Reflections on Peace, Nature, Modernity, and Civilization

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Abstract

In this paper I would like to offer some random reflections on what it means to enter into civilization, to be civilized, and how this relates to peace, especially inner peace. It is almost a truism that the modern urban conglomerate is not the ideal setting for peace and yet few of us dare to go back to the cave. Moreover, even if we did so we would still find violence present. External circumstances alone cannot produce inner peace. Nonetheless they can contribute. Hence in this paper I will explore the themes of inner peace, city life, living with nature, modernity and pre-modernity. In part I will speak to scholarly opinion in this area but in part draw on my own experience or reading. Hence I do not see this paper as strictly academic in nature. I prefer to think and meditate on the theme of peace in a time of urban modernity. I will close with some comments on the green movement and sustainability.

Keywords: city, civilization, modernity, peace, reducing desire

Introduction

After squeezing through the folds of rock and gazing down into the cave my first reaction was to think, "I am glad I am not a caveman."

In this paper I would like to offer some random reflections on what it means to enter into civilization, to be civilized, and how this relates to peace, especially inner peace.   It is almost a truism that the modern urban conglomerate is not the ideal setting for peace and yet few of us dare to go back to the cave.   Moreover, even if we did so we would still find violence present. External circumstances alone cannot produce inner peace.   Nonetheless they can contribute.   Hence in this paper I will explore the themes of inner peace, city life, living with nature, modernity and pre-modernity.   In part I will speak to scholarly opinion in this area but in part draw on my own experience or reading.   Hence I do not see this paper as strictly academic in nature[1].   I prefer to think and meditate on the theme of peace in a time of urban modernity. I will close with some comments on the green movement and sustainability.

Part One: The Contrast: Civilized and Barbarian

1.1 Statement: Civilization vs. Barbarity

Civilization normally defines itself as opposed to barbarity.   The barbarians live on the edge of civilization.   Their conduct is seen as unbecoming for those within civilization.   Human society has to be created by driving forward the frontier of civilization or by eliminating the barbarians. Being barbarian is not a self-description but an imposed description.

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[1]   The paper is written in a style that is rather different from that of normal academic papers.   I use a statement-commentary style.   Both statements and commentary are my own work.

Commentary

The above statement is hardly new.   It is also ubiquitous.   For those brought up in Western culture it has obvious resonances in the world of the Roman Empire and in that of colonial expansion especially in the Americas, Australia and New Zealand.   But it is equally true of Chinese culture.

China defines herself as the Middle Country, the area of civilization surrounded by nomadic or barbarian peoples[2].   In Chinese the names of the latter are often written with the "dog" radical (*quan*) to indicate that they are seen as closer to animals than to human beings.   To be human is to be civilized (*wen*).   In 135 BC Prince Liu An wrote a letter to the Emperor advising him not to wage war on the peoples of Yue (modern-day Fujian Province[3]).   He describes the Yue as non-urbanised:

> The Yue have no cities, towns, villages or hamlets.   They live among valleys and amidst bamboo (Ryden, 1998: 70).

They are also described as lacking respect for law:

> The people of Yue are stupid and lightheaded.   They break contracts continually.   They do not make use of the laws and ordinances of the Son of Heaven (Ryden, 1998: 70).

The barbarity of the people is stressed so as to persuade the emperor not to go to war against them.   Thus in some ways it serves as a literary device to justify a political action (no war) and is not a purely objective account of reality. However, this use of "barbarian" as a foil for "civilised" is something that we will constantly encounter.   To be barbarian is not an objective description of reality but a construct to show what it means to be "uncivilized."

> The Yue fight but not in a civilized way:
> Nor are they trained in the use of chariots, cavalry, archery or

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[2]   A classic text which describes the "uncivilised" peoples surrounding the Chinese is the *Shanhaijing*, see a translation in French in Mathieu (1983).

[3]   For the text of this letter in English, see Ryden (1998: 69-78).

crossbowmanship (Ryden, 1998: 73).

Often in Chinese the term *wen* (civilization) is contrasted with *wu* (martial force).　But the ruler needs both, one on the left and one on the right.　Hence in the above passage we see that the Yue lack the Chinese style *wu* just as much as they lacked *wen*.　In other words *wen-wu* are a unit of civility opposed to barbarity.　In Chinese tradition violence and war, while associated with beasts and animals, are not universally castigated.　Rather they can be brought under the sway of the civilized ruler.　In mythological terms, the Yellow Emperor is the progenitor of much civilization, but he also fights and is engaged in war with Chi You, a symbol of barbarity[4].

