

DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT AND FRATERNITY AS THE ETHICAL BASES FOR WORLD POLITICS

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In his last work, *Authority and Inequality under Capitalism and Socialism*, Barrington Moore expresses his skepticism about the suppression of authoritarianism and the inequality that prevails under present-day political and social systems. Scarcities, low wages, the work structures now prevalent, the lack of social coordination and general insolidarity are some of the handicaps underlying his diagnosis. The turn of events in the Soviet Union and in Central and Eastern Europe will serve to remind the West of its own problems —problems that are global challenges, eternal challenges affecting social justice, ecology, survival, inequalities and development. It is a fact that the experience of the socio-economic and political process of unification in Germany and the Soviet crisis of change have shown the tremendous complexity of the mechanism of transition of the countries with authoritarian socialism, and also, the social gap that separates poor and rich countries within the capitalist system.

It is obvious that utopic socialism transformed into dogma and authoritarianism has failed. But, in the words of the recent Nobel prize-winner Octavio Paz: «countries with a market economy are not a model of social harmony nor of human expression».

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Socialism aspired to equality, but at the cost of *freedom* — freedom of expression, personal freedom, intellectual and creative freedom. Liberal capitalism has brought more freedom, but at the cost of *equality* — equality in employment, equality of wealth and of earnings, equality of opportunity. Both systems, even though differences exist between them, both have forgotten fellowship and fraternity, first of all among themselves, and then most particularly between the industrialized countries and the developing ones. Solidarity has been lacking both within and without. The lack of fellowship in the world today is a proof that we are still very far behind in human development, in social and economic development. And besides socialism has not produced much equality, nor has capitalism produced all that much freedom. One way to fight against totalitarianism and injustice is by cooperation among nations, horizontal and reciprocal cooperation to lighten the heavy load imposed by the inequality and asymmetry of international relations. Cooperation should come when it is needed, not at the end of a disaster or when it is no longer indispensable. This is the case of the Soviet Union who is being urged to build the house, to make the reforms, and then she will be lent the bricks. This policy is more a commercial transaction than strictly an example of international cooperation in the mainframe of fraternity.

It is essential for men and women to consider themselves not as individuals but as part of a collective conscience leading to an extraterritorial and extracultural engagement; in other words, to humankind. A political system concentrated only on one society or on one specific culture simply intensifies ethnocentrism and weakens man's ability to survive in our inter-dependent world. It is necessary to think inter-ethnically, to live together considering diversity as the source of the

creation and the dignity of man, and from the political point of view, to play down territorial interests without impairing sovereignty.

Equality among sovereign states is not often respected, however, in international assemblies, and neither are the principles of international justice and give and take. Real democratic practice is not wholly reflected in the international community. Forty-five years after the setting-up of the United Nations, five countries, victors of a war among other considerations, assume the right to judge the conduct of the other nations and impose sentences as to what is convenient or what is unsuitable for all the other civilizations of mankind. The power of veto in the United Nations is a clear example of the inequality of rights in the international community and conclusive proof of the undemocratic practices that violate ethical and moral values in world politics. In any democracy, the power of veto is a sophisticated form of the use of power over the use of reason, and thus an important cause of discord and mistrust among nations. To build a more democratic and united world, these countries should preach by example, giving up their antidemocratic power of veto and leaving the way open to authentic international democracy, the dream of the people of all nations in their struggle for peace, equality and progress. Such a step would bring incalculable degrees of confidence, an indispensable element for the creation of the «new world order» so much talked about at present.

We do not believe, however, that a move from the socialist model to out-and-out liberalism is what is required. Nor do we believe that the system of market economy has to be the same as the one that is practiced today. As Octavio Paz says, it is impossible to give up our ideals of equality or of freedom, «but a space must be sought for fraternity.» And as well as this, a new political philosophy must be created that would control

the arbitrary use of authority and unjust inequality. But to achieve this new synthesis, whether of socialism in liberty or of socially controlled capitalism, it is first necessary to achieve a worldwide economic development in which all countries are jointly involved.

This development must follow the paths of freedom, democracy, participation and equity, all within a framework of reason and order that would allow to understand the course of changes at short and long-term basis. This knowledge is required to avoid or reduce the risk of erratic market prices or stiff measures of centralized planning that lead to authoritarianism and a loss of freedom. It is a question of harmonizing ecodevelopment with social equilibrium, a task that calls for a great deal of imagination, courage and mutual assistance. Michel Rocard admits that it «is difficult to safeguard social justice day by day in a market economy, but one must remain on the side of freedom without letting the economic order slip out of the control of the people.»

It is generally accepted that orthodox liberalism has a blind faith in the market as the only source of economic rationality. The true liberal is convinced that government intervention must be reduced to the minimum; hence his wish to privatize the public sector and rule out any alternative, even of a complementary nature. The socialist system, on the other hand, has practiced the exact opposite; planning was seen as a kind of divine right of government over its citizens: control from above, from the summit, over the majority.

