The Society of the Future in Political Focus

A Christian Perspective

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This paper attempts to identify some of the key dislocations in contemporary society in order to arrive at a provisional prognosis of "the society of the future." The scope of the paper will be broad rather than specific. It starts out with certain basic definitions of religion, culture, society, and civilization, and briefly indicates how the interface between them in the long run shapes the future of civilizations and the societies within them. Then it outlines the fundamental agents in a developed society and depicts the areas of tension among them. I will argue that the "future of society" will to a great extent depend upon the manner in which areas of tension are dealt with. It should be kept in mind that this paper is not written by a sociologist but by a political theorist. My immediate purpose is to elicit responses to my approach for future correction and refinement. The theoretical frame of reference of the paper is the social philosophy of the Amsterdam school of Christian thought founded by Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) and D.H.T. Vollenhoven (1892-1979).

Religion and society

A society is the interaction among persons, institutions, and associations in a particular time and place. In dealing with "the society of the future," one is confronted with the question of *societal change*, the forces that occasion such change, and our ability to identify those forces. My approach to this complex of questions can be schematized in the light of five terms which I will describe by selecting definitions for each from Webster's unabridged *Third New International Dictionary of the English Language*.

1. *Religion:* "the personal commitment to and serving of God or a god with worshipful

devotion, conduct in accord with divine commands especially as found in accepted sacred writings or declared by authoritative teachers, a way of life recognized as incumbent on true believers, and typically the relating of oneself to an organized body of believers."

2. *Culture*: "the total patterns of human behavior and its products embodied in thought, speech, action, and artifacts and dependent upon man's capacity for, learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations through the use of tools, language, and systems of abstract thought."
3. *Society*: "a community, nation, or broad grouping of people having common traditions, institutions, and collective activities and interests."
4. *State*: "a body of people permanently occupying a definite territory and politically organized under a sovereign government almost entirely free from external control and possessing coercive power to maintain order within the community."
5. *Civilization*: "the whole of the advances of human culture and aspirations beyond the purely animal level."

My basic approach can be summarized as follows: (1) Religion, as the source of the fundamental norms by which human beings live, is the most significant factor in the advance or regression of a civilization. (2) Religion expresses itself in the multiplicity of cultures that can exist simultaneously within a single civilization. (3) The impetus from both religion and culture is the prime factor in the structuration of societies that coexist within a civilization. (4) In developed societies, the state provides the common legal framework—the public realm—for the interaction among society's main agents: persons, institutions, and associations.

The history of mankind is a constant movement from religions to civilizations by way of cultural aspirations and societal structurations.[1] (In many areas of the globe, this movement from religion has been arrested at culturally undifferentiated and societally tribal stages. The main lines in the history of mankind are to be found in the major civilizations originating in the major religions: Judaism, Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Humanism.) The primacy of the movement from religion to civilization does not imply a denial of reverse influences, of causal impacts of society on culture or of sociocultural codeterminants on religion. But I am concerned with the primary factor, which is religion. In articulating this basic premise, I take issue with the predominant view among most contemporary sociologists who argue the reverse, namely, that social forces ultimately set the direction in the history of civilizations, and that religions are superstructural epiphenomena of the societal

[1] See Christopher Dawson, *The Dynamics of World History* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956), especially the section on "Christianity and World History".

substructures. I thus also reject the marxian notion that the societal relations of (economic) production are the dominant factors in the advance or regression of cultures and civilizations.

Societal actors

The agents or actors in developed societies are primarily these:

1. *Persons*. Individual men and women constitute the first category of agents in society. These are persons because they have been created in "God's own image." They are "individual" persons because they are individual centers of responsibility: they are able to respond *individually* to the norms or oughts (which God has) established for their existence. While I am willing to use *individual* as an adjective, I am hesitant to employ it as a noun, since persons are never cut off [in-dividual, a-tom] from their fellow human beings, who conceive them, give them birth, nurture them, etc. Human beings are always "members one of another." But the communal nature of the human race does not eliminate the "individual" nature of personhood.
2. *Institutions*. Institutions are the social entities that embrace persons as their members "to an intensive degree, continuously or at least for a considerable part of their life, and such in a way independent of their will."[2] In developed societies, there are basically four such institutions: marriage, family, church, and state.
3. *Associations*. These are communities established on the basis of the principle of voluntary joining or leaving by individual members. In free, developed societies they are numerous since they are generally founded by individuals in order to achieve common interests or goals. Associations comprise entities like business enterprises, schools, universities, clubs, political parties, labour unions, etc.

