

NEW EUROPEAN



**Biannual Views
of International Affairs
Autumn 2012**

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An Alternative to a Debt-driven Economy

W ithin the past decade we have seen the continuing turmoil within the Eurozone, several governments without money sufficient to govern, leading banks collapsing and in Britain the number on unemployment benefit rising to three million. This should be enough to persuade us that our form of capitalism has gone awry.

Yet the worst is still to come. The UK's national debt has reached such a height that to pay the interest the government has to borrow even more money. Corporate debt is so great that only a minority of companies can discharge their liabilities without going into liquidation. As for personal debt, the majority of homeowners live in mortgaged properties as well as having loans or overdrafts, hire-purchase agreements and credit cards. There are now many thousands who have pay-day loans at 29% to be paid off at the end of the month. If such debts default, even for a short period, the the amount owed can easily end up multiplied by several factors.

Conventional economists say the coming crash might be averted if the government increases the money supply by 5% a year, so that after ten years of inflation will devalue debts by one half.

A smaller group of economists explain how this huge indebtedness has come upon us. They say that if we add up all the rents, dividends, profits, salaries and wages we receive, no matter how large the total may be it always falls short of the total cost of goods and services we buy. There is thus a wide gap and it is filled by debt. We have therefore a debt-driven economy and in the driving seat are the moneylenders.

The alternative is to have a system of credit. Foremost among these economist is Dr. Frances Hutchinson, and we are glad to say she has agreed to write for this journal. We will explore the practicalities of this alternative. *R.B.*

European Superstate: One Step Closer or Imminent Collapse?

SIR JULIAN ROSE

Jean Monnet, the founding father of the European Union, had a very particular vision of Europe's future back in 1952, and he expressed it in a letter to a colleague on 30th April that year:

"Europe's nations should be guided towards the superstate without their peoples understanding what is happening. This can be accomplished by successive steps, each disguised as having an economic purpose, but which will eventually and irreversibly lead to federation."

Here, in a nutshell, we plainly see the trickery that stands behind the fabricated 'Union' of individual nations, each of which was led to believe that its economic and social stability would prosper once it committed itself to the 'common market' and the various treaties which mark its inexorable passage to 'superstate'.

The actual mission of the founders of the EU has always been something of a chimera; Monnet's letter makes it clear however, that the motivation was both idealistic and elitist. The supranational entity was to be created "without (their) peoples understanding what is happening" following a pattern of elitist oligarchical ambition stretching back through past dynasties.

We can trace the roots of this latest 'superstate' experiment to the Schuman Plan of 1951, which was signed up to by six countries and took the form of a treaty (The Treaty of Paris) centred around coal and steel industries being placed under common management, ostensibly to prevent any recurrence of the death and destruction of the Second World War. Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg were the signatories to this treaty whose empirical purpose was stated to be ensuring that none of these countries could ever again manufacture weapons of war to be used against the other.

Then, in 1957 the same six countries expanded cooperation to other economic sectors and signed the Treaty of Rome. Thus creating the 'European Economic Community' also known as The Common Market. The UK joined up to this in 1973 under then Prime Minister Edward Heath.

The formal creation of the European Union, under the guidance of Jacques Delors, didn't occur until February 1992 under the Maastricht Treaty. It formalised the introduction of the European Parliament and European Commission, the latter gaining considerable 'management power' under Jacques Santer, its first President. Interestingly the Commission was originally to be named "The High Authority", which has strongly Masonic overtones. But this name was dropped in the 1960s.

The single currency (Euro) element of the expanding Union was launched in 1999, along with the European Central Bank. Lastly came the Lisbon Treaty of December 2009 which created the new post of President of the European Council.

A success - for whom?

Within this brief synopsis of the EU's birth and expansion, we can detect the process of creeping homogenization which reflects Jean Monnet's covert masterplan. As intended, on the surface it certainly appears that economic considerations were to the fore, notwithstanding the supposedly benign 'common' interests such as modernized infrastructure, the Common Agricultural Policy and the 'no border' agreements which were deemed to give the EU a more flowing socio-economic (and cultural) connectivity. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was supposed to ensure that no one would go hungry in the new Europe and that farming interests would be financially protected against undue volatility within the wider market. Needless to say, the subsidized monocrops and intensive livestock holdings of the CAP have proved an unmitigated disaster for traditional bio-diverse mixed family farms, food quality and the ecology of European farmland. Distorted (subsidized) trading policies have also exacted their toll on others.

What is undeniable in all this, is that Monnet's grand experiment has concentrated a very large amount of power into very few hands; and those hands are a long way removed from the hands of the labourers and workers who continue to form the majority of European Union citizens.

The creation of the single currency (Eurozone) has served to expose the fault lines that have, on more than one occasion, come to the surface of EU affairs. Whatever the founding fathers may have thought, the idea that countries as socially, culturally and economically contrasting as Greece and Germany, could find commonality via some form of 'fiscal agreement' was anything but wise.

The creation of the European Central Bank epitomizes the 'trading block' mentality of the Eurozone.

It has, as Winston Churchill once noted, brought home the fact that the EU could operate like “A United States of Europe”. A United States of Europe is just what Europe is becoming, with the President of the European Commission acting as the front man; a powerful central bank acting as Europe’s vault and a weak parliament struggling to introduce some semblance of democracy.

Within this top-heavy and highly bureaucratic regime, global banking cartels have fully exploited the underlying sense of political insecurity. The European Central bank has teamed up with the International Monetary Fund to act as central controllers of the destinies of struggling Eurozone countries. The result is a cold and soulless brand of exploitation which appears blind to anything other than the imposition of Orwellian authoritative control structures that suck dry the assets of any country foolish enough to seek its financial support.

After presiding over the collapse of various European economies, Jose Manuel Barroso has used his position as President of the European Commission to recommend the imposition of a European Superstate as the only effective medicine left to hold the troubled ‘Union’ together. Resistance to this solution is taken as an infringement of the spirit of the project and those who dare to raise their voices as ‘deniers’. Sixty years on from the date of the Monnet letter and the framework of the envisioned superstate is pushed into place.

Poisoned loan packets

As ailing Eurozone member states pledge their dwindling national assets to the voracious demands of the IMF and ECB, the interest payments that the IMF and ECB exact continue to fuel the financier led cabal’s war chest. Countries outside the Eurozone are now being asked further to top up this chest, because apparently there is not enough in it to prepare further poisoned loan packages for the next victims.

What Jean Monnet had in mind when he wrote his infamous letter, was the carefully crafted, covert instigation of an ultimate power heist. A heist which firmly installs a small band of all-powerful technocrats and oligarchs in the undisputed driving seat of one of the largest trading blocks of the planet. Under this regime, the sovereignty of nation states becomes strategically weakened and so heavily dependent upon outside economic support that it ultimately ceases to operate as a functional ‘sovereign’ system. Decisions of national importance once made via elected parliaments, are usurped by the centralized control system based in Brussels, but directly linked to London, New York, Washington, Frankfurt, Paris, Rome and Tokyo.

Any country not part of this 'club' automatically becomes sidelined as a second-class nation with little or no right to sit on key committees and influence the future. The fiscal union club is held up as the holy grail by which all nations must abide if they are to be members of the inner sanctum.

Under this regime transnational corporations, bankers and EU bureaucrats flourish, while the working citizens of the EU are imprisoned in a modern serfdom in which the banker-controlled European Commission and signed-up nation states demand that the European labour force bail out the private banks by accepting lower pay, later retirement and the loss of social services.

