

WORLD TRANSITION, CIVIL COURAGE, AND WHISTLEBLOWING TO PROTECT SOCIAL PEACE

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Summary

In 2000 years, the world hasn't changed as much as in the last 200 years. One essential reason is the increase in the world population, a second the advance of the sciences and their application in technology. Top scientists and Nobel laureates like Josef Rotblat, Max Born and José Lutzenberger question the survival of mankind. In our culture, consumption, profit and economic growth represent high values and overshadow ethical and social values.... a source for dissatisfaction and a threat for social peace.

The present contribution will at first be about the dark side of social and technical developments, furthermore about attempts of Whistleblowers, individual courageous people, to solve these problems structurally, before bigger damage is caused.

Whistleblowers uncover corruption and the misuse of technical power as well as offences against environment or human rights. They reveal technological or scientific developments or procedures that may even be legal, but can have dangerous consequences for the general public. They are the alert conscience of a society and essential for a working democracy.

If we want to develop ourselves, we must have a good look at big and small conflicts and catastrophes.

Unfortunately whistleblowers or "ethical resisters" are uncomfortable and have had a bad reputation until now. They are regarded as disloyal, as nest-defilers, even as enemies of the state. They follow their conscience for the welfare of the general public and without taking into account the consequences which this can have for them personally. Many whistleblowers lose their jobs, are sent into psychiatric wards or prison. In America and England, where laws protect whistleblowing, the image of these courageous people has improved itself decisively. It is necessary to support the social dialogue about whistleblowing and to stimulate a culture of courage in order to found a basis for laws in other countries.

1. World Transition

1.1. Introduction

The world has never changed as much as during the last 200 years, one of the reasons for this being the expansion of the world population, another one the progress of science and technology. Many traditional values were thrown overboard. Milestones (without evaluation) include the steam-driven engine, automobile, electric bulb, telephone, refrigerator, film projector, the splitting of the atom, television, space travel, organ transplants, the discovery of quantum physics, electronic communication systems, the decoding of DNA, the development of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), etc.

This chapter deals with the dark sides of social and technical developments and the possibilities of correcting underlying structures before too much damage will come of them. These darker sides and the resulting conflicts are realized only gradually. If we wish to continue our development, we will have to take a critical look at the conflicts and disasters. We have a tendency to ignore all this, society needs whistleblowers, concerned citizens, opponents of injustice, those who pay attention, who have individual courage and a sense of responsibility.

Whistleblowers discuss the critical, intolerable dangers, within their sphere of activities by passing on crucial information to their superiors. If that does not bring about the necessary changes, they address the public, ignoring the risks to their own person. Turning against the trends of the time and the establishment, they withstand lobbyism as well as the economic, and political forces in power.

They expose the abuse of technical power and criminal machinations. They uncover those technological or scientific developments or methods which are perfectly legal but do present dangers to the general public.

Those who warn the public regardless of the consequences for their own well-being will get a bad reputation; they are all too often silenced or exposed to reprisals. Called denigrators of their own countries, they are regarded as traitors, as enemies of the State. In England and the USA, this has changed since there have been passed some laws protecting these courageous people. However, much effort will be needed to ensure that the laws are obeyed.

Whistleblowers are secret heroines and heroes. To achieve more peace in this world, the integration of whistleblowing and civil courage into our culture will be a fundamental requirement.

1.2. Expanding World Population and Limit of Resources

Humanity is facing enormous challenges. The risks to the survival of the human species and the preservation of nature are increasing steadily. According to the 'Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung', the world population is growing at a rate of about one billion every 13 – 16 years.

The question remains how the growing world population will be able to assure its food supplies. There are a number of projections. In the year 2010, there will supposedly be seven billion people and, according to the UN, in 2050 as many as nine billion. Three

alarming consequences of this development are desertification, urbanization and migration.

With a growing population and limited resources, the fight against poverty, illness and malnutrition plays an increasing role. In many regions, basic resources such as clean water or fertile ground will, in the very near future, become scarce. In an increasingly interconnected world, the economic forces are trying to reach maximum benefits and to control ever more spheres of life. Even basic food is becoming the possession of the big corporations who are interfering with nature by genetic modifications and patented products. They are now aiming to take over the seeds of crop cultures, free to all humans for thousands of years up to now, to make sure that in future these seeds can only be bought from them. And this in times when global warming causes dwindling water resources, over salting of the earth's crust and the destruction of fertile soil. The US, for instance, ordered Iraq to grow genetically modified crops. Millions of small farmers are now faced with ruin. A dependency on corporations for most of the basic needs of life is artificially created.