In viewing persons, institutions, and associations as fundamental societal actors, I reject the universalistic notion that they are essentially subsystems or parts of a more encompassing system called society.[3] "Society" is not a system or whole which embraces them as parts or subsystems. Rather, society is the structured linkage between persons, institutions, and associations. "Society" is a term comparable to "metropolis" which in effect is a mini-society linking societal agents as described above with transportation systems, communication systems, sewage systems, parks, etc., in a particular geographic area. Such urban linkage does not make a family, a church, or a legal firm a subsystem of a

[2] Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris; Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed; 1957), vol. 3, p. 187. Cf. L. Kalsbeek, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd's Thought* (Toronto: Wedge, 1975), pp. 196-268.

[3] Cf. Ervin Laszlo, *Introduction to Systems Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 98-118; and David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: John Wiley, 1965).

metropolitan system, which would then in turn be a part of a larger societal system.

Criterion: Simultaneity of norm realization

Since the future of any society will depend upon its health, and what is done about it in case it is found wanting, we cannot avoid the question of what constitutes societal "health." A society is sound if it enhances the simultaneous embodiment of norms or oughts that fit human nature.[4] Norms or oughts ultimately derive from religion, and the social scientist cannot evade the question whether a particular religion provides oughts that fit or inhibit human nature. I take my stance in the religion of the Bible,, and thus assume that the norms it reveals fit human nature and that obedience to these norms leads to "the good life" or "blessing"—to use biblical terminology; cf. Deuteronomy 26-28. The all-encompassing ought in the religion of the Bible is the command "to love God above all and our neighbor as we love ourselves." This dual ought embraces a variety of sub-oughts, like justice, stewardship, kindness, trust, honesty, etc. These oughts must be "done" or "performed" by human beings in any society at every stage of history. A society is sound if it enhances their "performance," their "simultaneous realization." The differentiation of societies, including the establishment of institutions and associations, is meaningful if it increases the spheres of freedom within which persons can act responsibly—that is, respond to the oughts that fit their natures. That differentiation, further, should be so harmonious that it contributes to the "simultaneity" of the performance of norms. If differentiation meets these criteria, we can speak of an "open society" or a process of disclosure.[5]

The crisis of the welfare society

From the vantage point of the sociologist there are numerous dysfunctions in contemporary society. There is the alienation in the life of persons, especially in the metropolitan industrial areas. There is erosion of community in the institutions—marriage, family, church and state—which constitute the more lasting structures of continuity and cohesion in society. There is the monetization of the voluntary associations and the professions. There is the search for alternative meanings in mass culture—sports, music, sex, vacations—made possible by the rapid development of science, technology, and industry.

In this paper I will point to three crucial societal problems the resolution of which

[4] The notion of the "simultaneity of norm realization" was developed by the Dutch economist T.P. van der Kooy. Cf. Bob Goudzwaard, *Capitalism and Progress: A Diagnosis of Western Society* (Toronto: Wedge; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; 1979), p. 65n.

[5] This notion of a process of disclosure is dependent on Dooyeweerd's view of history. Cf. his *Roots of Western Culture* (Toronto: Wedge, 1979), especially chapters 3 and 4. See also Bob Goudzwaard, *op. cit.*, Part Four.

will, I believe, shape the contours of the society of the future. These problems are the crisis of the welfare state, the nuclear arms race between the United States and Russia, and the tensions between the civilization of the West and the non-western civilizations.

The most common problem within the advanced industrial societies of western civilization is the crisis of the welfare society. This crisis has deep roots in the history of the West, and coming to grips with this crisis requires cognizance of those roots.