The Frankfurt Group

In this way, we (the people) are asked to carry the can and submit to the austerity measures imposed upon us in order that governments can bail out banks, and banks can satisfy their Eurocrat paymasters ensconced behind their mahogany desks at the European Financial Stability Agency. In close proximity also sit the shadowy 'Frankfurt Group'. According to Larry Elliot, economics correspondent of *The Guardian*, the Frankfurt Group is "an unelected cabal made up of eight people: Lagarde (IMF); Merkel; Hollande; Mario Draghi (president of ECB); José Manuel Barroso (president European Commission); Jean-Claude Juncker (chairman Eurogroup); Herman van Rompuy (president European Council) and Olli Rehn (the EU's Economic and Monetary Affairs commissioner). This group, which is accountable to no one, calls the shots in Europe."

Given the free rein which this cabal now exercises in its management of European (if not global) financial matters, its hardly surprising that *money and power* constitute the overriding theme of Eurozone ambitions. How many times have you heard, over the past few months, heads of state declaring that meetings must be concluded at such and such a time "in order to give the markets a clear message." Please note: not the people – but *the markets*. Everything, it now seems, is beholden to 'the markets'. They have become a totem to which we are all expected to bow our heads in obeisance. The pervasive consumption and growth ideology and the covert lust for power which accompanies its pre-eminence suggests a deep sickness reaching into the heart of society. A sickness which gives licence to the establishment of technocratic dictatorships and the demotion of the instinct for democracy.

Jean Monnet no doubt recognised this at the inception of the European Union. Maybe he saw how a small group of well schooled power-seekers would be able to engineer the economic collapse of

countries that failed to fulfil the diktats of the private club which he and his colleagues had instigated. Was it foreseen that it might be possible to achieve what the Third Reich had failed to achieve, but this time with little or no need for bloodshed?

A global power grab

In any event, gone is the Europe standing for a group of independent nation states banding together when appropriate, on internationally significant issues. The entire edifice of the extended family of nations called Europe has been brought to a point of crisis due to the artifice and brinkmanship of the executors of this global power-grab. A power which now controls the media, the politicians, the market and the people. "We give them what we make them think they want" is an apt summary of the heist's blueprint for success. In a world of mass media hype; virtual reality; 'shopping' as the number-one leisure pursuit, plus every conceivable gizmo to play around with; one can see how the artful creation of these superficial distractions has combined to become such a powerful opiate.

Tragically, the bankrupt materialistic imagination of the modern European fails to penetrate the veil of deceit which has allowed the clandestine take-over to proceed so smoothly. As Aldous Huxley warned in *Brave New World Revisited*, 1958 "Democracy and Freedom will be the theme of every broadcast and editorial. Meanwhile the ruling oligarchy and its highly trained elite soldiers, police, thought-manufacturers and mind manipulators will quietly run the show as they see fit."

At the edge of the precipice

So here we stand, on the edge of the precipice, yet mostly failing to recognize that it is a precipice.

The federal superstate, currently managed by the infamous 'troika', is closing around us, regardless of any nation's membership or non-membership of the single currency regime. This control system works on the principle of keeping people just intelligent enough to serve the system but not intelligent enough to recognize that *it is a system*. It has been largely successful in this mission, since up until now we have been pacified into accepting the role of grudging servitude with few signs of outward resistance.

However, all that may be about to change. 2013 looks set to be the crunch year. Signs of rebellion are appearing where once only the mists of sleep prevailed. The extremity of US and EU neo-colonial war-mongering in Africa, the Persian Gulf and Central Asia, is raising eyebrows and not a few hairs on the nape of the neck. Oil

companies are turning in record profits; banks are barely humbled by their carefree profligacy of 2008/9 and multi millionaires are created every week in extravagant game shows and lottery draws. All this while government instigated austerity packages are bearing down on citizens struggling to make a reasonable living and hold onto some modicum of social responsibility and decorum. Something has to give. And probably more than Greece, Ireland and Portugal.

Our long running pretence at being anything other than the schizoid and hypocritical society that we are, is finally falling away. The bare bones of the truth can no longer be disguised behind placatory rhetoric and artful deception. As the realisation of what stands in front of us grows, we have a very real choice to make: stand on our own two feet and free ourselves from the encircling tentacles of the Monnet and Delors inspired supranational dictatorship – or slide further under its control – losing our ability to forge our destinies for generations to come. The choice has never been so stark.

Its down to each of us to reach into richer soils and ensure that something altogether better is brought to birth.

October 2012

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His latest book is *Changing Course for Life*, 2009.

See more at [http://www.changing course for Life. info](http://www.changingcourseforlife.info)

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The First Great Victory Seen 40 Years Later What Next?

HEMING OLAUSSEN

What happened in Norway on September 25, 1972, was just quite fantastic! For the first time since WW2 the establishment did not have their way. A majority of the people said No in a referendum on Norway's EEC membership.

The Labour Party, the Conservatives, daily newspapers *Aftenposten* and *VG* and the rest of the establishment suffered defeat in a process which created an involvement and a political participation of which Norway has hardly ever seen the like. More than 90% of the voters used their vote after a campaign of civic information and a political mobilization without parallel.

The No side was led and coordinated by Folkebevegelsen mot EF (The People's Movement Against the EC), and its legendary leaders, Hans Borgen, Arne Haugestad and Ragnar Kalheim, formed a strong alliance, supported by the Christian Democrats. It was the inclusive nature of the opposition, combined with great political acumen and a massive organizing of the basis that ensured the victory. In 1994, the same factors characterized the second victory. This No campaign, now by No to EU, used the motto: "They have the Power, the Media and the Millions – we have the People". That proved true.

Again, this second time, the enormous mobilization was decisive. Almost 90% voted, and the No side secured a 52.2% against 47.8% victory. The 1972 victory is worth a celebration, and we will celebrate the 1994 victory two years from now, among other things with magnificent history book.

Is all this just nostalgia from a far-off past? Of course not. The EU is still very real, and Norway's Yes side has never recovered from its disappointment caused by the two defeats. The dream of a place at the "European table" is still alive, although not well – in Conservative leader Erna Solberg, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, about Minister of Health and Care Services and former Foreign Secretary Jonas Gahr

Støre, as well as the new Director General of NHO (the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise). But as the polls say 75% No and 15% Yes to EU membership, the yellow EU stars are further away than ever.

When the EU enthusiasts in Norway are not too badly weighed down by this it is probably because they have found a substitute in the EEA (European Economic Area) Agreement which does to a high degree take care of their interests. And even if the EU always politely repeats that "Norway's place at the table is vacant" the EU is perfectly aware that it has got a weighty influence on the political and societal life of Norway, even without Norway joining fully in the union.

That is the reason why there is a direct connection between the EC-battle fought in 1972, the one that was won in 1994 and the battle going on today on the future of the EEA Agreement. The EEA is so much more than a trade agreement. It interferes forcefully with the governing of Norway, with the creating of Norwegian laws and rules, and with the development of Norwegian society.

By means of this very special agreement which in actual fact only affects three countries in the world, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, the EU has acquired a power and an influence in Norway which can in truth be called in question. Was it not in fact exactly much of this that we said no to in 1972? And in 1994? And which we say no to today?

Is not the entire EU campaign fundamentally about Norwegian national sovereignty, about the conditions of democracy and about our right to decide how our society should be developed without being supervised from Brussels?

Must we then, as we celebrate September 25 as the fortieth anniversary of the 1972 victory, admit that Finn Gustavsen was right when he said: "We won the referendum, but we have lost every day since?" I am not willing to go quite so far. There are still sufficient good reasons to remain outside a EU which is moving rapidly towards a fully fledged political union and towards the United States of Europe (USE).