Hence, civilization justifies itself as being founded on principles that are at odds with barbarity.　It creates its own world apart, marked by the use of cooked, rather than raw, foods, clothes as opposed to nakedness, walls as opposed to open shelters.　It then builds up internal organization through politics, economics, learning and moral codes.　Writing replaces speech as the most reliable form of communication.

The South African Jewish anthropologist, Stanley Cohen, goes further in describing the modern city as not only cutting itself off from barbarity, but as creating a series of "safe circles" (Stanley Cohen, 1985: 226-27; Robin Cohen, 2007).　He describes, among others, the "purified city"— which excludes moral undesirables— the "sandbox city"— which provides a place for the poor away from the middle-classes— the "city as reservation"— which houses Native Americans excluded from the administrative centre.　To these Robin Cohen adds the "terrorist city" where surveillance cameras and armed guards curtail liberties so as to keep the inhabitants safe from terrorists.　The language is new but the idea of the city as a metaphor for social inclusion of the civilised and exclusion of the uncivilised is still very much to the fore.

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[4]　For a translation into English of the texts on this battle and a discussion of the whole issue, see Ryden (1997: 165-98).

Part Two: The Paradox: Town and Country

In this section we examine four areas of paradox presented by successful, urban civilization.   The first area looks at the paradoxical ideal of the town. The second looks at the paradoxical re-creation of the countryside.   The third looks at the clash formed by the first two paradoxes and the fourth presents a Weberian analysis of the clash.

2.1 Statement: The Town

The contrast between town and country is but a renewed form of the opposition between civilization and the barbarians.   The town is the place for civilization, convenience, work and entertainment.   Health and life itself are no longer subject to the vagaries of disease (exceptions like SARS proving the rule) since we expect hospitals to cure us.   The town brings anonymity, opportunity and freedom from traditions. It offers possibilities and variety.

Commentary

Babel and Jerusalem reflect the ambivalence of the notion of a town. Babel is the place of pride, of brick buildings, of united will that disintegrates into different languages and misunderstanding.   Jerusalem is the heavenly city paved in gold and precious stones, the place of unending light and peace, the ideal of future harmony.   Babel is the first city in the Christian Bible and the heavenly Jerusalem the last.   In creating the city we seek to put some of this heavenly idealism into the earthly even though in many cases our attempts end up only in Babel.   The reality falls short of the ideal.   The streets of gold are places for the poor to seek shelter in unused doorways[5].

Asia has developed and will continue to develop larger and more populous

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[5]   I wrote this before reading an article on Dubai that foresees its future.   Simon Jenkins (2009: 9) writes, "Thousands of residential properties, if occupied at all, will be squatted by a migratory poor… Gangs will seize the gated estates and random anarchy will rule the soulless boulevards."

cities than any other continent.　Whereas in Europe city centers tend to have many ancient buildings and various ancient customs and laws tend to limit expansion leaving large areas as parkland, Asian buildings tend to be made of less durable material and hence have less chances of coping with the planners' urge to remodel.　Some cities suffered during the Second World War, Tokyo, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, in ways that far surpassed the blitz in London. Destruction allowed rebuilding.

Weber (1951: 15) had already pointed out that European cities were different from Chinese cities.　The former had charters, guilds and privileges that gave them a quasi-autonomy even against a central government that used them as capitals.

> Yet the obvious and significant different is that the English city, even at that time, had the "charter" which guaranteed its "liberties."　In China nothing of the kind could be found.

Beijing may have had a special status under the imperial government but it was one that depended wholly on its being the capital and the centre of power. Hence central government has a direct impact on the city without having to be concerned about the citizens' local concerns.

The Asian city is thus not only an urban area; it is often also a political centre dependent on central government, a showcase for the country.　This means that the city can afford to have things that go way beyond its means. The maglev train in Shanghai is a telling example.　Tourists must be impressed and attracted.　Taipei built a gondola which earned a reputation as the best-run gondola in the world, until a landslide cut away its foundations and the whole system ground to a halt.　It had been made for prestige without sufficient concern for the local inhabitants or the environment.