The crisis of the welfare society is closely related to the crisis of liberal humanism which has been the public religion of the Anglo-Saxon countries for more than a century. Humanism is the religion of human personality, in its individual or communal expression. It is in essence an immanentization or secularization of the christian religion. George Grant describes humanism—"modernity"—as "at one and the same time a critical turning away from our origins and also a carrying along of some essential aspects of them."[6] Humanism carried along from Christianity its high estimation of the worth of the human person; it turned away from the christian notion that this worth is founded in man's creation in the image of God. This turning away entailed an immanentization[7] of the horizon of meaning in human existence: a turning away from the meaning of human existence in the worship, service, and glorification of God the Creator-Redeemer to the worship, service, and glorification of man(kind). This immanentization can be expressed in a wider diversity of cultural aspirations—in art, science, politics, industrial development, etc. Humanism has contributed to a phenomenal development in each of these areas of the culture of the modern age. Since the seventeenth century this immanentization increasingly focused on the acquisition of material security for the human person, justified by the modern notion of the natural law of self-preservation as developed by John Locke in his *Two Treatises of Government*. The pursuit of the acquisition of material security—"life, liberty, and property"—was made possible by the rise of modern science and technology and contributed greatly to the alleviation of the material burdens of the life of the masses in the advanced industrial societies. At the same time, the intensity of this pursuit has led to the materialism that is one of the outstanding marks of our culture. We have come to the discovery that

[6] George Grant, *Time as History* (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1969), p. 22. For a more extensive discussion of Grant's view of modernity, see Bernard Zylstra, "Philosophy, Revelation and Modernity: Crossroads in the Thought of George Grant," in Larry Schmidt, ed., *George Grant in Process* (Toronto: Anansi, 1978), pp. 148-156. For a discussion of the role of the Renaissance in the secularization of Christianity, see M. Howard Rienstra, "The Religious Problem of the Renaissance," in Henry Vander Goot, ed., *Life is Religion: Essays in Honor of H. Evan Runner* (St. Catherines, Ont.: Paideia, 1981), pp. 45-60.

[7] Eric Voegelin has dealt with this immanentization in most of his writings. Cf. his *From Enlightenment to Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1975). The development of Voegelin's understanding of the modern immanentized gnosticism is described in Gregor Sebba, "History, Modernity and Gnosticism," in Peter J. Opitz and Gregor Sebba, eds*., The Philosophy of Order* (Stuttgart: Klett-Gotta, 1981), pp. 190-241.

within the immanentized horizon of modernity the pursuit of material well-being very quickly becomes an end in itself which radically inhibits what I have earlier described as the cultural simultaneity of norm realization. The singleminded acquisition of material well-being has caused phenomenal dislocations in society. Hannah Arendt has keenly described this development in the modern age.

> A hundred years after Marx we know the fallacy of this reasoning; the spare time of the *animal laborans* is never spent in anything but consumption, and the more time left to him, the greedier and more craving his appetites. That these appetites become more sophisticated, so that consumption is no longer restricted to the necessities but, on the contrary, mainly concentrates on the superfluities of life, does not change the character of this society, but harbors the grave danger that eventually no object of the world will be safe from consumption and annihilation through consumption.[8]

By "objects of the world" Arendt refers to the realm of the objects human beings make over the generations to protect their life on earth and to give them joy. Our homes, our furnishings, our instruments, our cities, our art belong to that world—the realm of culture, made by human hands, in distinction from the realm of nature, which is a given for mankind. That realm of culture, developed over centuries, even millennia, is endangered by the materialistic immanentization of our "horizon of happiness.[9] The future of our society will, in part, depend upon our ability to avert this danger. We will, I believe have to meet a number of conditions if that is to be accomplished.

Firstly, the level of consumption will have to be decreased. I will again rely upon the insight of a careful observer of our society to describe the complexities involved in meeting this condition. Charles Taylor, in an essay published ten years ago, indicated quite rightly that the problem of the reduction of consumption is common to capitalist and socialist societies since the economic self-image of both is the same, *viz.* the self-image of a production association bent on transforming the surrounding natural world to meet the needs and fulfill the ends of man. This is Taylor's assessment of the difficulty we face in meeting this first condition:

> The drive to consumption is therefore no adventitious fad, no product of clever manipulation. It will not be easy to contain. It is tied up with the economic self-image of modern society, and this in turn is linked to a set of powerfully entrenched conceptions of *what the value of human life consists in*. This is why it is not realistic to treat the infra-structure of technological society as an instrument which we can use at will for any ends we choose. Rather, as long as

[8] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), p. 115.
[9] This term is Bob Goudzwaard's in *Capitalism and Progress*. Cf. pp. 139f., and 242ff.

