

TRIGLAV CIRCLE MEETING, OUGNY/LE VIGNOT, 5-10 JULY 2009

WORKING PAPER No 1

ISSUES/QUESTIONS SUGGESTED BY CONVERSATIONS OF THE CIRCLE

I The ambition, the raison d'être of the Circle is *to enrich the public discourse*.

Questions:

- Is there a “public discourse”? What is this “public discourse”? Is it the UN discourse? The discourse of the public media with a global reach? Is it what has been called by Isaiah Berlin the “spirit of the time”?
- Is the public discourse aimed at by the Circle another word for the dominant culture, or the global civilization that might emerge?
- Why “enriching” and what is meant by it? In what ways is the public discourse poor? “We” say poor “ethically and spiritually”. Leaving aside the meaning of these terms, if the “target” is the discourse of public institutions with power, would it not be more appropriate to encourage them to be more attentive to facts? More interested by the common good? More willing to promote international law? More democratic?
- Put differently, what is the answer of the Circle to those who contend that the public discourse (of governments and international organizations) has to remain sober and limited to issues governments have been created for, that is the provision of security – in the various meanings of the word- to their citizens? This liberal-pragmatist tradition, or Anglo-Saxon tradition, is not necessarily conservative and has a lot of credentials...Why introduce the “ethico-spiritual” dimension in what should be “only” a matter of “good” and “decent” government? Is the UN different in that regard from traditional public institutions?

Related issues/questions:

- Is the work of the Circle in need of a somewhat more limited focus, or is it appropriate to continue considering a variety of questions of global interest with the help of an ethico/spiritual angle, or perspective?
- How to improve the visibility of the Circle? But is it necessary, and why?

- Should we develop links with universities, with other NGOs?
- Should we seek financial resources, or/and resources related to specific meetings/conferences?

II The Triglav Circle is born from a UN Conference – the Social Summit- and seek to contribute to the dissemination of the **objectives and policies recommended by this Summit.**

Questions:

- As the UN role on what might be called macro social and economic matters is being drastically reduced what sense does it make to continue to place the Circle's reflections within a UN perspective?
- On the other hand, the UN is involved in humanitarian issues and some attempts are being made to use it as a forum for an organized dialogue among religions and civilizations. Should the Circle move in this direction?
- The text adopted in Copenhagen in 1995 has been forgotten in the public discourse of international organizations, but current circumstances vindicate a number of its provisions. Should the Circle try to contribute to a revival of the "spirit of Copenhagen", which is the spirit of the great world conferences convened by the UN at the end of the 20th century? For this, the first task would be to write a two-three pages text explaining this "spirit" and its present relevance.

III "We" often say that the dominant culture, or the modern Western civilization, or the spirit of the time, is shaped by a form of **instrumental rationality** supposedly placing human beings and societies in a sort of straightjacket symbolized by the "cost-benefit analysis".

Questions:

- What is precisely meant by this term "instrumental rationality"?
- What conception of reason do we have? Opposed to sentiments? To emotions? To passions?
- When we say that different sources of knowledge have to be "tapped", are we trying to find again the Reason of the philosophes of the

Enlightenment? Or are we contrasting reason with intuition and revelation?

- How do we see the role of science and the domain of its application in the world of today and in the world we wish to build?

IV “We” often deplore the consumerism and **materialism** of the time. We contrast the market economy and the **market society**

Questions:

- How do we account for the fact that the denunciation of materialism has been a favorite theme of “public intellectuals” for centuries?
- What are we precisely deploring when we use this term “materialism”?
- Are there “market societies” in today’s world?
- How do we see the “public” and the “private” sectors?
- What is the “Triglavian alternative” to a market society?

V In the Triglav “constitution” it is stated that we are not a “**religious group**” but that we are nevertheless interested in the **spiritual realm**”.

Questions:

- Is this distinction between the religious and the spiritual realms tenable?
- How do we see the situation and the role of religions in the contemporary world?
- Is there a secular spirituality? (spiritualite laique)
- Should we pursue the reflection on the concept of “public religion”?

VI Do the reflections of Triglav imply the possibility or the desirability of the emergence of a **harmonious global society**?

Questions:

- What would be the contours of such a society?
- Is this a repeat of traditional utopias? Or is it imposed by the survival of humankind?
- What is the meaning of democracy at the global level?

- Should Triglav focus its reflections on such harmonious global society?

VII The “work” of Triglav is based on a number of **assumptions, convictions and beliefs**. A critical look at these would be useful. Examples:

- Human beings are perfectible.
- Societies are also perfectible and the two “efforts” and “movements upward” are linked.
- The general interest, or the common good are notions that can receive an operational content.
- Power ought to be and can be a service. Public institutions have the vocation to be benevolent.
- Threats to humankind, such as atomic destruction, global warming, loss of bio-diversity, loss of languages and cultures, are best addressed by international or global institutions.
- Human dignity is both a fundamental principle and objective of society.
- Human rights are universal and inseparable.

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VIII Has the Circle something to say on the current **crises?** (see the summary of the March meeting in Cambridge)