

Imagine all the people, living in peace. (John Lennon)

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1 Preamble

Following text is not meant as an academic paper, but mainly as a discussion paper. It has its origins in a group of people who have been searching and pleading for years for more common sense in our world. This has to be seen in stark contrast with today's reality whereby democracy only exists in name, and organised people (industrial corporations, unions, political parties, special interest groups, and many more) as well as non-organised people use it by the simple act of voting. Directly or indirectly, they use governmental legal powers to create a selfish form of economy at the expense of their fellow citizens, who's main role has been reduced to vote, work and generate the wealth that keeps this system going. Whether this is called a leftist social economy or a rightist dictatorship makes no difference. The means of power serve a privileged group better than those who contribute the most. The class struggle seems like a never-ending story.

We have been advocating and researching alternatives. On the political front this has resulted in a search for direct democracy, essentially a form of very decentralized politics whereby the citizen decides as much as possible himself, but he also bears the responsibility for his acts. In our world of nations, very few places on earth follow such principles. One of the exceptions is perhaps Switzerland, a small country with 26 cantons and as many constitutions, ranging from very small cantons where people still vote on all important issues on the marketplace by raising their hand, to larger cantons that follow more or less the rules of a more centralized, representative democracy. What very few people know is that the Swiss democracy has roots that go 800 years back in history while it has given them centuries of peace and wealth, being taxed less than most people in the world.

One could think that this kind of thinking implies that we are better off with no form of government at all. This is very tempting if one sees the level of taxation (de facto often 50 to 80% of what one produces) applied in most western countries. And while this represents a huge level of public spending, it is often very inefficient. The bureaucratic sector is certainly a killing factor in the creation of wealth, the root cause of our problems lies deeper. The public sector and its political servants are itself just an instrument in the hands of people that use it to promote their own interests, at the expense of the interests of the fellow citizens. The instrument that makes this possible is the law, because the law specifies rules and exceptions on general principles that the citizen must follow unless he risks being fined or even being put in prison.

In such a context however, societies risk losing their own purpose. Not only do they risk losing their social purpose, they also risk losing all the economic wealth that their hard-working citizens have build up. The western world is now in deep economic troubles, but even deeper is its moral crisis. Those who think that Greece and the European Union can be saved by printing even more money and giving it as a loan to corrupt and bankrupt nations suffer from a disillusion. This is most clear in the case of Greece. 60% of the working population worked for the public sector not because Greece is a model state of socialism, but because it is utterly corrupt. It cannot be saved with more money. It can only be saved by restructuring itself and by cleaning society of its immoral attitude of corruption. Let the citizen decide and work for himself, but let him also be responsible for his acts.

2 A society from scratch

Pleading for direct democracy and individual freedom and responsibility in the current context is like whispering good advice in a storm when the ship goes under. Necessity dictates that we can hope to survive but most importantly that we can hope that the next ship will be build adequately and will steer us out of stormy waters.

Therefore, the idea was launched to rethink society from scratch, rather than trying to fight vested interests. It is similar to the times when the Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution, an exercise that needs to be done all over again because in most countries the spirit of the original Constitution has been lost. Often it even has been undermined in the constitution itself. Meant as an instrument to safeguard the Rule of Law, it has been used as an instrument to gradually use the Rule of Law for self-interest.

Rethinking society from scratch does not throw away everything we have learned. Essential is to rediscover the fundamental principles on which a society is to be based, ignoring the distorted picture that politics and law present us with today. Doing this is like designing a building. It will stand if it is designed using sound principles of physics and mechanics (actually the law of Newton might be sufficient). It will be elegant and practical if its architecture is crystal clear and takes into account that a building has a purpose, i.e. provides shelter and useful functionality to the people using the building. If both these principles are not followed, the building will collapse.

Below we propose a first set of fundamental principles. The reader might not agree or not fully agree with them. But even if that is not the case, it leads to a surprising insight. Important is that we can derive a coherent and non-contradictory "system". It should be noted that this system is not prescriptive but only normative.