> technological society is held together and given its legitimacy and cohesion by this economic self-image, it will tend to remain fixed on its present goals, the perpetual increase in. production and the ever-widening bonanza of consumption. If we are to build a society with radically. different priorities, one which will.not be driven by this mania of consumption, *then we will have to evolve a different foundation for technological society,* a quite different self-definition to serve as the basis of its cohesion.[10]

Secondly, governments will have to return to fiscal responsibility. More than sixty years ago Joseph Schumpeter depicted the *political* aspect of the problems of contemporary society.

> The fiscal capacity of the state has its limits not only in the sense in which this is self-evident and which would be valid also for a socialist community, but in a much narrower and, for the tax state, more painful sense. If the will of the people demands higher and higher public expenditures, if more and more means are used for purposes for which private individuals have not produced them, if more and more power stands behind this will, and if finally all parts of the people are gripped by entirely new ideas about private property and the forms of life—then the tax state will have run its course and society will have to depend on other motive forces for its economy than self-interest. This limit, and with it the crisis which the tax state could not survive, can certainly be reached. Without doubt, the tax state *can* collapse.[11]

During the last few years the governments in the advanced industrial societies are beginning to acknowledge this problem.[12] The election of Ronald Reagan is a sign of this.

Thirdly, technological development will have to be readjusted to an economy of "enough" instead of an economy of abundance. This will prove to be extremely difficult. Jacques Ellul and George Grant doubt whether the West can escape its technological fate.[13] In any case, reindustrialization of our productive systems entails extremely complex structural problems.[14]

Fourthly, our society needs a new spiritual foundation. To use Charles Taylor's words, "we will have to evolve a different foundation for technological society." Daniel Bell, at one time an erstwhile exponent of the liberal intelligentsia and therefore a defender of "the end of

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[10] Charles Taylor, "The Agony of Economic Man," *in Essays on the Left: In Honour of T.C. Douglas* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), p. 232. Emphasis added.
[11] Joseph Schumpeter, "The Crisis of the Tax State" (1918), in W.F. Stolper and R.A. Musgrave, eds., *International Economic Papers,* no. 4 (New York: MacMillan, 1954, pp. 5-34) at p. 24.
[12] See "Reassessing the Welfare State, *Time,* January 12, 1981, p. 22. See also "Sweden: A Survey," in *The Economist,* November 15, 1980. Special insert.
[13] Cf. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Knopf, 1964); George Grant, *Technology and Empire* (Toronto: Anansi, 1969).
[14] Cf. Emma Rothschild, "Reagan and the Real Economy, *The New York Review of Books,* February 5, 1981, pp. 12ff.

ideology" in our "affluent society," has come to the realization that the outbursts of modernism have stretched the limits of our society, and now propagates a modern equivalent of Puritanism.[15] Bell argues the case for a new reformation'[16] largely from a sociofunctional point of view. If I am correct in viewing religion as the origin of meaning in human life, and therefore the ultimate source of the direction of a society, then a "new reformation" is more than a functional need for cohesion in the social order. The future of our society will depend, in the final analysis, on our individual and communal conversion from the idol of material progress and the 'god' of the various christian groupings to an acceptance of the living God, Who made all things and Who is remaking all things.

The left-right dichotomy and nuclear arms

The contours of the society of the future will depend not only upon the resolution of the crisis of the welfare state, which is in the first place a problem *within* each of the advanced industrial societies of the West. There are also the tensions *between* these societies. After the collapse of the Roman. Empire, the christian church managed to sustain relative peace within the West for a thousand years. But in the modern era, the societies of the West have witnessed increasing conflicts. These were occasioned by the rise of national states, the break-up of the Roman Church (which led to the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and which still find their contemporary echoes, as in Northern Ireland), and later by the imperialisms of the various western European states.

