

(1 Timothy 6:9-11) – “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patients, gentleness.

Clashing Consciousness of Social Classes

By Tom Zeman

What about the poor people? There are those in the middle and upper classes who would argue against the poor lower class; the poverty stricken are detestable, filthy, ignorant, lazy, good for nothing individuals who deserve to be taken advantage of for exploitations' sake. This sort of thinking is wrong, bigoted and short-sighted, yet the truth remains; we love and praise the rich, hate and ridicule the despicable poor. These two mutually exclusive and contradictory groups are rivals who compete for land, natural resources and money. It is not money, but the “love of money that is the root of all evil” and poverty in this world. (1 Timothy 6:10). To restore balance between clashing classes, rich versus poor, our view must change so that we can all help each other grow and thrive. What are the rich doing to create wealth and how can the poor learn from the rich to create sustainability and prosperity for all? Corporations are the lifeblood for the wealthy, because they are organized and united. Learning from this, organized and sustainably structured communal communities may be a viable solution for the poverty stricken.

Poverty is the state of being poor. This unbearable state of being, for the most part, is imposed by the unequal distribution of wealth: the lion's share of global wealth is owned by less than 1% of the population. In the newspaper article “Even Among the Richest of the Rich, Fortunes Diverge”, economic policy reporter for the *New York Times*, Annie Lowrey, reports that the “wealth of the 99% and 1% have diverged, but the wealth of the 1% and the 0.1%, or the 0.01%, or the 0.001%, have pulled away even more”. She also indicates that the richest of the rich are increasing their wealth at an exponential rate, a situation economists call “fractal inequality” (1). And in part, poverty can be self-imposed due to a lack of hope, motivation, productivity and self-reliance. Or, poverty can be a false image of oneself when living in a materialistic society that judges a

person's worth by his or her wealth. Nevertheless, the disparity between the super-rich and the dauntingly poor is growing at alarming rates. The documentary, "Park Avenue: Money, Power and the American Dream-Why Poverty" concedes that the CEO's of the world's largest multi-national corporation's billionaires who control the global economy, media and Washington D.C., constitute the 1% of 1%, some of which live in 740 Park Avenue. The extremely rich are getting richer and the hopelessly poor are getting poorer because the poor are divided and the rich are united in cities.

As mega cities and urban sprawl grow larger and larger with increasing concentrations of people, competition for work and lack of resources haunt the masses like a shadow of death. At the onset of the industrial revolution most people lived out in the country subsisting through an agrarian lifestyle; agricultural groups were self-sustainable. In developed countries these days the majority of the people live in cities where it is necessary to be dependent consumers. Exacerbated by Darwinian consciousness, the survival of the fittest-richest what I call frichest mentality, modern man is obliged to get rich. According to David Cobb's on campus University of Hawaii at Hilo lecture the modern transnational corporation is the most dominant force on earth and is responsible for the world's wholesale destruction. Steeped in a dark agenda, the corporation has been traced to imperial England, dating back to the 15th and 16th centuries, when the British Crown contrived the Joint Stock Company which financed the East India Company that went on to enslave and exploit the sub-continent of India. Cobb described how the African Trading Company followed to kidnap millions of Africans by shipping them to the incorporated 13 colonies. He adds that "historically, until now, the corporation has been run by "mentally ill" people who lack morality and conscience because they are the ones who willfully create poverty by exploiting natural resources, human habitats and societies at large for their own opulence, benefit and excess"(Cobb). Author Anthony J. Marsella corroborates with David Cobbs in his allegations concerning the history of corporations in his article "Diversity in a Global Era: The context and consequences of differences" and he adds, "At the heart of hegemonic globalization is the ubiquitous--and deservedly maligned--corporation" (124). Dr. Marsella is currently *Emeritus* Professor of Psychology, the past Director of the World Health Organization Psychiatric Research Center in Honolulu and currently senior editor for Springer SB Publications, New York. Modern society's terminal complacency and meaningless conversation allows the corporation free reign to monopolize over the whole board. Perhaps it is promise of wealth and the good

life that is the enticing lure of the city. As the young darlings abandon life on the farm to live in town, the bucking broncos are sure to follow, selling family farms to the all-powerful corporations. In the old days, people had the ability to be self-sustaining or to move back to the farm. These days, moving out into the country seems like a step backwards and is no longer a viable option for most people.

Trapped by the invisible walls of the city, the concrete jungle becomes a vast desert devoid of hope and sustenance. Caught in a vicious cycle of supply and demand, the poverty stricken become raw meat for the corporate slaughterhouse. Rampant poverty ensures the corporations plenty of fresh meat. Low wages for hard labor guarantees poverty and short lives. Migrant farm workers are paid substandard wages for hard work that is potentially dangerous to their health. In "Geographies of Development: Without the Poor," Professor Richard Ballard of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, explains that "the surplus of labor power" contributes to the "direct competition between workers globally and the presence of the reserve army of labor both serve to depress wages and increase the ranks of the working poor" (565). The all-consuming corporations, profiting off the sweaty backs of the poor thrives on dependent consumers. Ballard goes on to say that "Efforts to center the middle class threaten to displace, and justify the displacement of, economically marginalized groups seen as surplus to development" (563). Therefore, what people thought was the good life in the city turned out to be a living nightmare for the have-nots. There are always the exceptional few achievers who shine like bright lights as an example to the underachievers. Anthony Marsella points out "Rates of unemployment and underemployment in many nations exceed 50%" (127). So the poor are coaxed to work harder and harder and longer and longer just to make ends meet. Absent moms and dads are out on the job while kids play out in the mean streets of the city.