The towers of Babel are still built today. Asian cities, Kuala Lumpur, Taipei, Shanghai are all competing to have the tallest tower in a competition for male supremacy, the longest "penis".　The male image is not misplaced. Men

tend to travel from A to B by the shortest possible route without stopping on the way.   Women tend to stop off along the route, buy a vegetable here and have a haircut there.   The pricing structure of public transport in a city like Taipei is male-oriented.   It is cheaper to travel in the male mode than in the female mode. River-banks are used for building expressways and parks undermined for underground carparks6.   The pursuit of convenience and speed makes "being late" a serious offence.   Time is measured and regulated with punctuality as its ideal.

Yet this world is also attractive.   By bringing together so many people it makes the sale of rare goods possible and hence increases variety.   By breaking up the traditional village networks, it gives the individual the freedom to be anonymous, to disappear.   The Japanese have even written books on this topic: how to disappear.   The city thus becomes a place to escape.   It allows us to follow personal ideals and fantasies, to create our own kind of heavenly Jerusalem on earth.   These ideals can be healthy: in arts, museums and zoos, or can be unhealthy: in prostitution and drugs, or ambiguous: in karaoke and internet cafes[7].

By its provision of health-care in clinics and hospitals, by its 24-hour lighting and all-season transport, by its provision of all the world's foods of any season, the city tries to banish time, space and death.   This is symbolized most of all in the international hotels that run a similar regime no matter where they are placed.   The visitor expects certain amenities and finds them, albeit with some allowance for local taste to spark a sense of the exotic which does not disturb the commonalities of universal hotel life.

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[6]   For an article in Chinese on cities, see Huang (2008: 48-51).

[7]   In a study of karaoke published in 2007, the authors recount how in January 2001 a freighter left South Korea for the North with aid on board, food and clothes and ten karaoke machines with 4,000 pop songs, since these could promote Korean reconciliation. They continue, "After nearly fifty years of conflict, would karaoke finally be able to bring about harmony and reconciliation? Perhaps once North Koreans have learnt those 4,000 western and South Korean pop songs by heart, there will be a new prospect for world peace. Or perhaps not." (Zhou & Tarocco, 2007: 181)

Cities create an artificial time and space in which people live on artificial food and drink. At times a typhoon, tidal wave or snowstorm can force a city to recognize that it is not free of nature, but for the most part it tries to live in an artificial cocoon. Sunrise and sunset are converted into traffic regulations. Hills are covered in concrete or bored through by tunnels. Above-ground and underground no longer has much meaning and the night is as bright as the day. Food patterns are regulated by choice and purse and not by natural supply and seasons. International cities can overcome geography and provide the same kind of food no matter where one is. The internet has taken this process even further. In Weber's terminology, instrumental rationality has triumphed.

2.2 Statement: The Countryside

Yet city dwellers need the country, for food, for rest. Pure city life leads to a rediscovery of the countryside as a place for recreation and relaxation. A city thus reshapes the surrounding countryside and looks in this for something it has itself lost. In short, it seeks again the noble savage[8].

Commentary

The stench of early modern cities with their inadequate sewage and unwashed inhabitants made the ideal of the noble savage highly attractive. From Rousseau to The Last of the Mohicans there is a certain dignity and pride in the life of the forest. Tarzan leaves his London flat to swing again through the trees. Just as we create the city on the model of the heavenly Jerusalem so too the city-dweller's version of the countryside is an idealized one.

In many Asian countries the tourist areas are indigenous areas. The indigenous people wear bright costumes, sing and dance[9]. They make cloth by

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[8] For a Taiwanese version of this image, see the seventeenth century portrait supposedly of a Formosan printed in Italy and republished by *Rhythms Monthly* 49 (Van der Aalsvoort, 2002: 49).

[9] Although slightly outdated now, Kung Wen-chi's *Indigenous Peoples and the Press* found that over a six month period (Jan-June 1994) in Taiwan the total number of newspaper pictures of

hand and produce folk art, in contrast to the manufactures of the city.   They live a carefree life without the need to worry about income and work schedules. The tourist even projects onto them "ideals" of freedom from moral constraints that is "whole and healthy" compared with the prostitution of the cities.   I have seen this happen among the Mosuo of Luguhu in south-west China[10].