The indispensable natural basics of life such as air, water and ground are no longer freely available for all, but have fallen under the power of a few who are abusing them for their own purposes or destroying them. The result: underprivileged people and many animal species no longer have access to them. Will humanity have to impose restrictions on the use of the resources on our planet? And if so, who is going to decide that?

1.3. Western Civilization Causes Risks and Endangers Life

1.3.1. Consumerism as a Threat to the Planet

Our planet earth is a "self-regulating organism" says British-born chemist, medical doctor and biophysicist James Lovelock. Our future depends on how we treat this organism. Intervening with this complex and sensitive system can have incalculable consequences.

José A. Lutzenberger, winner of the "Alternative Nobel Prize", the Right Livelihood Award, and former Minister of the Environment in Brazil has more than once quarreled with those in power. His accusation: "Ever increasing, excessive consumer needs and a battle for material values have become the religion of the West. The terror of consumerism is to the detriment of future generations and the world as a whole. Forces are at work spreading this lifestyle into the farthest corners of our earth. Modern industry sees the world just as a sort of free-of-charge warehouse, where we serve ourselves and use up the resources which are supposed to be limitless", criticizes Lutzenberger (2002).

1.3.2. The Disastrous Role of Natural Science

There may be various causes for a state for allowing risks to the health and life of its citizens. Max Born, winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1954, blames the natural sciences for the breakdown of all ethical principles. He writes: "The idea that this break in human civilization caused by the discovery of scientific methods cannot be corrected

depresses me." Therefore, his view of the future is gloomy. "The natural scientists themselves are an unimpressive minority; however, the excellent achievements in technology assign them a special place in society. They are conscious of possessing a superior objective knowledge accessible through their method of thinking, but they do not see their own limits. So, their political and ethical judgment is often primitive and dangerous..." (Born and Born 1969) Max Born was the only great physicist of that time period [during the Second World War] who refused to cooperate in the US project of the atom bomb.

During the first period of Enlightenment, during the 17th and 18th centuries, society experienced a secularization and negation of God. This has led to a reductionistic view and understanding of life and the world as a result of a linear thinking, which loses the sight of the whole.

Vandana Shiva, vice president of the Third World Network in New Delhi is a philosopher, physicist and pacifist. She also won the alternative Nobel Prize (1993). She criticizes the antiquated concept of natural science which looks only on monocausal relations between cause and effect.

The physicist Arthur Eddington has described the missing parts in scientific logic very vividly: A scientist goes fishing, using a net which has a mesh diameter of ten centimeters. He states: "All fish would be at least ten centimeter in size and have fins. But a passerby remarks: "I have seen fish which were only five centimeter in size." To which he receives the absurd reply: "What my net cannot catch isn't fish!" Every scientific study has its certain size "mesh"... But science claims for itself the domain of objective truth. Such way of thinking has devastating consequences especially in the field of health and ecology. In most spheres of life, we will have to rely on credible references and "substantial evidence".

In our modern world, a mechanistic concept of nature has developed which presents everything as ascertainable, analyzable, available, replaceable and feasible, and this permits unlimited access to everything on this planet. But most phenomena are accessible only by a multi-causal or transdisciplinary view. Laszlo, co-founder of the Club of Rome and founder of the Club of Budapest speaks of an unfortunate mechanistic view of the classical natural science. The cream, however, in the meantime would abandon this view: Their ideas are expressed in networks and fields and the spontaneous interaction of various causalities (Laszlo 2001).

Furthermore, public finances are in a bad state. Science depends on allocations by the economy. The deciding factor is economic benefit. This has led to the dressing-up and falsifying of study results in science. Unfortunately this intellectual corruption has hardly any consequences, neither in universities nor in the law courts. However, it does have consequences for scientists when their research conflicts with economic interests. If they don't play the game, they must expect to sacrifice their careers or lose their jobs.

1.4. Neo-liberalist Thinking and Acting

1.4.1. The Imposition of Dangers on People

How can we still maintain our present attitude towards human beings and nature? Modern technology is intervening destructively in the intricate processes of life. Technology is creating residual risks. Chemical substances in our environment lead to asthma, neurodermatitis, a weakening of the immune system, etc. Electromagnetic waves are causing brain damage, cardiac disrhythmia and high blood pressure; the low frequency radiation of nuclear power stations can change our genetic make up.

Residual risks are imposed on humans in an increasing measure. In Western culture, where neoliberalism and capitalism are advancing their structures, an indirect power is exercised. Some are earning money on products that sicken others. "The makers of technology are testing fate more than they themselves may perhaps think," resumes Shiva (Lüpke 2004). One glaring example: Two "fathers of the atom-bomb", Julius Robert Oppenheimer and Edward Teller were not even quite sure if, when testing the atom-bomb in the White Sands desert of southern New Mexico, it would not ignite the whole atmosphere. Did anybody hear a whistle blowing?