Modern society thrives on counter productivity and the exploitation of natural resources. Marsella calls our attention to the fact that "What is critical in our global era is that we are using the corporation as the spearhead of " 'hegemonic globalization' " (125). We stand up, clap and cheer for our overpaid role models, celebrities, athletes and a host of narcissists who lead us towards a path of self-effacing conformity. Lax moral codes superimposed as secular humanism and "hegemonic globalization" spurn us on to conform at dizzying rates. We adapt to our programmed environment or die. Marsella reminds us "We must move beyond concern for humanity (i.e., humanism) to concern for life

itself—Lifeism” (Marsella, 2008) (134). Self-preservation being the strongest law of the land, compels society to accompany the malignant tumors of status quo consciousness. As we feed off of each-other’s weaknesses, a pecking order is established to create the low, middle, and upper classes. No one wants to be at the bottom of the food chain, so we conform the best we can, contributing to the madness of creative destruction. Marsella makes note of the 6.4 billion that is estimated to grow to 9 billion people in the next thirty years (125). “Nine billion people, each seeking to survive, each consuming more resources, each witnessing or experiencing the “ ‘versus’ ” mentality of our times, each struggling to make sure that they do not fall victim to poverty” (125). As a result, those who produce and work the hardest (i.e., farmworkers) are valued the least, and this promotes an endless cycle of poverty on material, psychic and spiritual levels. Marsella again reminds us that “More than 20% of the world’s population lives in absolute poverty, with no predictable and consistent access to shelter, water, and food... poverty breeds hopelessness leads to desperation leads to violence” (126).

The redeeming value of democracy is hospitality and compassion towards all. Fair distribution of wealth, social security, and the welfare state help to balance the disparity between the super-rich and the poverty stricken. In “Sowing the Future”, Director of Earth Institute and Professor of Sustainable Development, Health Policy and Management at Columbia University, Jeffrey D. Sachs suggests that “We can learn from great social teachings of the church and other great traditions” (5). Original Christianity, lived out as an example by the Master Himself, eliminated poverty. Jesus Christ, a champion of the poor, called his disciples to a shared life of compassionate co-operation articulated in intentional communal community. These communal groups provided food, shelter, protection, healing, work, family, education, stability and a sustainable way of life, all the essentials to support a harmonious lifestyle with one another and nature. They had one common purse, vision, and mission to go and serve the poor. (Acts 4: 32-35). “Sell everything you have and give it to the poor,” said Jesus to the rich man. (Luke 18:22). It will be impossible for the rich to enter into eternity because they did not learn to share what was given to them. Those who take more than they need leave the left-overs for the rest which is never enough. Greed and the lust for power is what drives the roaring engines of poverty. Authentic Christianity, as described and lived out by Jesus and His followers, drives out poverty but this takes faith, co-operation and commitment to one another.

There is a new religion among us that is so pervasive and anti-Christian that

it threatens our inherent humanity; this is the modern religion of Social Darwinian consciousness. Humans are facing the extinction of their own kind. Homo-sapiens-hominid-primate consciousness threatens the existence of humanity and all life on earth. The liberating consciousness of Darwinism frees us from God and allows us to do what the Beast demands of us. Nearly seven billion people all in the “struggle to survive” competing for limited resources and wealth, destroying our living earth without the least concern. Humanity has become its own worst enemy unable to extricate and stop its lingering suicide of global death. Self-preservation being the most powerful instinct, magnified and exploited by the selective function’s “survival of the fittest” philosophy. Poverty and the poor will be with us until humanity recognizes the sovereignty and authority of Christ-consciousness. “No one can serve two masters” Jesus commanded. (Luke 16:13). Secular social evolution consciousness pokes and prods us to be ambitious, competitive, successful and rich, but Christ calls us to a common life shared by all. These two extremes of consciousness blaring at opposite poles are what create and can be called the Clashing Consciousness of Social Classes.

To restore balance between these two cacophonous trains of thought, it would be necessary to get on the same track of Christ-consciousness, share and share alike. “Love one another” are the greatest words of advice given to humanity. (John 13:34). Poverty is a direct reflection of our selfish-ambitions and rebellion against nature and God. As a result, humanity is on the fast track towards environmental and economic collapse. Jeffrey D. Sachs points out “Our societies, cultures, economic practices and political institutions have been unable so far to face up to the threats of climate change, ocean acidification, deforestation and other profound dangers. But the pace of environmental change is extraordinary, putting humanity in imminent peril in a matter of decades, not centuries” (3). All that we produce and strive for ends up in the toilet or the garbage dump; we end up throwing it all away; in the end we die and leave everything behind. The only thing that remains in the afterlife is the love that we shared with others. Economic pendulums oscillate at opposite poles of abundance and control, versus poverty and restrictive autonomy. Where are we at these opposing extremes and where is our society heading?