What the tourist may fail to realize is that this vision of the countryside and its inhabitants is a projection that, whilst drawing on certain elements of truth, is more a mirror to reflect those ideals the city-dweller seeks but which are not provided by the city itself.   The basic psychology is still that of the noble savage and the Wild West Show.   It does not encounter the other as a person but as a self-projection.

2.3 Statement: The Conflicting Goals of Town and Countryside

The recreation of the countryside is informed by a given civilization.   The barbarian hunts animals for food; the city-dweller takes photos of them on a high-class camera.   The countryside is no longer the wild environment to be tamed and eaten; it becomes the space in which to relax and learn, thanks to books and study guides.   The citizen who goes to the country does not become a barbarian.

Commentary

City-made countryside has clearly marked paths, with times and distances indicated.   It has routes and maps like those of the metro system.   It has toilets and restaurants.   Wild animals are non-existent or far away as in a zoo. When the children from Taitung visited the Taipei zoo and were shown the

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indigenous people in traditional images was 205, compared to 104 for those in "modern" images. See Kung (1987: 187).

[10]   The Mosuo are a matriarchal society in north-west Yunnan Province.   Husbands live with their sisters and only visit their wives.   This gives rise to the misapprehension that the wives are thus "available" for other men.

muntjac.   The keeper asked in a patronizing way, "Now, little children, have you ever seen a muntjac?" "Oh, yes," one replied, "my father shot one and brought it home for dinner last night."   The zoo-keeper hurriedly changed the topic.   Restaurants and facilities match those of the city.   The countryside becomes the weekend away, which both takes the tourists out of their urban life and also ensures that they can return to it.   Hence the roads in and out are of utmost importance.   The cars and tour buses need these.   During the week they can be clogged by cement-mixers and trucks mending the roads and no public buses run but those inconveniences for the locals are simply conveniences for the weekend tourists.

The environmental standards of the urban dweller with neatly sorted reusable "rubbish", called "waste" are used to apply to the countryside, where waste collection is erratic and poor, leaving rivers choked with the plastics and broken cars that are the urban-dwellers "gifts" to the locals.   The invasion of the urban style of life into the countryside is thus not only that of urban-dwellers seeking an escape into something different; it is also the increasing dependence of the countryside on the products of the city, a dependence fostered by TV and its images of city life and city products.   The countryside thus can no longer sell its own products—oranges go to rot on the trees—and its people want the instant-noodles, plastic-bottled rice wine and all-season diet of the town.

Thus urban life destroys the ideal to which it escapes because it propagates its own ideal as superior and looks to the countryside only for temporary respite, which is an acknowledgement that it does not really seek to leave its own ideal.

2.4 Statement: An Analysis of the Urban-Rural Clash

In pursuing its ideal the city has lost out in value rationality.   I may know why I want to go from A to B （to get to work on time for instance）, but I do not know why I want to live.   Of course this question is not new either but it is put into sharp relief because in pre-modern society issues of instrumental and

value rationality seemed to be merged together, but as the former is solved it reveals more clearly that the human being is not simply a tool.

Commentary

A major theme of Chinese intellectual history in the twentieth-century is that of the impact of westernization.   Zhang Zhidong, a nineteenth century government official, formulated the relationship of China and the West in terms of substance and use.   China should form the substance but the use could be imported.   In his day this meant that China should learn from the West how to make gunboats whilst retaining traditional Chinese values and classical education.   With the failure of the imperial Qing court to modernize, the movement for westernization became even more pervasive, expressed in slogans such as "Overturn Confucius" Shop' and "Science and Democracy" that dominated the era around 1919.   This type of attitude was to reach its peak, or nadir, in the Great Cultural Revolution of 1966-76.

At the same time there were people who realized that Westernization was not simply about aping another civilization.   It was rather modernization:

As to what people in general refer to as westernisation, in fact it is modernisation. What is called westernisation should really be called modernization (Feng, 2001: 218).

Moreover, modernization did not need to imply a total rejection of the Chinese "past".   By the 1940s Feng Youlan (1940: 331) thought:

We are arguing for so-called modernisation, but in the area of basic morality there is no so-called modernisation or non-modernisation. There are some people who often confuse a given social system with basic morality.   This is quite wrong.   A given kind of social system can be changed but basic morality cannot be changed.   What can be changed may be divided into modernised or not modernised but what cannot be changed does not have this problem.

