

Humanity has had and has big projects. Mastery of nature is one, still going on. Middle range phenomena have been mastered, but not the micro level of viri--HIV is a current case--nor the macro level of climate--to the contrary, humanity is making it worse.

Another huge project can be called Material-somatic comfort, including health. Well-ness not ill-ness. Amazingly successful, look at an average day in what can be called the bourgeois way of life. As is well known, this second project may contradict the first project.

Other huge projects stand in line, calling on our attention.

Spiritual-mental comfort, also called happiness, well-being, is one, not to be confused with indicators of material-somatic comfort assuming that one automatically translates into the other.

Peace, both as absence of violence and as positive peace, being good to each other, is another. Between persons called friendship, love; problematic. Between nations, states, civilizations, regions very problematic. One reason: we may not have wanted it enough, too low priority relative to the others. And that also applies to:

Equality, both by lifting the bottom up meeting their needs and reducing gaps between high and low. There are those who get material and spiritual comfort from war and inequality like the present Trump-generals-billionaires regime in the USA; fascist with a strong and belligerent state, and super-capitalist in its economy¹. With none of the socialist elements in Hitler's nazism and Mussolini's fascism.

Inequality and violence, urban vs rural, hit those who produce and deliver food for all of us; one reason being urban fear of a delivery strike. China experiments with radical elimination of the urban-rural difference by moving industries to villages run by agricultural-industrial cooperatives, most or many working in both. Interesting, but let us look at cooperatives to master rural poverty.

Cooperatives as opposed to farms. Farms are companies with CEOs, farmers owning the land and family members and others tiling the soil. The risks are many: unmastered nature, conjunctures, food imports; the farms become indebted-impoverished, farmers starving, suicide.

The primary purpose of rural cooperatives is to feed themselves by sharing risks, and share gains on top of that. Members are both farmers and farm workers with risk-absorbing capacity and sharing. Poor and unemployed from towns and cities may join, at least getting food in exchange for work. There may be mental aspects: farmers being old lonely couples wanting students between terms as company, they also sustaining themselves. The old farm = company is not good enough. Nor is capital buying all the land for single crop automated farming at the expense of both human and nature's needs.

¹ "Half of the World's Wealth in the Hands of Just Eight Men" (Inter Press Service 16-01-2017). "Obscene", pathological. Who are they? Bill Gates (Microsoft), Amancio Ortega (Zara), Warren Buffet (Hathaway), Carlos Slim (Carso), Jeff Bezos (Amazon), Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook), Larry Elison (Oracle), Michael Bloomberg (Bloomberg). Six Americans, one Spaniard, one Mexican. Let Trump isolate America, or the California-Canada-China-Mexico alliance gets the upper hand.

Rural cooperatives for rural uplift, Gandhi's sarvodaya with villages as a productive units, means exactly that. But this could go beyond Gandhi being much more diverse, adjusted to local contexts.

Spain offers a fascinating example. Travel from Sevilla toward Cartagena, white, poor villages with farmers tilling small plots, the land often owned by absent land-owners, some unused, massive misery. And then suddenly Marinaleda, a commune that became a rural cooperative by getting help from the region expropriating the land-owners, the population being paid according to the work input, run by general assemblies setting aside funds for kindergarten-schools-health services, all free. Mayor, highly entrepreneurial Sánchez Gordillo. Land-owner all over Spain will do their best to prevent a repeat, but Gordillo has shown how it can be done. It will happen again.

A "modern" company offers low price-low quality products, pays workers and managers a minimum, the CEO a maximum for handing over the net profit to the board. In a cooperative they are at the same level rotating among functions. Basic input work, not capital.

They are dramatically different. The jump is dramatic. Could it be more gradual, are there in-betweens?

Starting with customers-clients: "modern" business spies on them, gets their "profiles" from IT data for "matching" products. The method is that of dictatorships. In cooperatives a producer-consumer dialogue between equals about products--like better cars, computers-- is easy, developing products together. The method is that of democracy.

Take advertising in the media, with no chance for consumers to rebut, criticizing products. Dictators get some feedback, but the media treat ads as gospel truths for fear of losing advertisers. We need a culture of open product discussion, and producers may actually find that this also serves their, not only consumer, interests.

But companies could do better. "Marketing research" uses questionnaire and interviews, they could easily include dialogues.

Take the whole exploitation aspect, squeezing downward. Companies are ow gradually accept listing "negative side-effects", especially for medicines. One day also for cars and computers.

Take the penetration of the human mind by what we often call "commercialization", buying and selling, with few or no questions asked. And look at the list of Big Projects and bring them in--does this buying-and-selling serve peace? equality? Have a look at the prices of the final product and break it down into what is paid for resources, capital, labor and profit. Customers have a right to know.

Take the segmentation of workers and of customers; trade unions and customers associations have brought them together. Good, decent companies would celebrate them, not fight them, not marginalize them from decisions but bring them in like cooperatives do, by definition.

Treat the countryside badly, and get a revenge: "Why Rural America Voted for Trump" (NYT 06-01-2017). Treat it well, let it have its own life, integrate rural and urban, and get a good country.