The political expression of the humanist spirit of modernity regularly assumed imperialist form.[17] That spirit has assumed various degrees of radicalism which we popularly describe as "right-center-left." These have largely shaped the different political ideologies in the western countries. Due to a complexity of historical and geographic reasons, the two dominant versions of humanist modernity—capitalism and marxism—are entrenched in the societies of Russia and the United States, both politically organized as empires,[18] though with quite differing degrees of injustice and tyranny. Both of these empires have aspired for hegemony in western civilization since their victory over fascism in 1945. Imperial aspirations are always a threat to peace and justice; such a threat implies

[15] Cf. Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976). For a critical assessment of Bell, see Bernard Zylstra, "A Neoconservative Critique of Modernity: Daniel Bell's Appraisal," *Christian Scholar's Review*, vol. 7, number 4 (1978), pp. 337-355.
[16] Bell, *op. cit.,* p. 168.
[17] Cf. Bernard Zylstra, "Modernity and the American Empire'," *International Reformed Bulletin,* winter-spring issue (no. 68-69), 1977, pp. 3-19. For a discussion of .modernity and imperialism, see also Eric Voegelin, *The Ecumenic Age* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974) and Geoffrey Barraclough, "Eric Voegelin and the Theory of Imperialism," in *The Philosophy of Order* (1981), *op. cit.*, pp. 173-189.
[18] On the imperial nature of the United States, see George Grant, "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," in *Technology and Empire,* pp. 61-78; and William Appleman Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

unimaginable destruction of human lives if it is accompanied by the presence of nuclear arms. The to-be-or-not-to-be of any society in the West will depend upon a multilateral willingness and ability to reduce the threat of nuclear destruction.

I believe that this threat can be reduced if our posture toward international relations among states within the West undergoes a drastic change to reflect more adequately both new political realities as well as the norms that pertain to those realities.

Perhaps it is relevant here to draw a comparison between the current US-USSR relations on the one hand and the rift within Europe that climaxed in the first and second world wars. In the ninth century, the empire of Charlemagne embraced what today is France and West Germany. The culture of the former had been Latinized; the latter remained Germanic. When this empire disintegrated, conflicts between the Latin and the Germanic parts of western Europe marked its history for a thousand years. The futility of these conflicts was finally realized in 1945 when both Germany and France had nearly destroyed each other. Since that time France and Germany have been able to settle their differences in a non-military manner.

While this occurred, the focus of tension moved away from western Europe to the geographic periphery of western civilization: Russia and the United States. These empires differ radically in religion, culture, and societal structure. These differences cause immense conflicts precisely because they originate from the same civilizational geopolitical arena. But the short period since 1945 has already shown that, none of these conflicts can be resolved by the use of nuclear arms. This was evident in the crises in Berlin in 1948, Korea in 1950, Hungary in 1956, Cuba in 1961, Viet Nam in the 1960s, the Middle East since 1947, Iran in 1978, Afghanistan in 1980, and Poland and El Salvador in 1981. AS a matter of fact, the very power of nuclear arms paralyzes these empires not only in their contribution to an international legal order—for which flexible, efficient conventional weapons systems are much more effective—but also in the pursuit of their respective interests—which can as a rule be achieved by diplomatic, economic, and technological means. In the international society of the future, the contribution of Russia and the United States to a just international legal and economic order will be measured by their concrete alleviation of injustice in Central America, in South America, in southern Africa, in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in Poland, etc.—not by an increase in their nuclear arsenal, the use of which violates the relevant canons of the classic tradition of international law.[19] In the *societas societatum* which is the civilization of the West there is the real possibility for peace in the future if its two major powers are forced to admit the futility of the spiraling nuclear-arms race—to which by definition there is no end. The birth of Solidarity in Poland—so far the most significant

[19] Cf. Peter H. Kooijmans, "De kernwapens en het volkenrecht[Nuclear Arms and International Law], *Antirevolutionaire staatkunde*, vol. 50 (1980), pp. 398-406.

political event in the 1980s—proves both the internal exhaustion of the Russian empire and the possibility of creative beginnings within totalitarian regimes. The military support of the semifascist regime in El Salvador by the United States reveals the relative bankruptcy of its foreign policy. Nations like Canada could play a significant role in redirecting the society of the West if it would question—as several western European states are doing today—the direction of NATO's nuclear modernization and the economic "interdependence" between the "north" and the "south".

