. A capacity to love and to trust others also depend on that love. Making this love possible is therefore a duty of societies that want to be healthy. A family life conducive to the expression of mother love should be encouraged. And many current trends and economic strategies are destructive to the conditions that nurture families. Love and reason should be united to correct or stop such trends.

The Western mind should indeed go beyond the difficulties of introducing love into the renewed mindset that is necessary to change a course of thoughts and events leading to catastrophes. Love is but is not only a personal emotional feeling. The world religions approach to love is thru the golden rule, thru a bond in which the knowledge of the self comes thru the knowledge of others, thru a mutuality. In the Bible, justice is faithfulness to community needs and standards. But Aristotle developed another notion and the New Testament unfolds justice further into a compatibility with love. Love and justice, far from being opposed, always go together.

Social justice requires a power that is legitimate and exercised with wisdom. It was first recalled that so-called “soft values” such as compassion and generosity have power. Many people, including some of those in a position to influence others and the course of events are motivated by such values. In a period dominated by raw power and by ideas borrowed from a vulgar version of Darwinism we tend to forget that the spirit of the time has been and could again be different. After all Kenneth Galbraith was representative of mainstream current of thoughts for many decades. And Gandhi was and remain a world figure. His teaching might be revived. For such and other revivals and innovative thoughts, public intellectuals have a great responsibility. And political and corporate elites have the power to lead the world towards chaos or renaissance. Leadership and its quality are of fundamental importance. This is a truism that is too often neglected. Good ideas and good intentions, including those inspired by spiritual humanism will never be sufficient to modify the course of events. Leaders have to be influenced by these ideas. At least in the United States, there appears to be an increasing divorce between those in power and the intellectual elites. Academics are marginalized. And the liberal elites seem to suffer from a lack of confidence. Perhaps also because of the *de facto* lack of pluralism of the medias, a coherent alternative liberal discourse to the dominant neo-conservative ethos is not audible. And, still in the United States but also in other parts of the world, intellectual and political elites of a liberal leaning seem to have lost communication with the lower and middle classes that represent the great majority of the citizenry. Questions of security and questions of identity seem to be important elements to explain a divorce that is easily exploited by demagogues and authoritarian regimes. Then, the battered

intellectual and political liberal elites have to examine the reasons why their adversaries find such audience among the people that liberal ideals and policies were supposed to serve. But defeat has to be seen as temporary and self-examination should not be confused with the abandonment of principles and ideals that constitute the core of humanism.

There is the seemingly irresistible power of capital. The proponents of this power -- the managers, consultants, executives, bankers, financial wizards and politicians depending on the financing of corporations – are also its servants. Max Weber and his *Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism* should be meditated. Weber said that wealth is difficult for Christians and that a cloak becomes an “iron cage.” The power of capital is so strong that even those who benefit from it feel victimized by it.

How to convince the powerful – individuals, corporations, nations – to part with their power? It is perhaps a matter of persuasion, based on self interest or more noble motives, but it is also and mainly a matter of political struggle, was an answer provided to this rather rhetorical question. There are in the world, notably in Europe, forces and movements that are fighting global capitalism and the marketisation of the world. The “No” to the European Constitution given by the citizens of France and the Netherlands was in part a rejection of this “end of history.” And there are movements of farmers opposing the power of the agro-industrial corporations and their imposition of genetically modified seeds. These movements operate outside the limits of the political system and use illegal means such as the burning of fields planted with G.M.O. This might be deplored but illegal political protests in otherwise liberal democracies suggest that political parties and parliaments do not fulfill their role of countervailing powers. When governments are too sensitive to the pressures of corporate interests or identify such interests with the general interest, and when political parties have comparable platforms and discourses, the only alternative to passive submission seems to be extra-parliamentary and spectacular dissent. And, at the world level, there is no representative assembly of the “peoples of the world” where critics of the globalization ideology and deeds could voice their disagreements. Demonstrations and protests that started in Seattle seem therefore to play a legitimate and hopefully role.

This position prompted a sharp rebuttal from another participant familiar with both academia and the exercise of power. Anti-global movements are dangerous because they are essentially nationalistic and sometimes racist. They refuse a global world but are unable to propose an alternative. For there is no alternative but various forms of obscurantism. People’s resentment is used for blaming scapegoats and for indulging in various forms of demagoguery. The “small is beautiful” movement is wonderful for developing empathy and habits of the heart, but does it mean, for example, that Western democracies have to

subsidize their small farmers forever? The idealization of the past is a permanent and dangerous temptation. One cannot go back to the past, however charming or dreadful this past was. One should not forget that words like “natural” and “organic” have been abundantly used by racists and national socialists of the 1920s and 1930s. If we use these words, let’s define them carefully.

This dialogue could not continue for lack of time. It will be resumed sooner or later. Including thru the discussion of the role of the civil society that took place in Santa Barbara (see VI below)

In any event, what is essential to fully realize is that there is a moral and spiritual dimension to the exercise of power. Power corrupts. The moral dimension of the accumulation of unlimited power in the hands of international finance is glaring. There is probably not a full conspiracy, and probably many of those sharing such power operate in good faith and good conscience, but they nevertheless let themselves be exposed to the demonic aspect of power. Most cultures have religious protections for not exposing oneself to this demon, that is for avoiding excess power, for practicing moderation, for resisting the luxuriating of power that then gets out of control. Thus, beyond strategies for countervailing power, we need to rediscover the moral and spiritual resources available for fighting demonic aspects of power. Perhaps an exorcism of some sort would be appropriate for our culture of greed and domination. And those who know how to mobilize symbolic power also know how to use religion to manipulate that power. There is something highly moral behind the cool façade of rationality. We need to rehabilitate our cultural resources to maintain the viability of human life and of nature in view of the powers that we seem to think of as all powerful.

Social justice, in addition to compassion, benevolence and individual self-restraint, requires a scrupulous attention to facts. At the individual level, including for public intellectuals, this is intellectual honesty. Its opposite is complacency, lack of curiosity, difficulty of accepting facts that contradict one’s views. At a political level, it is respect for data and observations that are produced by agencies that are public but independent. Its opposite is propaganda and falsification. The current period is very ideological and therefore people and their governments are more than willing to ignore or falsify those aspects of reality that do not square with their prejudices, convictions and interests. An example can be found in healthcare and the most appropriate policies to promote it. Those who have an ideological bias in favor of private appropriation and control of the means to provide healthcare have managed, against all evidence, to convince their citizens that private care is less expensive, more efficient and more humane than public health services. In

particular they have hidden the fact that the exercise of private traditional medicine remain possible precisely in the countries that have socialize, that is financed by redistributive tax systems, their health systems. Honesty, in all its forms, is a foundation of justice.