Anyhow, it is far more feasible to pursue different policies outside the EU than inside. And we have seen instances of an independent Norway in the world. Norway has been a pioneer nation when it comes to combat cluster bombs as well as land mines. We have been pioneers in the global combat against mercury and have harvested wide recognition for initiatives such as international climate negotiations etc.

Fortunately Norway is not part of the partly criminal EU fisheries policy, is free from the EU Common Agricultural Policy and is not contained in the Euro straitjacket. There are still many good reasons

for resisting the EU propaganda.

Nevertheless it is a gigantic paradox that Norwegian politicians have allowed the EU to take so much power in Norway as the union has in fact done. The Trade Union Movement, in particular, is experiencing a rising opposition to a development of society governed from Brussels, in which Norwegian collective agreements on pay, the Norwegian labour market legislation and a decent working life are being undermined via EU legislation imported by far too servile Norwegian authorities.

Now, once more, the demand for national independence and democratic government of our own country is put forward. The third great EU battle in Norway can be expected not to be about annexation to the political union EU, but about replacing the humiliating EEA Agreement with an ordinary bilateral trade agreement.

A different battle, but still under many aspects the same battle as those fought in 1972 and 1994.

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Translation: Luise Hemmer Pihl

You Have Two Cows

FRANCES HUTCHINSON

Students of economics are taught two mutually inconsistent bodies of theory. The real, or 'micro' economy is only tenuously related in theory to the financial or 'macro' economy. The inherent illogicality of trying to apply the two modes of thought within the real-life political economy gave rise to an inventive tradition of 'two cow' jokes amongst students attending schools of economics in the early twentieth century. So often, popular humour encapsulates fundamental truths. And the truth of the matter is that economic theory is fundamentally flawed.

Microeconomics tells the tale of the Circular Flow. The people leave their households and go to work as owners of the 'real', concrete, material factors of production called 'land', 'labour' or 'capital'. They produce the 'utilities', the goods and services, which the firms can then sell on the market. From the firms who employ them, the workers receive an income in the form of wages, rent or dividends. Each household then goes to the market for their reward. From the goods supplied by the firms, they select a basket of goods that yields personal satisfaction. They buy food, clothes, cars, holidays and so on. Thus the 'utilities' created by the productive process are destroyed by consumption. It is 'back to the treadmill' for the next cycle of production and consumption. Households have what firms need, and firms produce what households want. In a barter-like system, money operates as no more than a useful medium of exchange.

The 'two cow' jokes arise as macroeconomics is introduced to the economics student. Macroeconomics deals with the broad picture of the national economy, with the ebbs and flows of trade, exports and imports, financial markets, inflation, over-all employment levels and all matters of sound finance as managed by the government of the day. In the early days of economics teaching, the difficulty of attempting to trade without money in a sophisticated economy was illustrated by examples which ran, "You have two cows, and you need a new suit ...

‘Two cow’ parodies have become a tradition, and many instances can be found on the internet. For example:

FEUDALISM: You have two cows. Your lord takes some of the milk.

FASCISM: You have two cows. The government takes both, hires you to take care of them, and sells you the milk.

EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY: You have two cows. At first the government regulates what you can feed them and when you can milk them. Then it pays you not to milk them. After that it takes both, shoots one, milks the other and pours the milk down the drain. Then it requires you to fill out forms accounting for the missing cows.

TOTALITARIANISM: You have two cows. The government takes them and denies they ever existed. Milk is banned.

The parodies recognise the illogicality of neo-classical economic theory: it cannot be applied in real life. If the Households have what the Firms want, and the Firms produce what the Households need, and money actually functions in a neutral, barter-like fashion, all might be well. But it would not be a modern economic system, for two reasons. Firstly, money always, and by definition, acts as a third party in any exchange. I have an apple and you have an orange we can agree to exchange one for one, real value for real value. But if money enters into the equation, everything changes. Now I can sell you the apple for £2, buy the orange for £1 and end up £1 the richer! All hinges on the initial allocation of resources and of money. This brings us to the second point. In traditional societies Households take the natural resources of the local area and, using the accumulated skills and wisdom of the society, they cooperate to produce the things they want. Each Household creates, or commissions from others, those things it deems desirable: there are no absentee landlords able to demand a share of the proceeds without making any local contribution.

All hinges here on the original distribution of resources. Customary law, administered by the people and for the people, determines land tenure rights, and the rights of access to commons and wastes, for each Household. As the ‘two cows’ parodies demonstrate, in a modern economy, the original distribution of access to resources is determined by a central government remote from the local community. There is no necessary reason why the people in the Household must sell their resources to the Firm, so that the Firm can tell them what to make, on terms dictated by the Firm so that they can buy back a part of the produce of the Firm, whilst the remainder goes to the Government to pay for the infrastructure, including the military, necessary to keep the Firm in power and hence in business.

The 'Firm', the corporations and the government bureaucracies they rely upon, is a legal invention of modern times, and quite superfluous to human welfare, or to the health and vitality of a living planet. In short, the Household, the real economy of the people, the land and the natural world, could survive in a healthy and sustainable condition if the Firm gradually ceased to exist. The Firm, the financial economy, is a legal fiction which is parasitic upon the Household economy. Like all parasites when they have established their stranglehold, the money economy is fast destroying its host, the real economy of society and the natural world. In terms of the Circular Flow, Households could continue to function if, rather than going to work for the Firm (i.e., the money economy), they retained their autonomy over their own resources and worked for each other. Households could perfectly well perform for themselves all essential functions of the real economy currently controlled by the Firm, by jettisoning the legal fiction that, "If a job's worth doing, it is worth being paid to do it."

It would be foolish to imply that each individual household could become economically self-sufficient, in the sense of supplying themselves with food and other real resources through working directly on the land, in the style of John Seymour. But it is possible for households within a given locality to investigate the extent to which they need to remain economically and culturally dependent upon the Firm. A great deal can be done – and there is a vigorous amount of experimentation to hand on this subject – severely to reduce the co-operation of the Household, and the local economy in general, with the Firm, i.e., the financial economy. However, the 'rights sphere', the whole question of the power of finance, backed by the force of law, over the rights of access of the Household to material resources, has been sadly neglected over the past two centuries.

As long ago as the 1820s, when 'political science' was in its infancy, and neo-classical economic theory was yet to be invented, William Cobbett travelled through England and in America, casting his shrewd eye upon all he saw. His journalistic commentary on the real economy and finance remains unsurpassed. The logical outcome of a political system designed to protect in law the vested interests of the banking and commercial fraternity is illuminated by his seminal work, the much reprinted and still in print *A History of the Protestant Reformation in England and Ireland. The Home Economics Study Guide to Economic History*, now available, presents the relevance of Cobbett's observations for the twenty-first century.

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€50:

The Limit to Our Liberty

IDA MAGLI

Did not we all start when we heard the news that from next year all retailers in Italy must only receive payment with bankcards for all purchases over 50 euro? Did we not immediately see it as another step by the bankers' government to lay the noose around our necks once and for all? I do not believe that there can be any doubt as to that: we know by now, even without being able to understand where this certainty comes from, that money is their *forma mentis*, the air they breathe, the weapon that they use. Money, in all forms, behind all masks. In their minds any idea is seen in the light of money, starts from money in order to penetrate the rest of the world.

Their gospel affirms: "In the beginning was money". Money is the state, money is the difference between the states, money is Europe, money is the sugar that is harmful for the citizens ... And as if this mentality is now part of the air we breathe, we have immediately realized that this paying with bankcards signals something else: our imprisonment within 50 euro.

