

Village Community and Nature: "It's no good" - Civilization

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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Instead of extended family, human warmth, village society and closeness to nature, we lucky moderns have gone down a path strewn with material things increasingly designed for the junk heap. What is dawning on climate scientists, biologists and many more of us is that we as a species are headed for our own junk heap.

While I'm painfully aware of sea level rise, our bodies' contamination with plastic, falling sperm counts and profusion of cancers, I reject that our present path is our fate. Is it time to say "Screw civilization"? This wouldn't mean we don't appreciate nice people in towns living decent lives, nor do we sneer at the accomplishments of Mozart and outer space flight. Bravo Amadeus and NASA. Now it's time to redefine civilization and prepare to pick up the pieces.

If the modern era's wars, ecocide and every-man-for-himself socioeconomic institutions must continue to corrupt and kill, all in the name of civilization's triumph over nature and "primitive" people, is "No thanks" response enough? We can do more than decry civilization, refuse to buy cars, wear a radical button on our lapel, and plant an organic food garden. For we need to sing the Earth into harmony.

Given the almost unspeakable ecological crisis and the failure of growth economics, more and more of us see that we must move on constructively with imagination and heart. Hating the greedy thieves at the top -- the 1% increasingly benefiting from a rigged system -- has its place, now that "Yes we can!" came to mean nothing.

With an "Obomba" leading a shrinking choir of Hope-filled victims of his bankster buddies, what are we to do -- vote again? As author Chris Hedges told a standing-room-only crowd on Dec. 1st at Portland, Oregon's Powell's Books, "To place faith in electoral politics is extremely naïve." If you don't quite agree, see the new documentary Inside Job, narrated by Matt Damon. It will disabuse you of any remaining respect you might have for Wall Street, the Federal Reserve Bank and top academics getting their juicy cuts from mega-financial interests.

However, if people get smart enough and real mad, will populism be the successor to the corporate state? Much more than we need to see a revitalized liberal class and the protection of U.S. jobs -- with free speech for the glamorized automobile workers and the rest of us -- we need an alternative that breaks with past allegiance to friendly American fascism. Even if social movements were to improve the institutional climate for our record population size, the end of cheap oil has guaranteed collapse.

Yes, we can -- move on. We are moving on, to save ourselves. All together is best, for leaving folks behind is but the disgrace of civilized society and its avaricious rulers. Solidarity is the only way. How can we do it right when we each have our struggles, such as to pay bills or get through one more night without proper shelter or warmth?

For me to have to post another plea for post-industrial, eco-egalitarian culture, when I have long been an optimistic networker and activist for community causes, is strange. I try to understand it, but I'm still marginalized, as you may be, for having logical feelings and cares. Most people want to avoid the heavy issues or even act in their own interests. They are content to earn some money, try to relax, keep their heads down, take drugs, and avoid dealing with issues of vital importance. Their survival is on the line right now, but to bring it up and point toward more conscious living is like farting in church.

Now here's my plan: get up the nerve to get rid of this computer and live without one. I have felt pretty smug for not

having a car for the past 21 years. But a friend of mine, an old misfit who used to be a car-free activist and now puts his health first (although he drives), pointed out that I can be car-free because I have a computer that I make a living off of. I couldn't argue with him. It's not that getting rid of my computer is so vital; the greater truth is that I am dependent on technology instead of relying on interacting directly with people for my work.

I would be nowhere without the people with whom I share a commitment to the cause, basic obligations, and mutual support. But I am far from self-sufficient or self-reliant with my community. (Community is weaker in the U.S than anywhere, but we have to get it together here and now, regardless of the bankers and the war machine.) I am more off the grid than most people, and I'm not dependent on having a lot of money. It's nice not to have any addictions, I say, but it's a lie when the computer is a major addiction. Where would people be if the computer network went down and didn't come back up? Folks would be scrambling like crazy, for the whole modern infrastructure such as petroleum fuels and chemicals would fall through as well.

I dreamed that I got out of a train and noticed I had left my laptop on a seat in the train. The train started to move along, and I had no chance to retrieve the computer. I was surprised at myself in the dream how little it bothered me to lose it. That was that, I was rid of it. When I woke up and relived the dream, my calm and almost happy reaction and feeling were hard to believe. This is why the dream is so vivid today.

Should we listen to our dreams and act on them? I'm a believer in that. Disturbed people who have violent or sick dreams should not act on such dreams; such people need help such as therapy. But as a clinical psychologist once told me after we became close friends, "I think that people just need more love." Nothing she or anyone else has said made greater sense to me. She is Lorin Lindner, now an animal sanctuary activist.

Material insecurity and greed appear to flow from one's deprivation of love, trusting companionship and support. In an historic time of breakdown of social cohesion -- evidenced by high divorce rates, people living alone, insanity and violence -- the absence of proactive concern for our common home the Earth is inevitable and inescapable. Being a selfish individual, whether one goes to church and greets people, or whether one flies the nation's flag, goes with gouging other people for material gain, and it goes with harming the Earth for same.

Is there a cure for this behavior and ecocide? Activism is not working, although a small movement exists to practice such things as consume more organic food than before, buy local goods rather than products shipped in at great distance, and reduce energy consumption. Since 2010 is the hottest year on record, with greenhouse gas emissions rising even faster than before, we clearly have a dilemma. And it appears that the more people hear about the climate's deterioration and rising uncertainty from extreme weather, the less people want to know. Some believe a violent reaction to identifiable threats is a viable course. Whereas self-defense is always valid, and civil disobedience is necessary to save habitats when government is in the pocket of corporations, a campaign of violence is a misguided delusion. Likewise, putting up no resistance to exploitation and oppression is uncalled for and insane.

As I reflect on two decades of activism and an ongoing education combined with disillusionment, I seem to return again and again to an idea: reaching people's hearts and their subconscious is the only way to bring about the deep change needed to save life on this beleaguered planet. If reached before the inevitable collapse of the consumer economy (based on dwindling oil), there might be more of a transition of culture rather than a wrenching transformation that might leave the human species behind.

I prefer healing myself and the planet, and not waiting for someone else to heal me or do the right thing for Earth. Combining dreaming and healing makes the most sense to me, and music does it. It worked for millions of people in the 1960s. I have been sharing the lyrics of a song from a dream that renewed my fondest hopes for humanity and the Earth. I sing it while playing acoustic guitar that is heavy on bar chords. The dream that the song came to me in had a woman singing about the certainty of the Earth's healing from climate destabilization and toxic pollution -- through the whole population singing together.

A normal left-brain response to such a notion is that it's crazy and can't happen. But what of the proven physics of our common, linked, intrinsic vibration and molecular oneness that we share with each other and all the universe? I woke up from the dream happier than ever that there was hope. As my morning began and I left behind my right-brain state, I remembered some of the music and what the singer had to say. I no doubt made the music and style of performance more rock 'n roll than my dream singer did, but hey... Please enjoy this message from my heart and subconscious, and I thank you for reading. - Depaver Jan

Singing the Earth into Harmony

(November 20, 2007)

Her voice was most reassuring now

With warmth and harmony

I had a dream and a woman sang

The sound was sweet and complete

I think it meant that humankind

Can help the Earth to heal

It takes one voice of all the people

Singing the Earth into harmony

Can you hear and feel

Guns will be laid down on the ground

After we learn

As forests burn

There may not be a grocery store

With neon lights in your eyes

We're going back to Nature's Way

Before the ice all melts

- Click here to play a low fidelity recording of the song, sung as a voice-mail.

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For hard-hitting political art see David Dees' work