



From the Rot to the Light

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Henryk has always been a stern critic of modern Western culture. Here he goes further by proposing some new terms to widen our cultural horizons and rebuild our metaphysics.

Preamble

The title itself says it all.

Our true journey of becoming is one in which we overcome the petrified forms, and the rot around us, in favour of new openings, transcendence and Light.

Yet so often we stay stuck in the old forms. We do try to reach the Light and transcend but instead we are performing the epicycles of the old. It is not sufficient to have good intentions. It is not sufficient to criticise the old eloquently. We need to have courage, imagination and will to break the mirror in order to be on the other side of it. And then we shall realise that there was no mirror — only our own mind, which has been holding us in captivity.

We have been imprisoned systematically. And by this I mean imprisoned by various kinds of systems. By the old religious system, which is still holding some grip on us. By the scientific system, which has coerced us to understand only physical fragments of the universe — instead of its wholeness and beauty. By the socio-political system, which has flagrantly violated the principles of justice and human dignity.

Now, instead of bemoaning that we are stuck, we need to go a vision quest.

My vision is that in addition to various crises, which we have identified, such as financial, economic, political and social, we are in a much deeper crisis, which I call the metaphysical crisis. Which can be identified as a crack in our cosmic egg or a crack in our cosmological foundations — which renders to us an incoherent cosmos. And this is accompanied by a crack in our psyche — which delivers to us an incoherent human. The crippled cosmos and the crippled human make such an unwholesome couple.

The first realisation on our road to restoration is to perceive that the Era of the Great Error is ending and that the Era of Light is beginning. And the next steps should signify restoring the human worth, human dignity and human thinking.

Compassionalism as a New Proposition

The core root of Compassionalism is compassion itself, which has been known in Buddhism and many other ancient societies as the attitude of the good heart. But compassion is much more than that. Ultimately it signifies the symbiosis and solidarity of the whole universe in which all parts are connected and cooperative. This deeper metaphysical aspect of compassion is conveyed and pursued by compassionism, which is a whole and complete philosophy. Thus compassionism entails and contains:

Compassionate Cosmology: It postulates that cosmos is a benign being, and it is populated with benign and benevolent entities. Therefore, the cosmos is not cold and ruthless, as mechanicism suggests. Compassionalism does not have to prove its assumptions. Ultimate assumptions are never proven; including those of mechanicism. Let us remember that.

Compassionate Values: of respect, reverence, sharing and altruism, which were much lauded in traditional ethical systems. Again these values were not proven or justified. They were followed by wise people as good strategies for living.

Compassionate Economics: as built and developed on compassionate values. The task of compassionate economy is to bring harmony and social justice for all, not individual profit to some.

Compassionate Society, based on a *New Social Contract* of human sharing, which excludes human exploitation.

Compassionate Knowledge and Technology, which are non-harming and non-toxic, and which increase harmony between nature and humans and among humans. Actually, compassionate Cosmology implies and necessitates (also justifies) compassionate science and technology, which cannot be ruthless tools, unfriendly to people.

Compassionate Work-place, where workers are treated with respect and compassion, without exploitation and without continuous fear of being fired at anytime; and are paid decent salaries to sustain themselves.

Compassionalism is an active movement of concerned people, who take responsibility for their own lives and the lives of future generations, and who believe in the power of light and love to overcome all obstacles in creating a sane, just and equitable world.

Compassionalism vs. Capitalism

Compassionate economics must be the result of a larger metaphysical system of which it is a part, which it serves and exemplifies. It is possible to formulate and define this larger system of thought, really a world-view (or metaphysics), of which compassionate economics could be a part. I call this system COMPASSIONALISM. Some would say that it is a strange name. Well, Capitalism is a strange name too. Some would say that *compassionalism* is a nice name but not a rational system. I would respond: is Capitalism a rational system — after what we have seen of its excesses?

Present economics has been a handmaiden of Capitalism. Compassionate economics will be a bride of Compassionalism. What markedly separates these two systems (nay, these two metaphysics) are values and the conception of the human. The basic debate between capitalism and compassionalism is not over the modes of production but over the whole system: whether to continue the existing (capitalist) system or to introduce an altogether different system, such as compassionalism. *The main bone of contention is what kind of human are we trying to realise? What is the main purpose of life? And who is going to answer these questions?*

Compassionalism assumes that the world is a sanctuary. Each of us is a sanctuary. We, each of us, have the responsibility to take care of the well being of this sanctuary. We are all woven in a common net of well-being. Hence we take care of the other as a part of a larger biotic and cosmic community. Our world is holistic. We are all connected. And we strive to realise the ideals of equality and justice. Compassion in this context is not a great sacrifice but an elementary act of understanding — of how things are connected in this symbiotic and empathic universe.