If, however, we try to look deeper into some particulars of this situation, we become aware that the first prisoner is the retailer. In this system he will be forced to let all his daily ingoing payments go via his current account, that is via the bank, and he will not be able to lay aside and use his money for any purpose other than first and foremost the credit he may be having in his bank. It is notorious that the banks are the government's personal police, their Cekisti, their SS, who are amply recompensed for their faithful service with a certainty that they will profit from any and every operation.

But the most important fact is that this provision is the beginning of what is to come, and which we have long anticipated: by removing cash money they will force everybody to use electronic cards, and thus they will be able to spy on every preference and every movement of the citizen.

Some people will, unable to understand the value of liberty, see any coercion in such measures by those who govern as justified, because the sole purpose is to hunt out the tax dodgers. It would probably be useless to remind those who seek refuge behind this noble motive that it was the Italian civilization that, before any other in Europe, maintained, from Machiavelli and onwards, that the end does not justify the means.

Anyhow, there has never been a totalitarian government that has not proffered abundant justification for their own acts of suppression against their subjects. The security of the state, the danger of counter-revolution, the existence of the Mafia, the fear of terrorism: even the most ferocious of government in our times, that of the Bolsheviks, did for many years find a way of exalting the Stalinist dictatorship by means of such arguments.

However, what gives rise to even more fear in those who sense that the end of democracy is in the air, is a government of bankers rather than a government declared totalitarian. It gives rise to more fear just because the bankers' government needs no guns in order to reduce everybody to deference towards money; it causes more fear because it has been able to establish the control system of the banks in full daylight in order to achieve obedience, rather than by means of a cruel secret police.

This has in fact been possible because it is a government supported by a parliament which pretends that it still represents the citizens, but in a democracy fiction is not sufficient. This is the reason why we are, without being aware of it, sliding towards a dictatorship, and the government of the bankers can do whatever it likes, as it is in fact doing: by calling any citizen who holds more than 50 euros in his hand a thief and a tax dodger, by taking away from him all dignity and by preparing him for a subjection that will be ever more complete.

IDA MAGLI is an anthropologist and writer and professor emerita at the Università di Roma. Her latest book is *Dopo l'Occidente* (After the West), 2012.

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Translation: Luise Hemmer Pihl

A Sell-off of Italy's Public Property Would Be Suidical and Irresponsible

MAGDI CHRISTIANO ALLAM

If we consider that of the approximately 2000 billion euros of Italy's total public debt only 25% concern the Italian households whereas the 75% are in the hands of either Italian or foreign banks, and if we consider that the State gets into debt automatically because it is unable to issue currency, but is forced to purchase it from private banks by issuing debt securities, why then should Italy sell off* its real estate assets to banks in order to repay a debt which arises in the form of domination and grows in the form of speculation?

Before the Monti government proceeds to "sell off," an expression used recently by the Court of Accounts, emphasizing that just in the first quarter of this year property prices have fallen by 20%, the Italians have a right to know the facts and express themselves on the issue before they find themselves thoroughly impoverished as well as robbed.

Because it is not true that the strategy to contain public debt either through a tax rate that the same director of Inland Revenue Attilio Befera said will reach 75% (the highest not only of the world but also in the history of humanity!), and through what is euphemistically called "divestment and valuation of public property" (estimated at €300 billion in total the real estate assets of the State and €350 billion for that of the Municipalities), with revenues ranging between 15 and 20 billion per year according to Economy Minister Vittorio Grilli, will result in an improvement of the living conditions of the Italians and the consolidation of the Italian economy. For sure we shall be increasingly subjected to the financial dictatorship that is literally destroying the real economy!

If we want to get an idea of how to shape the national debt, let us consider what happened in December 2011 when the ECB has donated one trillion euros to Italian banks, who re-invested them in government bonds that yield 6% without doing anything and without allocating anything to the business community which is

increasingly disappearing. But above all, with the result that we citizens are carrying an automatic burden in the form of new taxes or cuts in public expenditure, to repay the interest that the State has taken on itself to pay to banks. It is the overwhelming power of the banks that is the problem, not the public debt! From 2007 to 2012, European banks have lost 2000 billion euros of international deposits, the share of Italian banks is 450 billion: a loss equivalent to the entire Italian public debt!

That is why, before accelerating in the irresponsible and suicidal choice to impoverish more and more citizens and increasingly subject Italy to financial dictatorship, Italians should be given the opportunity to understand the facts and express their opinion through a popular referendum on containing public debt and what lies behind it: about our adoption of the euro, the constraint of a balanced budget, the adherence to the treaties of the Fiscal Compact and the Fund-saving States, the more so as this Parliament has chosen to give power of attorney to President Giorgio Napolitano.

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Leopold Kohr and the Limits to Complexity

MICHAEL BREISKY

Many people think the financial crisis, Fukushima and the many *Wutbürger* (angry citizens) movements spreading all over the world are symptoms of a deep systemic problem. Protestors who also reject the too-big-to-fail argument might be glad to remember Leopold Kohr (born 1909 near Salzburg - died 1994 in Gloucester, England), Austrian philosopher, professor of economics, and winner of the Alternative Nobel Prize in 1983. Kohr was founder of the small-is-beautiful movement and his views on life and society are remarkably well-suited for the 21st Century.

Always crystal clear and full of up-beat humour, Kohr's advocacy of human scale can be summed up in three axioms:

1. If man is free, he will always surprise us
2. When something gets bigger, it will soon get over-complicated
3. When something gets over-complicated, the surprises will be nasty ones

Human beings are always able to surprise us and, as long as they are free, they would rather build than destroy, says Kohr. These traits are the source of human individuality and dignity, a safeguard against manipulation, and they are also the basis for democracy. Thus Kohr may have an optimistic view of humanity, but one built on strict prerequisites: the open exchange of ideas with friends (in the informal-but-academic atmosphere he preferred, so our endless propensity to err can be mitigated), and his call for small and transparent environments that prevent people from hiding in the anonymity of the masses. After all, the ability to hide from accountability while comfortable is also dangerous: we must always be challenged to act as individuals.

A faceless mass can offer the individual intoxicating emotionality and a brief feeling of belonging, but the absence of comprehension and manageability of the whole on the individual level (*Überschaubarkeit*) comes at a high cost, namely the loss of freedom, and ultimately can end

in disaster. In conclusion, Kohr sees a strained relationship between two extremes: on the one hand, a utopian but desirable romantic anarchism, with individuals liberated from violence and hierarchy, and at the other extreme, the lowest point, domination by others, where human beings become totally anonymous and predictable.

Kohr's warning against large-scale complexity is fundamental to his theory of society. It is derived from his observation that while growth can often be advantageous it bears a cost of coordination that increases disproportionately on such a scale that, once a "critical point" is reached, an impossible burden is added. At that point, as with living cells, this will lead to spontaneous division and new organisms will emerge or else the whole will perish. As a consequence, Kohr proposed that politicians should divide up states and overextended social entities into several small units of sub-critical size. Where the threshold actually lies depends mainly on the purpose of the group, but also on the quality of its organization, the population density, and its economic sustainability.

The nasty surprises that arise in units that are too big or too complex and thus impossible to understand must be seen within the context of Kohr's ideas on life and society. These surprises are 'nasty' because the consequences of excessive size will be totally unexpected; this also applies to abstractions: when we press complex matters into simple models, and project them onto other different and more complex scenarios, often relying on ideologies or 'great ideas' to do so. According to Kohr, Paracelsus's adage "The dose makes the poison" is valid here too. Ideologies built around nations, classes or markets may initially have a high explanatory value, but when applied wholesale they give rise to negative outcomes. Two current examples of such grand ideas running into trouble are cost-reduction by outsourcing and monetary union in Europe.