Thus having experimented with various versions of what China had to learn—westernization, modernization, industrialization—and what she did not need to learn, he arrives at a distinction between basic morality that cannot be changed and other things which can be changed.   He may have found the right terminology but exactly what this should mean is not so clear.

Max Weber made the distinction between instrumental and value rationality, according to which instrumental rationality is Feng's "what can be changed" and value rationality is his "what cannot be changed."   Weber holds that a society needs fundamental values according to which the person is valued as a person, even though for the development of capitalism there is also a need to see things in terms of means or "instruments."   Weber also realised that a society could not be run purely according to instrumental rationality for it would then become irrational rather than human.

For the city-dwellers the goal of the countryside is to give them rest and an escape from a life of instrumental rationality.   But in fact the countryside itself becomes another instrument to be used to compensate for deficiencies in city life.   This goal thus clashes with that of the dweller in the countryside for whom the countryside is their home, a place to live as persons in society.   The clash shows when city-dwellers require new and better roads to facilitate their access and rapid departure, whereas country dwellers may require a better environment.

Hence we may conclude this section on the paradoxical nature of the city and the urban-rural tension by saying that the solution is not to call for an abandonment of one term in favor of the other.   Sustainability does not mean rejecting the town, nor is its opposite a total rejection of the countryside. What is required is an acknowledgement of the need for a healthy tension between the two kinds of rationality, and given that we tend to devote more effort to "means" rather than to "substantive value", it is within the later that we need to seek a way ahead.   We need to find a purpose for life as human beings.

Part Three: The Call of the Heart

Hence we look for alternatives to cities and civilization; or at least, we look for ways in which to live with them.   I will suggest that there are three broad ways in which we can do this: the first is to reduce desires; the second is to accept oneself and the third is to become at peace within. I will deal with these three in turn.

3.1 Statement: Reducing Desires

This is a traditional Buddhist, Chinese and Abrahamic tenet[11].   In the modern world it gives rise to sustainability, to being Green, to reducing power, to eating organic.   I think there is also a need too for a spirituality of the Green and for the Greens.   Otherwise being green simply becomes another campaign of the city and does not give inner peace.

Commentary

The ecological reading of the ancient wisdom of restraint in one sense brings nothing new to the contemporary scene.   It simply reinforces a modern trend with the wisdom of the past.   The Chinese philosopher Liang Shuming (1922: 383) analyzed world culture according to three models: modern Western, Chinese and Indian:

> Western culture took the first path: this is the spirit of the will to want to go forward; Chinese culture took the second path: this is the spirit of the will to compromise and keep to the middle way; Indian culture took the third path: this is the spirit of the will to reflect on oneself and turn back.

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[11]   I use the word "Abrahamic" to refer to Judeo-Christian-Islamic religion since whatever differences there are in details the basic faith is the same.

Although he noted that these three cultures were associated with different geographical locations and historical traditions, he held that what was important about them was not their situation in particular places but that they exemplified different paths that civilization must take. Liang (1922: 391-92) argued that the three paths were different responses to the question of life and that they should not be seen as steps on the one road through history:

> Most people simply assume China is not up to the West. The West advances quickly and the road it travels goes further; whilst Chinese people go slowly and have not advanced even half as far as the West. I used to think like that too… but in fact the truth is not so.

Nonetheless, in what seems to me to be a contradiction in his thought, he also proposed that the way ahead for humankind requires the adoption of modern western culture now—he was writing in the 1920s—followed by Chinese culture and then Indian.

The three cultures take three different approaches to life. The Western approach is to master the material world; the Chinese approach to balance the person and matter and the Indian approach to deny the world and seek peace within. In other words he realized that pure pursuit of material wellbeing needs to be corrected by the spirit of moderation represented by the Chinese type of culture. When we talk about sustainability, it is precisely this that we mean. We do not deny the value of the "Western" approach, but we temper it with a rule of moderation, a control of our desires.

Liang was wise enough to understand that his three models were important as types and not as literal cultures. He did not suggest that everyone should learn Chinese! Indeed, the discovery of the Chinese value of moderation and restraint should lead each of us to seek similar values within our own traditional cultures, to draw on our own pasts and hence to deepen what we have. In Weberian terminology, we are called to look to our own traditional value rationality to balance out the rush towards instrumental rationality.