The connected, holistic and reverential nature of the universe is the justification of the rationality of compassion. Compassionalism is rationally justified by its larger cosmology (all is connected and participatory), its value system (to share with others is more important than selfishly hoard), and by its eschatology (the ultimate purpose of life is self realisation and not hoarding material goods).

Capitalism starts with different premises. It claims that the individual, the atom, is more important than the whole to which it belongs. Hence selfishness is justified “rationally” because the individual atom is most important. We live in a world of disconnected atoms. It is free for all. Hence equality and justice are ignored. There is no other purpose to the universe and to individual existence but to amass material things and if possible dominate others. *Psychological domination is a substitute for self-realisation.* In the capitalist system you never lovingly unite with the other. You only exploit the other for your own purposes.

Compassionalism represents a whole belief system, a set of values and a worldview. Just like capitalism, represents a whole belief system — a set of values and a worldview. None of them is *rationally justified*. There is no external rational agency, which can validate either capitalism or compassionalism. And none of them is scientifically justified. There is no science, which can vouch for the scientific validity either of compassionalism or capitalism. *Each is justified contextually by the whole system it represents.*

So much for the justification of compassionate economics as a part of compassionalism. Let me state clearly that compassionalism is not the only alternative to consider, while searching for a new metaphysics and alternative life styles. Actually the two go hand in hand with each other. Potent metaphysics implies its corresponding life styles. On the other hand, viable and fulfilling life styles imply some metaphysical underpinnings, which are hidden deeper down.

After the crash of the financial markets in the autumn of 2008, we are all searching for alternatives. But they have been around us a plenty, including our times: from cooperative movements, such as Mondragon, in Spain, which not only established its own community but also its own university; via alternative societies such as Kibbutzim, which have been themselves schools of life; through many well tested communes,

which have been laboratories of alternative lifestyles; and let us also remember the remaining tribal societies (not yet destroyed by civilisation) — in all of them, we can see alternative economic systems flourishing.

By and large these alternative economics have been based on solidarity, sharing and altruism — broadly conceived. Usually in these alternative societies, the earth and the cosmos are considered as benign and friendly to humans. It is thus assumed that the world is good. We are good. And we cooperate with the world and are blessed by it. This is quite in contrast to the basic assumptions of the Western world view (amidst which modern capitalism thrives) — within which the world is considered as indifferent or hostile; and man is wolf to man; and nature is an object of exploitation, which should be raped if necessary (Francis Bacon’s words) in order to extract from her what we need or want.

For these reasons, contemporary capitalism (and the entire ideology of Western civilisation) has tried to discredit alternative forms of economics and alternative societies — as irrational, obsolete, good for the birds not rational human beings. This ideological warfare against alternatives has been quite fierce and intense. Actually until now, the capitalist propaganda has silenced most of its critics and intimidated most of the visionaries. Madeleine Bunting goes even further in her criticism, as she writes in the *Guardian Weekly* (10 October, 2008).

“Ultimately, neoliberal capitalism is self-destructive. We are now witnessing the collapse of this absurd economic orthodoxy that has dominated politics for nearly 30 years. Its triumphalist arrogance, its insistence on orthodoxy, has been comparable to Soviet communism in scale...we now understand that neoliberal capitalism was a form of mythology. That’s why triumphalism was necessary; you could not afford anyone to challenge the system or we might all realise we were gawping at the emperor’s nakedness.”

Cosmic Forces Aiding Compassionalism

Compassion is not an ordinary phenomenon of the human world, as for example kindness is. Kindness is nice. It helps to smoothen human relationships. But compassion is much more profound, it has deeper roots. Its nature is truly cosmic. And by this I mean that it was born in the womb of a larger cosmos, of which we ultimately became a part. And for this reason *we share the empathic ethos of the whole universe.* There is an underlying affinity of all beings in the universe. One of the expressions of this affinity of being is empathy, as we ALL come from the same family.

The most awesome phenomenon of the cosmos is Light. It has begotten all there is. Like a miraculous cosmic spider, it has woven out of itself, all the wonderful tapestries of existence and life. But Light has not been alone in this weaving miracle. It has had some powerful helpers, which of course had been its progeny — as everything comes from Light.

Among these forces the most important were: Evolution, Creativity and Transcendence. They are essential to understanding the story of the universe. Yet, our comprehension of them is so superficial. Most of the time they are treated as separate items, merely categories of knowledge. Even science is mute about their deeper meaning. It only superficially talks about so-called Darwinian evolution, missing entirely on the majesty of cosmic evolution.

So let us come to the kernel of the story. In order to unfold, Light had to create appropriate vehicles. Evolution is one of them. Now, evolution is not just movement, going haphazardly here and there... and ultimately going nowhere. Evolution is *evolving and unfolding*. This is then the essence of the creative universe: from seeds to flowers; from the blush of the flowers to their radiance; to new forms of life, and new forms of being, and new forms of understanding, and then spiritual illumination.