Kohr's ideal political entity:

This is the city state, as it existed in ancient Greece, medieval northern Italy, and the German mini-states of the Holy Roman Empire. Here, culture and civil society prospered because things were small, transparent and understandable, and fewer resources had to be spent on military power (less power means much less mistrust: another aspect close to Kohr's heart). Consequently, he repeatedly praised Liechtenstein, and Switzerland for its cantonal constitution. Looking to the future, Kohr advocated the subsidiarity principle and strengthening of the historical and small regions of Europe: thus anticipating a *de facto* disempowerment of large nation states. Only in this way could Europe achieve the necessary harmonization of supra-regional needs without

marginalizing the minnows. Today, Kohr would criticize the EU above all for its fixation on standardization: as the expressway to large-scale failure.

Human scale as a guideline

Kohr does not see smallness as an end in itself: after all, at the heart of his philosophy is the welfare of the individual, not the collective or great idea. In aphorisms and striking comparisons he may blame large-scale growth as the root of most troubles in the world, but what he really criticizes is not size itself, but rather mankind's inability to understand the complexity that usually (but not always) goes with it. Human scale implies an ability to at least roughly understand the causal relationships. As already implied in the three axioms, Kohr's warnings not to cross the "critical point" are built on three different arguments:

- socio-political** based on the hard facts of cost-benefit analysis
- philosophical** based on empirical psychological knowledge of the necessary social framework for individual human development
- rational** by keeping on challenging the abstractions behind great ideas (this approach is quite revolutionary, countering the methodology of the enlightenment: where simple models are developed from abstractions, as in laboratory experiments, and then applied by linear projection onto more complex scenarios).

The financial crisis that began in 2008 seems to confirm Kohr's warning; even the financial industry itself did not fully understand derivatives, and the unbridled greed of neo-liberalism drove us like reckless motorists at full-speed into a fog bank. However, it is not only the financial sector which failed due to its own complexity; it is the whole philosophy behind globalization that must now be reappraised.

Support from others

Prince Hans-Adam II von Liechtenstein describes in *Der Staat im dritten Jahrtausend* (The State in the Third Millennium) a triumvirate as old as human history: monarchs (hereditary or elected), oligarchs (formerly nobility: now party bosses and doubtless bankers) and the common people. Today, it is the all-powerful oligarchs who must be checked in favour of the people and monarchs. If these oligarchs are so powerful because, as they claim, they are better able to handle

complexity, then the best way to keep a check on them is by reducing this complexity.

Nassim Nicholas Taleb argues in his book *The Black Swan* how the probability of rare events is non-computable and how supposedly extremely unlikely risks very often have drastic consequences.] The theory of evolutionary epistemology (R. Riedl, H. v. Ditfurth, G. Vollmer, also A. Dijksterhuis and myself) explains why for biological reasons our ability to understand complexity is limited. It is especially dangerous when rational people fail to recognize their own limitations as well as the grave risks that exist beyond focused awareness. Biological evolution means we can recognize these risks only with the help of irrational means: firstly by instinctive information-analysis that spontaneously informs us, through our senses, of all remarkable events in the outside world, and secondly by consulting irrational but holistic sources of cognition such as religion, desire for harmony, sustained customs and traditions. Today in our apparently enlightened world, to have abandoned these holistic means of protecting our flanks and instead to rely solely on rational thought is worn as a badge of honour, and yet this presents us with an awful dilemma around the globe as, due to globalization and new technologies, we project ever-wider webs of purely rational abstractions.

Time to reverse globalization!

Sometimes things work out, even when driving into a fog bank, and globalization could yet have other benefits: the unlimited exchange of information, universal recognition of human rights, a new awareness of the global causality needed to protect the world's climate. But insofar as globalization is a rational project, with Kohr's nasty surprises still lying in ambush, we need to be particularly careful when stepping outside familiar territory. We must first try to establish that our actions have no catastrophic consequences and check the corresponding burden of proof, before we speed into the next fog bank.

The need for a paradigm change is clearly felt today. In many fields, from religion to national security, from energy policy to democratic legitimacy in the financial sector, there are contemporary trends that clearly relate to Kohr's ideas. While none of these separate trends have been widely adopted so far - after all, they emerged and developed independently - it is only a matter of time before they will be linked politically and a new dynamic of regionalism develops.

Recommended course of action

I have great confidence in the internet and new social media such as Facebook. This is where new networks are being created with the

same holistic quality as the city-states that Kohr so admired. The real potential of these networks has yet to be seen, but they could give birth to completely new models of political interaction: over and above the utopian cosmos of mini-states and the failing reality of large and increasingly impotent nation states.

A tip for angry citizens: use Facebook, read Kohr, support liquid democracy and study at how holistic resilience trumps complex efficiency. The soft landing of the economy and politics might depend on it.

Dr. **Michael Breisky**, former Austrian ambassador (www.breisky.at) *Gross ist ungeschickt, Leopold Kohr im Zeitalter der Post-Globalisierung* (Big is Clumsy. Leopold Kohr in the Age of Post-Globalization.), published

MICHAEL BREISKY INVITES TO AN ALLIANCE FOR HUMAN SCALE

Mission statement:

Small may not always be so beautiful, but “too big to fail” is a recipe for disaster in everything human, including “great ideas”. This new group is a networking alliance for Human Scale. It supports the elaboration of models – economic, political and social – that have individual man at their centre and respect differentiation of ideas, such as balancing efficiency with resilience, globalization with regionalism, market-supply with cooperative practices, tolerance with identity.

Introductory document:

Human Scale is viable – and needed right now!

Old and New Enlightenment:

Enlightenment brought us the use of Reason. After a long success-story, Reason now tells us that Enlightenment also requires something else: consideration for what is unreasonable in man. And so we learn that reason works best where it stays within Human Scale – i.e. in an environment where individuals have the maximum holistic understanding for their situation as well as the consequences of their actions. All technological progress was not able to extend this environment much beyond our sense’s reach. Outside this area we must heavily rely on assumptions and linear projections, where the

ever more complex risks of failure are today becoming unreasonably high.

Old Enlightenment projected a few great ideas into sky-high cathedrals, dreaming of a better world. New Enlightenment shares these ideas, too, but asks why the better world would never dawn; and sticks to the ancient system used by nature and masons: cells and bricks. Building with many small, independent and versatile units gives the system flexibility so that the whole will not be affected if one or the other unit fails to function; and the result – material or virtual – will not exceed Human Scale. Its cathedrals may not reach to the sky, however, but they can be at least as beautiful – because more often than not, “small is beautiful”.

Kohr and Schumacher

Small is Beautiful is the title of a book by E. F. Schumacher (1911-1977), published in 1973; it is also known as the motto of his friend and teacher Leopold Kohr (1909-1994), who had developed his philosophy 20 years earlier (published 1957 in *The Breakdown of Nations* (see p.25)

The two authors were the first to stand for the Human Scale in society. Kohr was the socio-political “philosopher-in-general”, while Schumacher dealt more with economic issues. What they said about Human Scale half a century ago survived great social revolutions, but it is as valid today as it was then. And it helps that both authors were particularly charismatic, their writing crystal-clear and witty. This bodes well for the next 50 years!

Both authors agreed that small is beautiful where size and complexity of things will not exceed comprehension and manageability – the pre-condition of responsibility. Ideas may also be great and beautiful, but they are easily projected into excess; the best way to keep ideas (and values) within Human Scale is to differentiate and in particular to balance them with equally good counter-ideas or values, like bravery and caution, or direct democracy and representative democracy. Today it may be imperative to balance efficiency with resilience, globalization with regionalism, market-supply with co-operative practices, tolerance with identity.