The pursuit of wealth is what separates us from nature and more importantly from one another. Dr. Marsella directs our attention to “What we must do to sustain diversity in the face of pressing efforts to homogenize us as human beings into a vast consumer culture under the control of a limited few for

reasons that stand in opposition to universal human rights and human dignities” (120). Man’s needs are relatively simple, the same now as they have always been. It is our modern perception of our needs that leads us away from a simple but sustainable environment. Israel’s incredible comeback and success in rebuilding its long lost country, is the collective consciousness generated in a *kibbutz*. Natives, the world over have always lived in tribes, villages and small communities where life, work and goods were shared by all, an extended family that transcends blood lines and recognizes spiritual development by nurturing individual’s needs for identity, to contain individuality within the communal community. Marsella’s article “Diversity in a Global Era” quotes M. Wessels, “Local communities have specific methods and tools for healing such as rituals, ceremonies, and practices of remembrance. Since they are grounded in the beliefs, values, and traditions of the local culture, they are both culturally appropriate and more sustainable than other methods brought in from the outside. (Wessels, 1999, pp.274-275)”

In our profoundly individualistic and competition oriented society, people often feel alienated and alone, searching for meaning and identity, lacking the insulation of a close knit community. Our poverty becomes self-imposed when we allow ourselves to be alienated and separated from others, but this is easy to do because of the pecking order dynamic; it is risky business to show weakness in a chicken pen.

During the Great Depression, city folks moved back to the farm and grew victory gardens, and during the Vietnam war hippies moved into communes out in the country. As times get tougher and jobs scarce: people are forced to car-pool or share homes. Young adults staying home longer with parents is becoming today’s norm. Poor people must unite and solve their problems together as a team, not merely as individuals. Anna Bernasek of *Newsweek Global* informs us “It’s no secret that the rich are getting richer and that the income gap between them and everyone else in America has reached alarming proportions...What is clear though is that the faster inequality grows, the harder it will be to turn things around”(2). The corporate share-holders know the secret to their success. Will the poor learn from the rich and unite in communal community to build a sustainable future for themselves and their children? In old Hawaii’, the extended *ohana*, family was a way of life; people took care of each other, and the tribe was socially viable. Modern society places its bets on false senses of security, such as Social Security, stocks and bonds and life insurance; these are poor substitutes for

structured and close-knit organization. The modern revolving church, strictly a place of worship, cannot hope to meet all the complex needs of the poverty stricken. Life demands a 24/7 commitment.

Scientist, philosopher, gardener and author of “A Natural Way of Farming,” Masanobu Fukuoka, the late Japanese sage who achieved a sustainable way of life, advocated and lived on a communal farm. This modern day Buddha has not been recognized in his homeland, but prophets are rarely acknowledged by their own people. Fukuoka has left us with his example and books, and it is up to us to learn from them and interpret our newly found golden knowledge into practice. Masanobu Fukuoka’s multi-dimensional understanding of the natural world and human nature, farming, science, economy and philosophy resonates in deep spirituality. His work is profound unparalleled in depth and substance for our modern times. Fukuoka offers a green consciousness and working model to cure the ills of modern society.

Cool communes, like Alpha Farm in Deadwood Oregon, offer a working mechanism for governance and decision making by mandatory weekly meetings that employ the fair practice of consensus and facilitation. Amish and Mennonite communities farm the land the old fashioned way and are extremely efficient and productive in their collective and organic approach. Communal farms are places of refuge for the weary traveler, outcasts or people who crave a way back to nature and close relationships. The late great martyr and author Dietrich Bonhoeffer recognized the power of “Life Together” and the communal spirit in Germany’s Nazi Era, and how communal life can create sustainability in a time of adversity. Jean Vanier, Ph.D is a French philosopher, writer, religious and moral leader and the founder of two major international community-based organizations, one of his many publications, “An Ark For the Poor: The Story of L’Arche” Vanier poignantly illustrates the all-encompassing healing power of “inclusive communities”. All these examples, and many more like them, offer a blueprint for successful communal living: Collective sustainability based on compassionate co-operation that benefits the natural environment, the whole community as well as the individual.

Modern man’s vision quest is to rediscover the way of our ancestors if we are to regain our collective whole, intimacy of relationships, sustainability and abundance. Rich in abundance, nature provides its bounty to all of humanity; our level of peaceful co-existence with nature and one another will ultimately determine the quality of life for all the inhabitants of the planet earth. Wielding

incredible power the global corporate body is an example of unity and cooperation to us all, collectivism works for the super-rich. Sustainable communal societies can work for the poor as well, so that the precarious balance between the two can be harmoniously restored. Based on the sum total of human history, due to our genetic kinship, mankind is finally ready to recognize his common ground and to accept each other in a new light, as diverse brothers and sisters of a noble and divine human family that must equally share our common earth, a world in peril!

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