The West and the non-West

The widest range of relations in the society of the future consists of the linkages among world cultures and civilizations. I will briefly consider this range from the limited vantage point of the relation between the western civilization on the one hand and nonwestern civilizations on the other. The rapid change in this relation today will markedly alter the future of our society.

I believe that we have arrived at the end of an era in the relation between the West and non-West. The era that is now drawing to a close is the age of Europeocentrism or, more broadly speaking, the alleged superiority and primacy of the West. This era was initiated by the crusades of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in the Mediterranean basin; intensified after 1492 by the colonial conquests of Spain, Portugal, France, England, and Holland; and solidified especially by the British, Russian, and American empires in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The collapse of the colonial regimes during and after the second world war introduced the end of western centrism from a political point of view. The rapid development of new states in Asia and Africa began to fill the political vacuum in the post-colonial period. But between 1950 and 1975 the industrial and technological superiority of the West sustained its position as the "centre" of world history. From out of this centre, the "modernization" of the non-West would receive its primary impetus, under the aegis either of Russia or the United States. In the light of this conception of world history, we have become accustomed to speaking of the first, second, and third worlds.

This is, of course, a mistake, since there are numerous worlds, as Alexander Solzhenitsyn observed in his 1978 Harvard University convocation address. These worlds are distinguished from each other, not primarily by their different systems of economic production but by their various cultures and religions.

The recognition of this will be one of the outstanding features of the society of the future. We will be confronted by the revitalization of the self-identity of non-western civilizations and cultures. This revitalization has already been in process for a number of decades, and we can expect it to continue. The first major phenomenon in this process was the breakaway of India from the British Empire under the guidance of Gandhi. A second

phenomenon—even more significant—was the takeover of the direction of China by Mao-tse-tung—on "marxist" premises to be sure but nonetheless on indigenous Chinese terms. A third instance of this process is the nationalism in South East Asia, which caused the elimination from that scene first of the French and then of the Americans. A fourth instance is the astonishingly rapid politicization of the African continent, in the sub-Sahara societies moving from tribal structures to state formations in little more than a generation. A fifth instance is the renewal of religious, cultural, and political self-consciousness in what I like to call the Islamic Belt, dividing "north" from "south," and stretching halfway around the globe from Morocco to Algiers, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, the Arab States, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, to Bangladesh and Indonesia.

I am not saying that the "modernization" of these numerous worlds will be unrelated to the West, but that increasingly it will occur on terms attuned to indigenous cultural and religious premises, and that we in the West will have to take that into account. We will no longer be able to take the "non-West" for granted as a supplier of human labour (as in the eighteenth-century slave trade), of natural resources (as in the "bourgeois imperialisms" of the nineteenth century), or as markets for our industries (as in the twentieth century).

This shift in the relation of the West to the non-West is evident in the shift of military conflicts since 1945. The first and second world wars were the climaxes of tensions primarily between competing nation-states *within* western civilization. Tensions continue to exist there, as we see in Northern Ireland, Spain, South America, and the presence of the Iron Curtain. But the major military confrontations have moved to the "edge" of western civilization, in the geographic intertwinement of still lingering presences of the West on basically non-western territory. Examples of such conflicts are the Korean War, the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, the Vietnam War, the civil war on Cyprus, the final withdrawal of Portugal from Angola and Mozambique, the hostage crisis in Iran, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, Mugabe's takeover of power in Zimbabwe, the unresolved apartheid confrontations in Namibia and South Africa, and OPEC's determination of the world oil flow and its price since 1973. If this perception of the recovery of the self-identity of non-western cultures and civilizations is correct, then the West will have to draw a number of radical conclusions from it for the way it prepares itself for the society of the future in a global setting.