3.2 Statement: Self-Acceptance

The second way to peace is self-acceptance.   Much of our trouble comes from wanting to be someone else, from desiring to have success like "x".   Our urban civilization constantly wants us to be discontented with ourselves so that we can buy its products.

Commentary

Just as the city is a projected ideal, so too civilization is a projected ideal and this ideal is projected onto each person.   The tyranny of the ideal is that it destroys self-image.   The city is an attempt to create a society freed from the vagaries of weather, from the changes of day and night.   It lives 24-hours a day every day.   By many forms of rapid transport it seeks to overcome distance, to make things all so close that space is eclipsed.   It aims for the perfect style of life and claims to offer this to its inhabitants.   Its advertisements and marketing seek to push products that will help you into its ideal, but this has the downside of first trying to convince people that they are no good, that they do not meet the grade.   Only then will one want to buy the touted products.

One particular area in which this is quite strong is in the area of body-image and dress.   Human beings need clothes for warmth or for protection from the sun, but clothing in human society is far from being a purely utilitarian item.   In traditional societies it serves to indicate status, especially gender and hierarchical status.   It also serves to guard against attack and abuse.   These uses can all be legitimate but they do not exhaust the meaning of clothing. Clothing also hides, veils, and thus states that what is hidden is "not good", "not right".   While cosmetics can be used to enhance beauty, they can also be an assertion that something is not beautiful.   Weight-reduction, required in part by the unhealthy lack of exercise of urban life, leads also to a sense that something is wrong with me.   In short, civilized life portrays the body as ugly, heavy, thin or fat, too short or too tall, the wrong color, but immediately provides the remedies for all these 'illnesses'.

One healthier way in which to cope with this destruction of self-image is naturism[12].　Naturism is sometimes conceived of as a pursuit precisely of the goals of fitness and perfection that are in line with urban cosmetics but more normally, naturism involves the total acceptance of the body, and hence of the self.　By putting aside clothes and cosmetics and rejecting the pursuit of a false ideal, naturism places people face to face with each other.　That is not to say it is unregulated.　There are norms of conduct, moral rules that are adhered to. Naturism is not about pornography and eroticism[13].　Rather, "the really important thing is that people be accepted as they are; their acceptability does not depend on their fitting some ideal of body image set by arbitrary cultural ideals of youth, shape and fitness[14]."

By taking the example of naturism as an illustration of how to come to self-acceptance, I certainly do not wish to claim it is the only way to achieve this goal, nor do I seriously expect it to become something accepted by more than a minority.　But it is worth reflecting on what naturism represents in so far as it can illustrate the dilemma of modern life.　Naturism is not a return to the past.　While some ancient societies make less use of clothes than we do today, more commonly we find that men and women have separate and strict

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[12]　For reasons of brevity I present one example here.　Another good example that could be used is dance.　I refer to a very positive assessment of dance along the lines outlined here by a Religious Sister from north China (Hu, 2007).　Sr. Hu acknowledges that dance can be used for bad purposes but overall her assessment is positive.　She finds dance can integrate the person as one, overcoming any body-soul division.　Dance can also be an act of worship and prayer: "A really prayerful dancer can be a true peacemaker and a lover of nature and earth.　Because harmony flows from her or his inner-self, a prayerful dancer can harmonize with nature, with the universe, with human beings and surely with God." (Hu, 2007: 109).

[13]　Pope John Paul II (1981: 176; 191) wrote, "Sexual modesty cannot then in any simple way be identified with the use of clothing, nor shamelessness with the absence of clothing and total or partial nakedness… There are certain objective situations in which even total nudity of the body is not immodest."　The Pope does not himself discuss naturism, but this quotation is used, very properly, by Gorham and Leal (2000: 21).

[14]　See Gorham and Leal (2000: 15).　My comments here are based entirely on this pamphlet.　It may be an over optimistic reading and I beg to be corrected by those with experience in the field, either positive or negative.

codes of dress, even when scanty[15].   The complete absence of any fabric in a mixed sex setting is a modern phenomenon. It is not a return to the past. Perhaps it is a search for a counterweight to the pressure that society has placed on the human body[16].   It has a longer history in Germany for instance and German society is marked by an infinity of rules and norms. Maybe it is a reaction against these.