In this process of unfolding, *creativity* has articulated itself as a part of the vehicle of evolution. Yes, creativity is a part of evolution, and a very important one so that evolution does not become stagnant and barren. Looking at the picture genealogically, we might say that evolution is the older daughter

of Light, while creativity is the younger daughter. Creativity is restless, impetuous, sometimes uncontrollable. Such is the nature of it, both in the cosmos and in our own life.

To amend this situation of restlessness, which sometimes leads to chaos, Light created yet another daughter, whose name is Transcendence. And the name is very appropriate: Transcendence means going beyond and beyond. In order to unfold continuously, evolution must continually transcend itself, beyond all it has accomplished so far. Thus Transcendence watches and guides creativity, so it is cumulative, doubles upon itself, to create extraordinary results, which the human mind finally calls miracles of evolution. Such is an approximate picture of our dynamic, unfolding, amazing, evolutionary universe. And it must be something of that sort. Otherwise we do not understand at all its magic, its beauty, and its irresistible attraction for us.

To make a point quite explicitly, Evolution, Creativity and Transcendence are undeniable *ontological* forces, which are shaping the nature of the universe and our own universe. We are inherent parts of this universe of Light and its progeny Evolution, Creativity and Transcendence. These are the primordial forces of the universe. They are the real stuff of the universe. They are not conventional concepts, invented by science or philosophy. They are ancient dwellers of the universe.

And to this family also belongs compassion or empathy. They emerged early in the bowels of evolving cosmos, yes, to acknowledge the affinity of all beings and the empathy that works as an invisible bond to hold all forms of existence in the universe.

It is in the very nature of the universe to recognise all parts of its existence without discrimination. For all of them participated in and contributed to the whole. The original impulse for compassion was the same — to treat each human being without discrimination. This bond is unifying the entire cosmos, both human and non-human. And this bond is very ancient.

We don't need to apologise for the existence of compassion or for upholding it in our world. Compassion is an ancient traveler, along with Evolution, Creativity and Transcendence. They were created by Light in order to bring more coherence, more shine and more love. And what is the place of compassion in this entire context? A deeper reflection on the compassionate universe.

Cosmococracy

Democracy was a laudable invention of the Athenians in ancient Greece. Its purpose was to liberate people from the tyrants and oligarchs. As an idea it was a splendid invention: power to the people. The idea worked for quite a while in Athens.

Then Democracy was replaced by Theocracy within the Christian universe — for quite a number of centuries. With the waning of Christianity, Democracy, at least as an idea, returned in the industrial age.

Now, during the last several decades, Democracy has been simultaneously praised and abused, both in the communistic countries, as Socialist Democracy; and in Capitalist countries, as Industrial Democracy. The short and the long of the story is that Democracy has been in tethers for several decades. Its slogans have been used for enslaving an intimidating the people not for freedom and self-enhancement.

The time has arrived to replace Democracy by something more worthy of free people, who want to live in dignity and self-respect. And there is another important reason. We need to find a system, which is respectful of the entire cosmos and of Nature within it. For all its virtues, Democracy was a parochial invention, on the scale of the Greek Polis. We now live in an amazingly large cosmos. And we are aware of the rights of beings beyond the humans. Our scales and visions are so enlarged. And this requires also an enlargement of our moral responsibilities and our entire thinking.

We propose to enlarge the dilapidated, abused and dysfunctional Democracy with COSMOCRACY. And the new term says it all. Cosmococracy is a generalised idea of Democracy, which is universal and compassionate; it is democracy extended to all beings. Its premise is simple and overwhelmingly convincing. It is the recognition that *all powers come from the cosmos*.

Celebrating the cosmos as the power-giver leads to a political system which is not rooted in a one sided physical power, nor in the idea of Democracy for a select few (as the Greeks conceived of it) but in those *tremendous forces which brought life and human societies to existence*.



Our universal and compassionate thinking must inform us that we are all connected with the stupendous tapestry of the evolving cosmos. This recognition must inform us that seeking justice, freedom and good life cannot be confined to a few select societies. Cosmocracy is Democracy extended to the entire cosmos.

Some semantic purists might argue that “Democracy for the entire cosmos” is a meaningless phrase. Let us see whether they are right. The expression simply conveys the idea that all forms of being are entitled to their existence. It furthermore conveys the idea that all beings are entitled to their respective forms of self-actualisation. This last point is important.

All life, including human life, is a process of self-actualisation. If we cannot understand that then we cannot comprehend the meaning of our own life. Let us emphasise. The right to self-actualisation is a continuation of the right to existence. Every being has the right to exist. By the same token, every being has the right to self-actualise itself. The right to self-actualisation is one of the main principles of Universal Democracy, which we call Cosmocracy.