Outlook

Of course, there were – and there are also today – many other great minds objecting to the outcome of Old Enlightenment and arriving at conclusions close to Human Scale. Their followers should rally and co-operate in several layers of networks!

For the need for a paradigm change is clearly felt today. In many fields, from religion to national security, from ecology and energy

policy to democratic legitimacy in the financial sector, there are contemporary trends that clearly relate to the issue of Human Scale. These trends appear to have surfaced separately and continue to be handled separately, but they should urgently be linked politically under the auspices of Human Scale.

Very little falls from heaven; if today's man wants to be free, he needs to network with the right people and institutions or work for a network of like-minded. Internet and the new social media such as LinkedIn and Facebook will play a decisive role – and joining the “Alliance for Human Scale” with LinkedIn is certainly a right move.

As the Alliance grows, it will set up a reference basis and an on-line journal.

Human Scale has so many aspects that it may be advisable to establish sub-groups to this LinkedIn-group; one of the first sub-groups should deal with models to solve the crisis of European integration.

Most important: Optimism should prevail; just as Kohr brought the essence of Human Scale to the point:

Adjusted in size to the small stature that God had given us, their problems could therefore by nature never outgrow the genius of local their leaders, or the resources of their natural endowment

Finally, I leave the floor to the German poet Erich Kästner; he managed to express the truly revolutionary power of the Human Scale in two brief lines:

Who dares to stand against roaring trains?
Small flowers, blooming between the rails!

Dr. MICHAEL BREISKY is a retired Austrian diplomat and writer

*„Alliance for Human Scale“ -
opening of a new group in LinkedIn,
20 September 2012*

Leopold Kohr and the European Union

SIR RICHARD BODY

The New European was founded by John Coleman and me shortly after the 1975 Referendum which decided that Britain should remain in the EEC. Both John and I had been active in the 'No' campaign ; and we had also both read Leopold Kohr's *The Breakdown of Nations*, being much influenced by it.

Leopold Kohr had been a strong critic of the EEC; its objective of an ever closer union would eventually turn Europe into a big state with a constitution comparable to that of the United States of America.

This, believed Kohr, might be fine for politicians hungry for power, or multinational corporations wishing to be freed to operate without controls of a multiplicity of countries.

For everyone else, by what ever measuring rod one took, the small country was a happier place in which to be. Kohr used to tell the story of the man who telephoned the Prince of Liechtenstein a voice answered "this is the government speaking." The little country had a population of only 12,000. It needed no government and thus no taxation. Of course this changed when its population doubled after bankers, accountants and tax lawyers poured in.

Leopold Kohr's thesis began with a claim that if anything is wrong with the way something works it is because it is too big. Today when we look around the world there is little or nothing wrong with scores of small countries. In the bigger countries we see the problems, most notably in the United States and the Eurozone.

Leopold Kohr would have smiled at what is now happening in both of them and would have said it was inevitable.

The New European began with the aim of promoting the views of Leopold Kohr; and it will continue to do so.

The Breakdown of Nations by Leopold Kohr was re-published by Green Books in association with New European Publications in 2001. ISBN 1 870098 98 6

John Seymour's Legacy – Beyond the Thunderbox!

THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES OF
THE JOHN SEYMOUR SCHOOL FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY

WILLIAM SUTHERLAND

John Seymour's legacy stretches far beyond carrots and pigs – even beyond our famous thunderbox composting toilet. The canvas is broader and the issues rather more important. Today we must look beyond the thunderbox. John Seymour was much more than a digger of the soil, he was a thinker and a teacher with a great belief in the power of humans to manage their own destiny. We have to start with some of the questions that often cropped up while we sat around the fire in the snug during long winter evenings.

Are we happy in our world of corrupt politicians, greedy bankers and profit-hungry corporations? Are we pleased with a society where most human contact is gained either by watching Coronation Street or daily visits to our Facebook page? How long do we think it will take before the soil is gone, the water is undrinkable and the air is putrid? When the fossil-fuel age is finished do we think our grandchildren will thank us for our selfish foolishness and sheer incompetence?

No doubt we all have our own answers to these rhetorical questions. The problem has been a long time in the making and many indeed are those who have written about possible solutions. Things certainly do not look good.....and you can be sure nature will have no mercy for the foolishness of our behaviour. William Blake famously said that *"if the fool would persist in his folly he would surely become wise"* Less romantically, as Jared Diamond has very ably pointed out, we are replaying a very old story seemingly quite blind to the lessons of history. (*"Those who ignore the lessons of the errors of history are destined to repeat them."* American philosopher - George Santayana)

John Seymour is just one of a long line of wise men who have tried to stem this tide of disaster as humans go down the blind ally of vapid consumerism. At the John Seymour School for Self Sufficiency we continue to teach his philosophy and the many practical techniques which help individuals disconnect from the corporate world of consumption and greed.

Blake, Rousseau, Cobbett, D H Lawrence, Wendell Berry and then

Seymour continue a long history of campaigns against affluenza, industrialization and urbanized dis-empowered wage labour. They fought against what is often called “progress” – because what other men called “progress” they saw as progress in the wrong direction. They totally rejected idea that humans should live in a world where man is reduced to a wage-slave living in an urban box, brainwashed by adverts and wholly dependent upon remote governments or huge corporations for all the daily necessities of life. More than this they saw the constant drive for more consumption as a crude exploitation of Earth’s living systems. They sought to replace an age of plunder by a new age of life enhancing stewardship.

All these men were outspoken in their opposition to the establishment and in their support for the majority of working people. They were great communicators and often suffered the consequences of their unconventional views in brushes with the law.

All these men were visionaries in their own way. They hated to see individuality, independence and rural traditions swallowed up by industrial cities. They feared the dangers of humans losing contact both with each other and with the natural world.

John’s own reaction (and solution) to this problem was to promote what he called “self-sufficiency”. Becoming “self-sufficient” is not just a question of growing (and storing) fruit, vegetables and meat; self-sufficiency is an attitude of mind that says “I am going to do what I sensibly can to live independently from big government and big business”. Do we really want to live in a world where virtually all our food is provided by one or two huge multi-national corporations and dependent on long and complex supply chains? And it is not just food – think about our fuel, the processing of our waste and the provision of water and electricity. All come from huge centralized organizations which we have allowed ourselves to become dependent upon. All depend on processes which are exploiting natural resources rather than conserving and enhancing them.

John knew first hand what it meant to be self-reliant because he had survived in the African bush and lived through the terrible Burma campaign of the second world war. John was the only man I have known who had personally killed many other men face to face in war. Just think about this for a moment before you get worried about killing your chickens!

“Self-sufficiency” for John meant sleeping with a gun under you bed – you took no chances if you wanted to survive in the jungle. And John did survive, unlike 38 of the other 40 officers who started the wartime campaign in Burmah at the same time as he did.

So are we just to take the content of the Complete Book of Self Sufficiency as John's legacy? Will John's spirit be smiling down as we kill our chickens, brew our beer and bake our bread?

The answer is "No" three times over. Like Blake, Rousseau and Cobbett, John Seymour was a philosopher whose time has not yet come. The question for us now is whether and how we take up the challenge of his teaching. It probably will not be comfortable and it certainly will not be easy. But, like all challenges, it will be life enhancing.

Our fate and the fate of the world is held like a fly in a spider's web of established systems and institutions that must all be swept away if the future is to be saved. This cannot be done by using the institutions that are causing the problems. It cannot be done by populist politicians driven by the egos. It cannot be done by even the most idealistic bleeding heart NGOs (Non Government Organisations) It can only be done by completely new social movements. And these social movements can only begin when ordinary people finally realize that they themselves are both the problem and the solution. Voting will not change things but how we spend our money and how we live our lives can and hopefully will. John's books, his teaching and his example are important foundations for promoting this central truth. As John wrote: "I am only one but what one can do I will do" – this is at the heart of John's message and will be the iconic mantra of his legacy.