This artificial paradigm, strengthened by political and ideological conflict, almost invariably from irrational and dogmatic standpoints, has marked a great part of the antagonism in world economy. Can this

paradigm be destroyed? We think that cracks are already appearing in the structure, some of them due to the events in authoritarian socialism. However, it would be unjust to think in terms of winners and losers when what is at stake is the welfare of mankind and peace among nations. One must admit that when it comes to choosing between the models of the paradigm we have mentioned, we prefer the one that rests on democracy, on freedom, in spite of the grave deformations and imperfections of the liberal model, since from the aesthetic and ethic point of view, real equality is acquired only from freedom. We are convinced, however, that the solution lies not in the choice between the two models but in the quest for a model that would perfect freedom, equity and solidarity. This cannot come from simplifications nor even from a synthesis of conflicting schemes.

Human beings are very much inclined to swing from one extreme to another. The world is full of dichotomies and asymmetries. One way to evolve is to bring the edges of the paradigm towards the center, integrating rather than fragmenting. History is full of examples of the destruction of what had been built, to bring in a system that then seemed the most desirable. Or, as at present, one extreme is being practically demolished, and people think that the only alternative is the opposite extreme, or if not the only alternative, at least the best available. And this leads society to an ideological conformity that inhibits the capacity for creativity and for reflection, as well as the search for new options or alternatives. Revolutionary action is unnecessary and dangerous but revolutionary thought is indispensable. Education is the key to bring democracy and human development to a successful end.

Efforts are being made to improve education, social behavior and practice, and much has been achieved. Day by day, more freedom is won,

and thus more opportunities, more social and political participation, more access to education, and more sharing in cultural activity. Little by little the concept of development is coming to be focussed on man, even though it is still insufficient and unequal. Thus, for the first time, the *1991 Report on Human Development* of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) includes an *index of freedom*. With all the limitations inherent in a concept so abstract, but at the same time so real, it considers the relationship between the quality of life and human rights in the various countries. The combination of the most important elements of development —social, cultural, ethical, political and economic— gives a more precise picture of development in world politics. The consideration of such aspects as pluralism, ethnic equality, multiparty elections, minorities, equal opportunities for both sexes, the teaching of ideas and thinking, the right to travel and to hold meetings freely, free access to information and many others, as well as the classical questions of literacy, purchasing power and life expectancy, gives a fairer and less simplistic vision of human development.

Then again, the basis of human progress is not in a return to the past, nor is it in the present; it is to anticipate the future; to go forward with the awareness of what could and should have been done and has not been done. The objective is to conceive new ideas, methods, values and attitudes. The utopias have nearly always been taken over by ideological extremists. In this century, they brought in the leftist utopia, or the terrible utopia of the extreme right —fascism or nazism— as the only proprietors of the desirable goals for human destiny. On one hand, a betrayal of the collectivist ideal, and on the other the egocentrism and racism of the minority in control. The utopian idea of democracy in the terms of the French Revolution was downgraded, and nowadays liberty, equality and

fraternity are paradigms relegated to the economic sphere. But would it not be possible to build utopia within the framework of democracy? Isn't democracy after all, a utopia? We should begin by analyzing the components of democracy in relation to human development.

Freedom produces development, and development produces freedom in an inevitable interaction. But the development we refer to has a human face; it is global, holistic, integral. In economic terms, freedom and development do not necessarily interact in the same way; in other words, economic development does not imply freedom. Some dictatorships have had notable economic growth; Spain in the sixties, and Chile during Pinochets regime, suffered violation of many of their citizen's freedom, but their economies flourished. On the contrary some democratic countries have seen their economy decline. So economic policy must not be confused with freedom, nor democracy with economic development. Hence the novelty of the 90s *U.N. Development Report* in dealing with development in a more comprehensive term. Human development goes hand in hand with democracy and with the utopian dimension we mentioned earlier. There can be no **development centered in mankind** unless society assumes the genuine options of liberty, equality and fraternity. And this implies the eradication from democratic political practice of four crucial aspects: corruption of any kind, concentration of power, nationalism and ethnocentrism, and the separation of the people from decision-making by the democratic government.

In an even wider sense, the suppression of frontiers, diffusion of power among the whole people, inter-ethnic development and respect for minorities are essential to international and intra-national progress. Democracies in which authoritarian practices are concealed, or any kind of

discrimination permitted, are guilty of a malevolent use of power. The learning process often implies a relinquishing of old habits and undesirable behaviors. Politicians must abandon double talk and half truths that distort the truth. This habit, ingrained in political practice, especially when it is used to win popular support, is dishonest, and it undermines the democratic system which should be soundly based on honest and transparent behavior and values.