The tenets of Cosmocracy are not new vis a vis the major spiritual traditions of the past. When the Buddhists talk about compassion as a vehicle to helping others in their self-realisation, indirectly they attempt to bring about cosmic justice. Self-actualisation and self-fulfillment are important gospels of major religions. However in most of these religions, only human beings are considered. In the framework of Cosmocracy all beings are included. Cosmocracy signifies not only the proclamation of cosmic justice, but also the celebration of the cosmos.

Cosmocracy, here presented, is re-statement of the Kantian imperative: “Act as if the maxim of our action were to become through your will a universal law of nature.” We generalise Kant’s principle and assert: Act in such a way as if the maxim of your action were to become a yardstick of cosmic justice. Such a principle would be a lovely foundation for political systems of the future — whether we call it Cosmocracy or by some other name.

Indeed we need something as universal and far reaching as Cosmocracy to bring the human family together. Let us emphasise that Cosmocracy is not a fancy linguistic invention to enlarge our language. It is in the nature of compassionism to look deeper into the nature things, including such important institutions as Democracy. Instead of merely criticising Democracy for its defects, compassionism has gone *plus ultra* and suggested a positive and far-reaching alternative.

The Tribunal of Life

At times of transition and uncertainty, we must learn to think in new and unorthodox ways. We must have the courage to examine and challenge bequeathed dogmas. Of late some thinkers started to look critically at the very idea of efficiency. Is efficiency such an unquestioned virtue that we must bow to it regardless of the consequences? They have decided that it is not so. And they declared that in our times (and in the future) less efficiency would be beneficial for society at large and for the countless individuals, who are moaning in the yokes of efficiency.

The unrestrained pursuit of efficiency has led to the exhaustion of the works (and the elimination of many jobs) at one end of the ladder; and, at the other end to the accumulation of undeserved riches. The diminishment of efficiency would benefit both ends of the ladder in the long run.

Many will find these arguments startlingly new and unacceptable. But we are in the period of new thinking and challenging of old dogmas. The whole perspective on what is good for society must be examined and changed. The old criterion or rather a dogma that the Bottom Line should rule supreme is a pernicious piece of thinking and it should be eliminated in favor of something more worthy of human wisdom. God’s overall commandment is: *Love each other* and not the diabolical Bottom Line.

Yes they are better criteria of human action, more rational and wiser. One of these new criteria is the criterion of the Tribunal of Life, which I will present in a short poem.

Tribunal of Life

Life is a supreme judge
Judging how we behave on this earth.
Life is kind, benevolent and benign.
Life is patient, tolerant and indulgent.
But Life also set limits — for you and me.
For society and the whole human race.
It is advisable and wise to follow these limits
And not to transgress them willfully.
Otherwise unpleasant consequences follow.
Life is a supreme judge.
It tolerates the transgressions of its limits
Only to a certain point.
Then it shouts “NO!”

The Tribunal of Life is the Ultimate Bottom Line.
The Economic Bottom Line is just a trifle.
The Tribunal of Life is the real thing.
We need to learn its verdicts.
It has already spoken against poisonous technology
And other deformations of life.
It has already spoken against material progress.
Please do not say “Yes, but...”
There is no appeal from the Tribunal of Life.
You must obey and cherish it.
The Tribunal of Life is invisible but inexorable.
The Tribunal of Life
Represents the cosmic scales of justice.
You do not tamper with the Cosmos.
You do not question the Tribunal of Life.
You simply merge with them.

Summary

The world has become a sorry place of confusion and impotence. Why is that so? Because we do not take ourselves seriously. We do not take our thinking seriously. We do not take our world seriously. We are only pretending. It is a dance of Harlequins.

Philosophers are repeating their ancient mantras. Economists are intoxicated with their pseudo-theories. Politicians are just puppets manipulated by the strings held by others. What kind of people are we?

I am not a Cassandra predicting the doom. Rather I am a Diogenes searching with my lantern for human beings worthy of their salt. Yes, chagrined I am by the spectacle of continuous confusion, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

Science will not save us, as it hasn’t so far. We cannot drag the dead horse of positivism, empiricism and materialism forever. All the excesses of rampant capitalism and uncontrollable escapades of science and technology (so often toxic and harmful), have their source and roots in the mistaken assumption that materialism is the most superior worldview. It isn’t! The right path is elsewhere. Only our deeper wisdom and spiritual light can lead us from darkness to fulfilment and to a desirable future for all.

Henryk Skolimowski has been a recalcitrant believer in perfectibility of man, of human knowledge and of the future which will fulfil the human dream of the Earth being fair and just to all people and all beings. He has always believed that high ideals are more important in one’s life than being “comfortable” and continually adjusting to schemes which are ethically questionable.

DO WHAT IS RIGHT. DON’T DO WHAT IS WRONG.