We have the good fortune to be living during one of the periods of truly epic challenge for the human race. We have to win the war against greed and consumerism. We have to understand that it is only by changing our own lives that we can change the world. This is the message and the legacy of John Seymour's life and his teaching. This message is the one we must devote our own lives to promoting and explaining. Time is short and our addiction to greed is deeply entrenched.

So what sort of social movement could we envisage as the life enhancing legacy of John Seymour's life and teaching? What sort of social movements have created upheavals in the past? What sort of social movements would John Seymour have supported?

We have seen many dramatic social movements emerge throughout history. Many have been spawned by environmental or financial collapse, others have been generated by disaffection arising from bad government and some have come from inspired leadership or philosophical campaigning. Religions have generated hugely powerful priesthoods based on belief systems and fear of the

unknown. We have had hereditary monarchies and emperors. More recently we have had elected democracies and dreadful dictatorships all couched within Adam Smith's powerful free market. It's not hard to see that the twenty first century will be dominated by the few huge corporations who control world trade. Their creature is the World Trade Organisation. Their creed is driven by profit. Their main thing they sell is greed itself.

But the inflamed world of greed created by the corporations contains the seeds of its own destruction. Not only does it ignore the fact that the Earth only has finite resources but it is also predicated on the creation of huge inequalities between people and between countries. How long do we think the poor of the world are going to be prepared to be hungry and ill while the rich minority enjoy the fruits of their labour and deny them the resources to help themselves? We already have our gated walled estates and as the gap between rich and poor widens it will not be long before the owners of jaguars and mercedes and other luxury cars are afraid to leave them out in the street. Owning such blatant symbols of excess consumption is not clever or desirable – one man's gain is another's loss. It will not be long before the horrors of crime and terrorism are commonplace in rich western societies.

Outside of electoral politics we may see a new gaia type religion developing. It is not hard to imagine a gaian priesthood creating new sins against creation and, like the Incas, for example, making it a crime not to compost your own shit? Certainly the young people of today are under no illusions about the importance of the natural world. On the other extreme this concern may manifest itself in a harsh green fascism. Which way the balance will tip is now a crucial question.

In his recent book "The Globalisation of God", Dara Malloy gives powerful insights into the way value systems inherent in religions have shaped the modern world. Such a pity that the celtic Christians did not win the arguments at the Synod of Whitby 1400 years ago, if they had we would be in a very different world today. Of course the Roman version of Christ's teachings had a much greater attraction for those seeking power. Even so the irish Christians kept Christ's teachings alive outside the reach of the Roman empire for over 1000 years. Today there are many, including our friends on the Aran Islands, who are trying to rediscover and energise the core beliefs of those Celtic luminaries..

Of course we have Green parties, we have the permaculture

movement, the bioregional movement, the Steiner people, the rainbow people and numerous active Non Governmental Organisations not to mention the established churches and other world religions. But as John Seymour continually pointed out – the whole edifice is based on an outdated belief that we live in a well behaved and machine like world whose mysteries will all, in due course, be sorted out by our scientists. We no longer fear the power and the mystery of nature because we have an arrogant belief in ourselves.

Perhaps if we encourage more people to experiment with growing their own food some of this certainty will begin to disappear? Perhaps if the scientists and physicists were better able to better explain the magic of quantum mechanics and relativity we should have little more respect for the wonder of the cosmos.

Of course science has had remarkable successes but for over 100 years now science – theoretical physics at least – has been telling quite a different story from the predictable and machine like world of the old science. The certainties and straight lines of Newton and Descartes have been replaced by the stretched time and space of Einstein and the altogether improbable world of Shroedinger's quantum cat. Worse still these outlandish theories have been tested in countless experiments and, so far, they have always proved correct.

This new scientific world is an unsettling reality where energy and matter can interchange at random and time and space change with relative motion. We know, for example, that if you got into a space ship and accelerated at a steady rate of 1g for 10 years you could reach our nearest star in about 20 years. But when you came back 40 years older you would find that more than 10,000 years had passed on earth – strange isn't it? Our optimistic hope that man can cope with planetary challenges and "win" is based on rather a less rampant Cartesian reality.

So somehow we have moved from a discussion of carrots and pigs to thinking about relativity and quantum theory with a short interlude on Celtic Christianityand all the context of discussing John Seymour's legacy. We could go on and talk about the relevance of the internet, the folly of the banking system or the implications of Lovelock's gaian hypothesis. But sadly our space is limited. Suffice to say that the current insane mismanagement of the world's money system (forseen and predicted by such luminaries as Gesell in 1929 and Douthwaite more recently) may in fact be the catalyst for some of the changes we are talking about.

So how will the Seymour legacy reveal itself?

One thing we know for certain is that John always rejected the role

of “guru” and all the trappings of charismatic leadership. John always said he would never tell anyone to do anything but he would always try to tell him how if he was asked. John was opposed to top down organizations that took away creativity and responsibility from individuals and restricted local autonomy. John believed that beauty and stability in the natural world come from encouraging variety and fighting against uniformity. In the words of Chancey Gardener (of Peter Sellers last film “Being There”) you would not plant all your carrots in a single plot but rather scatter them in groups around the garden. So with the Seymour legacy we would not expect the new society to be a monolithic top down cult but more an amorphous grouping of autonomous units sharing roughly common values acted upon in different ways.

At this point I have to say something about one of my pet theories. This concerns style and clothing! In medieval times each trade had its own “uniform” and to some extent this is still true today – priest wear black robes and dog collars, butchers wear striped aprons, bankers wear dark suits and ties, police, fire and military wear uniforms, hippies wear sandals and new age people wear Birkenstocks, skateboarders wear baggy pants and reversed peaked caps.... etc. What will those who follow Seymour be wearing? Bright silk handkerchief, knickerbockers trousers, colourful waistcoats and good strong brown shoes with a bit of tweed cloth thrown in somewhere for good measure.....and, of course, a workmanlike hat of some variety – peaked cap or Sherlock Holmes style. They certainly will never wear clothes made of plastic or bearing corporate logos – they will not wear watches and they won’t ever wear ties (badges of servitude to Seymour) although a silk scarf is OK. This then is the shape of things to come!

WILLIAM SUTHERLAND worked and taught with John Seymour for more than 10 years. He continues to run courses each year. You can find more information on his web site at www.self-sufficiency.net

Green Philosophy – How to Think Seriously about the Planet

REVIEWED BY JOHN RATTRAY

When serious questions began to be asked about global environmental problems, those who took up the causes of ecology and sustainability came from all parts of the political spectrum. The cause seemed to transcend the usual categorisations of left and right, and a number of Conservatives, including Margaret Thatcher while still British Prime Minister, issued warnings against the possibility of serious climate change. In the 1989 European Parliament elections, the Green Party in Britain received its biggest-ever vote, bolstered by the support of many who would normally vote Conservative.

More recently, however, and apart from a few exceptions such as Zac Goldsmith, the Green movement has come to be seen as predominantly a preserve of the Left. Why should this be? And what should be the response of those not of a left-leaning persuasion but concerned for the sustainability of our world?

These are some of the questions which Professor Scruton addresses in his new book, *Green Philosophy - how to think seriously about the planet*.

He sees conservatism and environmentalism as natural allies; by their very name conservatives ought to conserve. This should be done through a blend of free-market economics and judicious legislation and regulation, with an emphasis on the local and national levels, where the individual can connect with and identify with the whole, and where his or her voice stands a better chance of being heard.