So to base the political division of the world of the future on ideological standpoints of **left** or **right** is senseless. From the right, from the left, from conservatism or radicalism and even from the ambiguity of the center, bad policies can be practiced, in which the extremes of the systems meet and melt-down. The ideological position that focuses on the complexity of human development cannot possibly be simplified into such vague and empty expressions as these extremes we have mentioned. They must be stated in terms of those who are in favour of human rights and those who violate them; of those who work for the common good and those who extend their freedom at the expense of the freedom of others; of those who distribute equality and those who accumulate privileges; of those who defend diversity and those who try to impose a uniform culture; of those who respect other opinions and those who practice intolerance; of those who accept the will of the people and try to administer the power they have been granted and those who misuse it or turn it to their own benefit; of those who have an ethical sense of life and those who feel no obligation to mankind.

These antagonistic paradigms, and others that could be derived from conceptions centered in man, call for economic and social policies much wider and deeper than a simple market economy; at least they call for a

social market economy and for other measures to ensure that the economy does not pass out of the control of the people. The most important policies for integral development are found in **capitalization in human beings** and in the safeguard of natural resources and the protection of the environment. Beyond any doubt, the immediate priorities of the democratic society of nations must aim at overcoming the most merciless forms of inequality, poverty, ignorance, sickness and discrimination.

Progress, considered as innovation in all human activity, implies the decision at the heart of the national and international conscience in favour of the active participation of all the people, and also permanent changes in axiological, social and economic systems. This should allow the generation of new structures of production, consumption, education and leisure at the service of the people. In other words, development in freedom demands a fusion of economic and social factors in such a way that the population may benefit from the services they provide. Unless economic policy is organized with a view to quality rather than quantity, development will be unequal, so instead of a predominantly monetary economic operation, emphasis should be placed on the promotion of employment, education, the expansion of science and technology, and on the quality of life.

However, all these policies and activities in favour of development would be submerged unless measures were adopted to strengthen freedom and democracy by the search for common goals, and their expression in sociocultural pluralism and dialogue. Only by accepting the pluralism of ideas, cultures and achievements and of their open discussion in political dialogue, is it possible to accomplish unity in diversity in which individual and collective creativity may be expressed. The inspiration of the democratic task is based on the guarantee of full practice for the plural

vocation of those who form part of it, and of the adoption of all the values expressed in dialogue to strengthen neighborliness and equality.

This also means the evolution of democracy towards structures and political practices which make it more and more organic and comprehensive, an evolution tending to unite the people with their representatives in areas not strictly political. To this end, people should be encouraged to take part in the exercise of democratic power in all its manifestations with a view to controlling parliamentary activity and expressing the will of all levels of the community. In this regard there is an urgent need to establish the appropriate channels of political, economic and social participation beyond political parties and the simple act of voting. To some extent the parliament controls the government, depending on the election system. But the key question is: who controls the parliament and other political institutions? Should the people have to wait for the next election in order to evaluate the effectiveness of their representatives? Evaluation is an ongoing process that cannot be stopped for any period of time.

Achieving true democracy demands a whole-hearted and responsible participation of the different components of society including minority and majority groups. Both the government and the parliament must stand as efficient policy makers and as an administrative entity for society aspirations and expectations. This will require the establishment of multiple mechanisms of participation of control and countercontrol within a flexible structure in order to allow permanent changes if the people are to recover the trust they are losing in their politicians. The government will be aware of the expectations of the people and will adopt measures of democratic planning for the needs of all the social sectors, measures

demanded by democracy itself as an expression of cultural, ideological and social pluralism.

All these ideas bring us back to fraternity as the essential element of human development. The word *fraternity* is often changed to *solidarity* to make it seem more pragmatic, less utopian, more in keeping with present day behavior so averse to idealism and love as the maximum ethical and aesthetic expression of mankind. But solidarity in the sense of sticking together is not enough. In addition to sticking together, it is necessary to unite in concord, sharing the present and the future, sensibly and peacefully. So fraternity must be proclaimed as the most legitimate expression of the intercultural and inter-ethnic life of the whole world. And if this makes sense for one society or one nation, how much more it has when applied to international ethics, in the enormously rich diversity which is the greatness of our world.

The diversification of cultures is the only way in which man may enhance his inventiveness and achieve greater freedom. One of the most serious risks facing mankind is that of cultural uniformity. But this does not imply any increase or strengthening of nationalism. In other words, according to Bertrand Russell, «The things which man will desire for his own country will no longer be things which can only be acquired at the expense of others, but rather those things in which the excellence of any one country is to the advantage of all the world.» It is a practical way of being able ***to think globally and act locally***. Again, quoting Russell in his *Portraits from Memory*, where he appeals as a human being to human beings: «remember your humanity, and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you cannot, nothing lies before you but universal death.»

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