Yet, naturism is more than just a reaction. In the face of "civilized" society's denial of the body, it is an affirmation of the intrinsic goodness of the human body.   It captures a moment of optimism that is absent in the control of desires examined above.   This spirit of optimism is necessary for the ecologist. It is very easy for the attentive ecologist to succumb to climate doom, to pessimism with regard to the future of the planet and the universe as a whole. The naturist ethos is precisely the opposite: it rejoices in the present, accepts the present and lives in the present.   The burden of the future does not disappear but it does not oppress to the point of making life unliveable. Speaking about a naturist club, Gorham and Leal (2000: 19) say:

> What you find is a greater sense of freedom, more willingness to converse, more willingness too to help those in trouble and a greater sense of fun.

The sense of community that this suggests may be common to any type of "club" but the "greater sense of fun" indicates an underlying optimism that would not necessarily be present in other kinds of club.

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[15]   I do not mean to rule out all possibility of ancient unclothed societies.   However, the meaning of being unclothed may be different.   For instance, I read once about a Papua-New Guinea tribe where young girls were completely naked but for a cord around the waist.   It did not "cover" anything but in the story recounted a man insulted a girl by breaking her cord.   She felt so ashamed she ran up a tree and threw herself down to her death.   The cord was her clothing.

[16]   The equation of clothing and culture is very strong.   Mathieu introduces section 67 [*Les hommes nus*] of his book on Chinese legends by saying, "What, in the eyes of a Chinese person, is less civilised than a naked person? Clothing is the first sign of culture.   The inhabitants of Naked Country (*Luo Guo*) do not cover their bodies; like the beasts they go around without any sense of shame in the woods where they live." (Mathieu, 1989 : 152)

In many ways of course naturism exists as a hiatus in society. It is the weekend away, the night at the club, the annual holiday and hence is a supreme example of escapism and idealism that must return to the "normal." The bare tourist in the countryside must go back to the town clad. But by presenting another way of life as a possibility in the present it already creates a sphere of peace and hence fosters the hope that peace is possible. This is something the ecological movement needs to learn: we can save the whale and the frog. Human beings can live in peace and acceptance by accepting themselves and hence others too.

3.3 Statement: Inner Peace

Finally, I argue that we need a third step, the rooting out of violence in our hearts by going deeper into solitude, until we are no longer afraid of ourselves.

Commentary

The root fear we have is not fear of others but fear of self, because the tendency to unpredictable evil lies in our own hearts. Whilst naturism may help in promoting self-acceptance within a social context, we still need to tackle the inner heart. This is something many of us seek to avoid. We want to change the environment (be Green); we want to create new styles of society; but we do not dare to change our inner selves. But unless we can "get rid of the vinegar in our hearts we cannot pour in the new wine of peace." Desmond Tutu tells the story of a husband and wife who have quarreled and then the husband brings some flowers back and the couple pretend that all is in order but they have not faced the truth of their quarrel. Tutu (1999: 270) says:

> They will have only papered over the cracks and not worked out why they fell out in the first place. All that will happen is that, despite the beautiful flowers, the hurt will fester.

There are a number of authors who have followed Archbishop Tutu in taking up this theme of forgiveness and finding out the truth that caused the

problem in the first place, but I would argue that we need to go one step further.

To face the self we need to have the courage to go into the desert, alone, not for loneliness but for solitude.   This is something which not only takes courage, it also requires guidance and the humility to realize that my projects and ideas may be wrong.   If naturism is unlikely to become a majority pursuit, disappearance into solitude is probably even more marginal.   The life of the hermit is not one that will appeal to the multitude.   But it is a life that attracts because it speaks to us of a path that we all wish we had the courage to take.

St Ignatius Loyola took the path of the hermit and drew up his experience in a dry manual called the *Spiritual Exercises*.   This is not a book to be read and indeed the idiom can appear out-dated and rather off-putting.   What Ignatius intended was to help a person become free of what is not important so that they can dedicate themselves to deeper goals, which he naturally saw as a following of Christ in the world today.   In our days many people, both Catholic and non-Catholic, Christian and non-Christian still follow the course of the *Exercises*, though not normally in complete solitude.   Here I shall not go into details but concentrate on the spirit of the *Exercises*.