Scruton states that “environmentalists have been habituated to see conservatism as the ideology of free enterprise, and free enterprise as an assault on the earth’s resources, with no motive beyond short-term gain. Furthermore, there is a settled tendency on the Left to confuse rational self-interest, which powers the market, with greed, which is a form of irrational excess.” He, on the other hand, sees the market mechanism - when allowed to do its job properly - as a way of ensuring that good environmental methods can be given a chance, and that finite resources can be conserved and used

efficiently. He points out that conservatives should also be natural conservators in terms of recognising the value in a settled society.

As an example, Scruton points out that in Poland under Communism it was an offence to discharge effluent into rivers. But since the factories were controlled by the state, no polluter was ever prosecuted and the rivers became biologically dead. With the return of free enterprise and an independent rule of law, the rivers are returning to life and again carrying fish.

He is sceptical about the chances for success of global solutions such as the Kyoto Protocol, and instead posits the possibility of employing decentralised energy production along the Danish model, and advocates a flat-rate carbon tax on all products, rather than a system of carbon trading and carbon permits, which he sees as inefficient, expensive and open to misuse. Much of the proceeds of the carbon tax should be devoted to research on the subject. He quotes the American economist Thomas Schelling, "there is no historical example of any international regime that could impose penalties commensurate with the magnitude of global warming."

Central to Scruton's case is his concept of "oikophilia". Derived, like "ecology" and "economy" from *oikos*, the Greek for household, it is an idea centred on love of home, of place, of community, and of neighbourhood. As well as being applicable at the national level, it can also be seen as a sort of local patriotism: not aggressive or nationalistic, but desirous of living peaceably with others and preserving a particular place. It emphasises the human scale and the importance of individuals joining together in civic and voluntary associations. He strongly invokes Edmund Burke's "little platoons", giving prominence to Burke's view of society as an association of the dead, the living and those yet to be born. This view, Scruton tells us, "carries a precious hint as to how the responsibility for future generations arises".

Scruton is sceptical about European Union's role, considering it to be part of the problem as much as part of the solution. EU directives, he tells us, "are propagated without respect for national differences or existing sentiments of legitimacy" and that the result is a gradual erosion of respect for law. The Common Fisheries Policy, by transferring fishing waters from national ownership and stewardship to a centralised and insensitive bureaucracy, has led to a collapse of fish stocks, whereas Norway and Iceland, outside the CFP, have conserved their stocks. The Common Agricultural Policy has made life progressively harder for the small farmer and for traditional local farming communities, by forcing up the price of land and by over-regulation.

Professor Scruton may not have all the answers. But he has raised some important questions and provided some imaginative replies. It could be argued that Scruton's remedy would work well at a local level but would not be adequate for bringing about the co-ordinated international action which is urgently needed if we are to tackle the threat of climate change. It could also be said, however, that only by building a response from local roots upwards would popular support for these policies be garnered. Many in the Green movement will come to different conclusions to Professor Scruton's; but they would do well to read and to respond to this serious and timely contribution to the debate.

Green Philosophy - how to think seriously about the planet.

Roger Scruton, 2012.

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£22.00

JOHN RATTRAY has been and continues to be active in a number of Green and Eurosceptic organizations and campaigns.

The First Principle of Democracy

GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON

This is the first principle of democracy: that the essential things in men are the things they hold in common, not the things they hold separately. And the second principle is merely this: that the political instinct or desire is one of these things which they hold in common. Falling in love is more poetical than dropping into poetry. The democratic contention is that government (helping to rule the tribe) is a thing like falling in love, and not a thing like dropping into poetry. It is not something analogous to playing the church organ, painting on vellum, discovering the North Pole (that insidious habit), looping the loop, being Astronomer Royal, and so on. For these things we do not wish a man to do at all unless he does them well. It is, on the contrary, a thing analogous to writing one's own love-letters or blowing one's own nose. These things we want a man to do for himself, even if he does them badly. I am not here arguing the truth of any of these conceptions; I know that some moderns are asking to have their wives chosen by scientists, and they may soon be asking, for all I know, to have their noses blown by nurses. I merely say that mankind does recognize these universal human functions, and that democracy classes government among them. In short, the democratic faith is this: that the most terribly important things must be left to ordinary men themselves - the mating of the sexes, the rearing of the young, the laws of the state. This is democracy; and in this I have always believed

But there is one thing that I have never from my youth up been able to understand. I have never been able to understand where people got the idea that democracy was in some way opposed to tradition. It is obvious that tradition is only democracy extended through time. It is trusting to a consensus of common human voices rather than to some isolated or arbitrary record. The man who quotes some German historian against the tradition of the Catholic Church, for instance, is strictly appealing to aristocracy. He is appealing to the superiority of one expert against the awful authority of a mob.

It is quite easy to see why a legend is treated, and ought to be treated, more respectfully than a book of history. The legend is generally made by the majority of people in the village, who are sane. The book is generally written by the one man in the village who is mad. Those who urge against tradition that men in the past were ignorant may go and urge it at the Carlton Club, along with the statement that voters in the slums are ignorant. It will not do for us.

If we attach great importance to the opinion of ordinary men in great unanimity when we are dealing with daily matters, there is no reason why we should disregard it when we are dealing with history or fable. Tradition may be defined as an extension of the franchise. Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about. All democrats object to men being disqualified by the accident of birth; tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of death. Democracy tells us not to neglect a good man's opinion, even if he is our groom; tradition asks us not to neglect a good man's opinion, even if he is our father. I, at any rate, cannot separate the two ideas of democracy and tradition; it seems evident to me that they are the same idea. We will have the dead at our councils. The ancient Greeks voted by stones; these shall vote by tombstones. It is all quite regular and official, for most tombstones, like most ballot papers, are marked with a cross.

I have first to say, therefore, that if I have had a bias, it was always a bias in favour of democracy, and therefore of tradition.

Before we come to any theoretic or logical beginnings I am content to allow for that personal equation; I have always been more inclined to believe the ruck of hard-working people than to believe that special and troublesome literary class to which I belong. I prefer even the fancies and prejudices of the people who see life from the inside to the clearest demonstrations of the people who see life from the outside. I would always trust the old wives' fables against the old maids' facts. As long as wit is mother wit it can be as wild as it pleases.

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The NEW EUROPEAN

“... to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses”
(From Alfred Nobel’s will. English version by the Official Web Site of the Nobel Prize, Nobelprize.org)

The first Nobel Peace Prize was first awarded in 1901, and the decisions of the Committee have often given rise to debate. Several winners have been seen as controversial. To name a few: Austen Chamberlain, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Menachem Begin, Yasser Arafat, Henry Kissinger, Liu Xiaobo and Barack Obama.

Just as much debate has been caused by the omission of Mohandas Gandhi, Eleanor Roosevelt, Václav Havel, Ken Saro-Wiwa and Corazon Aquino. Gandhi was nominated but turned down no less than five times, the last time was in 1948, shortly before his death.

This year’s winner, the European Union nearly shared the fate of Gandhi, and the debate has been just as passionate. The President of the Committee, former Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary Thorbjørn Jagland, has put forward the European Union as a candidate for at least five times and only succeeded in obtaining unanimity because one of the five members of the Committee who would have vetoed the decision happened to be ill on the day of the meeting.

It is a tradition that the Peace Movement in Norway celebrates the winner on the day of the presentation of the Peace Prize. But this year December 9th in Oslo will see a demonstration against the decision of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee. The conveners say that the Peace Prize should primarily reward such persons or institutions who have done most during the past year for arms reduction and reconciliation. *LHP*

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