To begin with, it will have to affect our understanding of the dynamic of societal change in the non-western cultures. By and large, we have superimposed what we consider normative change in western societies upon non-western societies. This conception of change has two key components: the "negative" component of secularization (the elimination of traditional religions) and the allegedly positive component of

modernization, with its subparts of a scientific understanding of nature, technological advance, and industrial production. This view of "progress" is peculiarly and parochially western because it is inherently tied up with the humanist religion that replaced Christianity as the dominant spiritual force after the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. There is little evidence for the view that societal change in non-western cultures will "normally" follow the western pattern, even in the case of the secularization of non-western religions (which does not necessarily lead to their replacement by humanism). The evidence points to the opposite conclusion. For wherever capitalism and communism—the dialectical components of western humanism—are kept alive in non-western societies, it is done with the indispensable aid of authoritarian, tyrannic, or totalitarian regimes which repress the personal, institutional and associational freedoms of the indigenous populations.

In the second place, the shift in real power among world civilizations and their cultures will require the "de-imperialization" of the western political entities. The fiasco of the United States in south east Asia, the loss of its influence on Iran after the overthrow of the Shah, the impasse which Russia is experiencing today in Afghanistan, and its nonintervention in Poland after August 1980, are evidences of this "de-imperialization. But if the future will be one of relative peace and mutual respect between differing cultures, there will have to be additional instances of this process, especially in the relations between the United States and its neighbours in. South, Central, and North America; and in the relation between Russia and its eastern European satellites, its Asiatic republics, and those areas of Africa where it is attempting to impose a political system with the aid of Cuban military forces. Without this de-imperialization, the society of the future will continue to witness unjust wars, notably at the edges of the civilization of the West.

In the third place, this de-imperialization will provide the necessary frame of reference for evaluating conflicts within non-imperial societies in terms of their own dynamics rather than in terms of the tensions between capitalism and communism. To be sure, it is naive to think that either Russia or America will neglect using conflicts abroad for their advantage. Russia especially is adept at this. But it is quite counterproductive to view the tensions in Cypress, the Middle East, South East Asia, Nicaragua, and El Salvador as indications of Russia's efforts to achieve global hegemony.

The conflicts "at the edge of western civilization" will also have to be reinterpreted. Here I am thinking specifically of the Israeli-Palestinian problem and the apartheid issue in South Africa. In both cases we are confronted with problems of western peoples domiciled on non-western continents who defend their political existence in terms of typical small-scale imperialisms. The forefathers of the Afrikaners settled in southern Africa

after 1652, almost as long ago as the first Englishmen, Scotsmen, and Frenchmen settled in. North America. They have a right to be there, but not in terms of two-and-a-half million Afrikaner western nationalists imposing a political and economic future on twenty million blacks.[20] The Israeli-Palestinian problem is similar. Israel is an injection of western culture in the Arab world. As long as this injection continues at the expense of Palestinian rights, the Middle East will know no peace.[21]

Finally, a new understanding of the dynamic of societal change in non-western cultures and a concomitant de-imperalization of western political entities might well contribute to an easing of tensions between capitalist and communist states within the West. This, in turn, might provide a new base for detente and a control of the arms race.

Conclusion

Predictions about the society of the future are meaningless by themselves. Nonetheless, the future belongs to the realm of history and thus is our responsibility. The future is shaped by human decisions—for better or worse—in the various ranges of personal, institutional, and associational offices. Decisions occur between two poles: 1) keen awareness of the trends and (dys)functions within empirical social reality, and 2) keen awareness of the norms by means of which the dysfunctions are identified. In the three ranges of societal problems discussed here, we can detect violations of the norms of economic stewardship, of political justice, and (inter)cultural respect. Ours is the task to help eliminate the violations so that the future will be more human than it is today.

[20] Cf. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism. (New* York: Meridian Books, 1958), Part Two: *Imperialism*.
Cf. Bernard Zylstra, "The Struggle for South Africa: An Interview with Steve Biko", *The Canadian Forum,* December-January 1977-1978, pp. 15-21.

[21] Here Hannah Arendt's writings of the 1940s on "Zionism and the Jewish State" are still instructive. Cf. *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age* (New York: Grove Press, 1978), pp. 125-222. See also the current assessment by Gershom Schocken, "Revisiting Zionism," *The New York Review of Books,* May 28, 1981, pp. 41-47.