The starting point is a recognition that we need to find the purpose of our existence and the realization that everything else exists relative to this goal. The problem is that we often stop on the way and get stuck at some lesser goal. We become attracted to plans and ideas that may be good in themselves but which do not really engage our innermost being.   We then become activists, do-gooders and define our value by what we achieve.   In my experience it is possible to follow the pattern of the *Exercises* even over a period of eight days and fail to really change.   We can easily become stuck in a pious routine that runs away from the challenge of really facing the self.

By taking the radical step of completely cutting myself off in a hermitage, I find that the first day is generally positive and restful but by the second day the anxieties and troubles hidden within start to emerge and run riot.   It takes a few days of discipline and silence for one to even begin to go deeper into the

heart and find a peace there which is strong enough to replace the tempest of negative feelings.   Initially once one comes to deeper peace there is a sense of joy but again we must be careful.   Ignatius warns us that in such times of joy we may start making resolutions that have little to do with reality.   In short we can easily construct castles in the air.   Hence he has go through a period of simply watching, of becoming passive in the sense of suffering.   This is often a step one is reluctant to take and it is only after many years that I find it a natural step.   There must be a complete emptying of the self, even of the peaceful, joyous self that has said goodbye to the initial disturbances.

Finally, the movement takes one into gratitude for what is given and a readiness to return to daily life but to live from what is experienced and to often return to it.   Peace then becomes not a temporary respite from strife, but a heart able to accept the suffering of the world and not be disturbed by it. Simplicity of self leads to an openness towards others, because the self is no longer seeking its own reward and thus complicating the relationship:

> This really will have to be my ultimate objective: to grow very simple in myself but to accept all the complications of others (Hillesum, et.al., 2002: 137).

Ecologists are clearly aware of the ills of the world and the sufferings of people.   By finding peace within, they do not escape from these ills but embrace them and are able to go out and face them.   The above quotation comes from one of my heroines, Etty Hillesum (1914-43), who attained to an inner peace and was then able to spend all day in a Jewish transit camp and listen to suffering and still come home her heart full of joy.   She too was later gassed to death.   Etty had not encountered the *Exercises* but her psychological training and meticulous analysis of her heart led her along the same road:

> Sometimes I might sit down beside someone, put an arm round a shoulder, say very little and just look into their eyes.   Nothing was alien to me, not one single expression of human sorrow.   Everything seemed so familiar, as if I knew it all and had gone through it all before… And at

the end of each day, there was always the feeling: I love people so much. Never any bitterness about what was done to them, but always love for those who knew how to bear so much although nothing had prepared them for such burdens (Hillesum, et.al., 2002: 546).

Many years ago I met a priest who was giving the *Exercises* to people engaged in disarmament and social causes.   He found that they lacked a deeper spirituality to sustain them.   Sustainability is not only about how to keep enjoying our current level of material civilization.   It is also about having a heart able to face rejection, failure and disaster and not be overcome.   My own feeling is that the way of the hermit is one way in which we can hope to find this courage.

Conclusion

Much of what is said in this paper will come as no surprise to my hearers. My analysis of civilization and barbarity of urban and rural is nothing new, though I may have drawn on Chinese material that is unfamiliar to many.   In Part Three, however, I changed the focus from analysis to proposal.   The proposals are deliberately radical and to some extent impossible.   Many of us travel by aeroplane and high-speed train, the perfect images of modern civilizations.   It could not be otherwise.   We cannot go back to the past.   But by linking the call to sustainability, to being "green", with the notions of self-acceptance and facing the fear in our hearts, I hope to be able to suggest that working for peace should not become just another "job", a task in our busy life. It requires, rather, an inner optimism and acceptance of the world and of others as well as the courage to learn from our innermost self.   The ways I have suggested may be unrealistic but I hope that the spirit is not.   The challenges of sustainability are not only goals in the external world but also a path we must take in our hearts.

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關於和平與大自然、現代與文明的一些反省

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摘 要

　　在本文作者思考進入文化的意義，反省文化與和平的關係，特別討論現代城市生活、簡單生活以及如何達到內心的平安。雖然城市非何和平理想地點，但是今日的人也無法回到山洞時期，而且甚至回到原始生活模式，仍會有暴利，因為暴力來自人心內。本文以自己或他人的生活經驗為基礎，參考學者的意見，提供反省，因此不是一篇正式學術性的論文。在結論中，我向環保運動說幾句話。

關鍵詞：城市、文化、現代、和平、節慾