Who decides about the risks? Until about two generations ago, people still assumed that they could – at least in times of peace – calculate their own risks of life and health to a great extent, or at least they thought they could. Even when dangers become obvious, in most cases no changes will be made as they should be. The truth is withheld or the cases legalized and categorized as residual risk, but even if the factor is, for example, only 0.01, over time, thousands of people could be affected. Whistleblowers stand by undesired truths. They uncover corruption, dangers and risks, in this way preventing health problems and the destruction of the environment. They do not wish to be used for objectives to which they cannot agree.

2. Unloved Heroes of our Establishment - Examples

2.1. Guillermo Eguiazu demands Transparency in the Development of new Technologies.

The 52 year-old Eguiazu suffered outrageous treatment at the University Rosario, Argentina. He had acted according to his conscience. The Department of Education in Argentina counted him amongst the most qualified scientists in his country. This, however, was of no help to him. He had to give up his career because he had made himself unpopular with his colleagues.

Eguiazu and his assistant Alberto Motta had developed a theory that they called "technopathogenology" (TPG). The objective was to avoid the risks of new technologies, that is, to assess systematically, as early as possible, any dangerous developments and to prevent health risks for the consumer right from the start. His concept of natural sciences also includes ethics.

Eguiazu was engaged in the study of genetic engineering, pesticides and electromagnetic pollution and he especially focused on the carcinogenic fungal poison of Aflatoxine. However, he did not stop there; he also informed the population. He and Motta held lectures in the villages. The results of their research were written in Spanish

and in plain, easy-to-understand language. Eguiazu even fought for a law for the reduction of mould formation through better storekeeping for instance, of cereals.

The university administration found that it was not Eguiazu's job to care about the social side of the problem or meddle in questions of economics and politics. For years, Eguiazu and Motta had to suffer reprisals. Their laboratory was ravaged and the professor's salary reduced, his assistant's salary even eliminated. The professor was no longer allowed to teach in his institute. In 2002, the laboratory equipment was simply removed after he had permitted a group of students to do research on the electromagnetic radiation of cellular radios.

Many modern technologies have inherently negative effects which may become evident at any time. To reduce the risks of damage from the start, this should be done by the scientists themselves.

2.2. Wangari Maathai and her Non-violent Commitment to Democracy and the Environment

The preservation of nature is playing an increasingly important role as the world population is rising steadily. This is expressed in the award of the Nobel Peace Prize for the year 2004 to the 64-year-old Kenyan professor Wangari Maathai. The Prize is endowed with the sum of ten million Swedish crowns (about one million US dollars). She is the first African woman to be awarded this prize. The Nobel Prize Committee in Oslo (2004) declares that Maathai stands at the forefront in the battle for an ecologically responsible, social, economic and cultural development in Kenya and Africa as a whole. This is the first time the Nobel Committee gives the prize to the issue protection of the environment!

During the regime of President Arap Moi, when corruption, torture and attacks on citizens were the rule of the day, she was able to get courageous environmental and democratic projects off the ground. In the beginning of the 1970s, she founded the first environmental movement of Kenya, the "Green Belt Movement". Since 1977, she has motivated many thousands of poor women to plant about 30 million trees.

However, the more successful her movement was, the more difficult became her own position. In 1991, the regime arrested her and she was ill-treated. More than once she was beaten up by the police when demonstrating. Once she had even to be brought to hospital.

Wangari Maathai was the first female professor for veterinary anatomy and later the dean of her faculty at the University of Nairobi. Her resistance in 1998 against a building project to be carried out in the jungle and supported by president Moi, drew worldwide attention. Repeatedly, she went to court against the government to prevent deforestation.

With the change of power at the end of 2002, she finally became deputy minister of the environment in the cabinet of the new president Mwai Kibaki. But the deforestation continued even in her own constituent area of Tetu. Wangari Maathai announced that

she would rather give up her office than tolerate further deforestation. The Nobel Prize Committee stated that the protection of forests to prevent desertification is an important factor in the struggle to strengthen our environment on the earth which we all share.

“Most conflicts in Africa are about the distribution and the access to the steadily decreasing raw materials”, says Maathai in an interview with the German magazine "Focus". We have to restore the natural basis and to manage everything in a sustainable and responsible way. People realize that problems like AIDS, war or erosion are symptoms of the deterioration of our environment. If we master the environmental problem, many other problems will simply disappear."(Wagner, 2004)

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