

The Axial Principle of all Governance in the Scientific Civilization

(translated by Kay Gillioz)

The transition from the agrarian to the scientific civilization - the modern world - imposes a radical modification of mentality which is best illustrated as follows: the agrarian civilization rested entirely on man's adaptation to a particular environment, to a precise place. In this environment he had to implement a kind of fusion with Nature, he had to live with her, understand her, little by little he had to tame her, foresee the weather, prepare for possible dangers, anticipate the rhythm of the seasons. Originally, the only justification for politics was the necessity to organize the means of agricultural production and to protect the activity of the agrarian community against outside encroachment. The latter function made it necessary to create ever-increasing political entities.

But the origin of wealth no longer lies in Nature herself but exclusively in human nature

In the scientific civilization - and here lies the essential point - the origin of wealth no longer resides in Nature with a capital N, but in human nature. Man is the source of scientific discovery, he is the creator of the techniques he makes available to his own designs, it is his dreams that feed the quest for new horizons. To these ends he creates industrial or commercial enterprises, laboratories and space centres. In this new civilization the origin of wealth is no longer a privilege, it no longer results from the unilateral appropriation of objective goods, but from the imagination, the intelligence and the work of men and women.

Politics had to protect privileges, while now it is required to favourize the application of human intelligence

For this reason alone, politics as traditionally conceived is not only no longer appropriate, it no longer has any sense. Its task was to organize and protect the privileges; now it has to favourize people's creativity, the spirit of research and the taste for enterprise. And since the increase of wealth now derives entirely from human intelligence, inventivity and dexterity, the desire for power can no longer be satisfied by wars and conquest; no-one can appropriate man's dreams. A scientific, industrial or commercial enterprise is of no significance if it is not embedded in a dense network of scientific, technical and financial partnerships and of world-wide commercial exchange, all animated by the necessity of reciprocity.

The Communist regimes were proof of this: they seized the production lines, never realizing that, in so doing, they were isolating the source of their creation, that is to say, free individuals in relation to their peers, and they condemned them. It is true that the Soviet industries continued to muddle along but, when the Iron Curtain collapsed, Russia was nothing more than an under-developed country.

The scientific civilization is in keeping with a spiritualization of action

The arrival of the scientific civilization is thus in keeping with the spiritualization of work and activity; its manner of producing wealth implies no attachment to a natural environment or a tradition but demands rather the rediscovery by the individual of himself in a constant effort to invent, to innovate, to produce and to sell under the best possible conditions. **The main threat to this spiritualization of activity is not so much external envy as the violence of those who refuse to make the effort of self-improvement or who are incapable of it. The State is no longer necessary here in the same way as it was before. From now on the axial principle on which it must imperatively construct itself is the encouragement of the free exercise of human intelligence against all the aspects of human violence, including those traditionally generated by the State.**

Tolerance and freedom : The Axial Principle of all Governance in the Scientific Civilization

This spiritualization demands respect of freedom and tolerance which allows intelligence to escape from the routines and well-trodden paths in order constantly to open new horizons. It is rooted directly in self-control and, if we want it to maintain its effects indefinitely, it must be ethically inspired without ever becoming mired in non-modifiable attitudes and certainties.

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