3 First Principles

I. Every human being has a worldwide fundamental right on self-determination.

Meaning: self-determination is determined by the person itself and is harmed when the self-determination or the potential to it is diminished or is terminated against the will of the human being, be it directly or indirectly.

II. The right of self-determination is to be granted to any other human being.

Meaning: the right of self-determination is not an absolute right. It is kept in balance by the reciprocity to grant this right to any other human being. This reciprocity is the root principle of social behavior and assures that the relative right of self-determination is the greatest for human society as a whole.

III. The nucleus of the human social society is a person's family

Meaning: self-determination is a right that surpasses the border of one's life, as life would be futile without the survival of the human species. Hence, every human being has the right to strive for tight social relationships as he sees fit. A human being maximizes his post-life self-determination by taking care of his biological followers until these followers have achieved the moral awareness and capability to exercise their right to self-determination in line with the first two principles.

IV. The nucleus of the human political society is the local community.

Meaning: in order to maintain and secure the rights on self-determination, human beings have no choice but to interact with their environment and other human beings wherever they are. This creates a local sharing of resources and consequently of interactions to share these resources in the best possible way.

4 Derived principles

V. At all times, a balance must be maintained between individual rights, social rights, and political rights

Meaning: given that the fundamental right on self-determination is dependent on interactions with other human beings, and are a result of how well other human beings respect that right, none of the rights can have a higher status at the expense of any of these rights.

VI. None of these worldwide fundamental rights has a higher status than any of them and hence cannot be used as a prerogative to suppress any of the worldwide fundamental rights.

Meaning: If this would not be the case, then power will be unrightfully exercised and human beings will be harmed in their right on self-determination.

VII. The only violation of these rights is the retribution for violating the worldwide fundamental principles.

Meaning: to keep the balance, it might be necessary to use violence against human beings or their social or political associations that willingly violate the first principles. This is not a violation of these fundamental rights but a necessity to guarantee these rights in the long term. It goes without saying that one must be very cautious in applying this principle.

VIII. Every effort will be pursued to maintain the worldwide fundamental rights.

Meaning: as the right of self-determination of human society as a whole is the fundamental goal, it acts as the moral guiding principle for all decisions and actions taken by human beings. Hence, a moral human being must engage himself to maintain these fundamental rights.

IX. No distinction will be made between human beings as long as they adhere to the worldwide fundamental principles.

Meaning: while human beings are not equal when born, they have equal rights on self-determination, notwithstanding any differences of any nature (e.g. historic, genetic, ...).

X. Every human being has the freedom of speech, association and work as long as he adheres to the worldwide fundamental principles.

Meaning: the underlying moral principle for the individual human being is that of self-fulfillment, in essence, the capability to reach his maximum potential. He must therefore be able to make use of his natural and acquired capabilities in the best possible way.

XI. Economic rights emerge from the interactions between humans that are inherent to the social and political society.

Meaning: for maximizing the right of self-determination of all human beings, human beings need to acquire resources, by exchanging them or by producing them. First principles dictate that this must happen with no hindrance if not at the expense of the

fundamental rights of other human beings. Economic interactions focus on resources but are nothing more than specific cases of social and political interactions.

5 Practical Principles

Human life would be very unproductive if one had to consider at every instant the adherence to above fundamental and moral principles. In addition, the practical application of these principles is passed on from one generation to another. Hence, rules are useful to give concrete guidelines for the implementation of the fundamental principles. There should be as few rules as possible as insight and knowledge change over time and rules must then be adapted. In addition, all rules are trade-offs, as no perfect knowledge exists. Historical knowledge will always be incomplete and future knowledge is uncertain and therefore any interpretation of the fundamental principles will be driven by a specific context.

In practice, the elaboration of these rules will be the battlefield of the political struggle. No human being is perfect in light of the principles and power struggles that will take place. They merely reflect that some human beings prefer the shorter-term benefits over the long-term benefits.

From these observations, one can see that a practical implementation must obey a number of principles to assure a longer-term adherence to the fundamental principles.

1. Before practical rules are provided, a correcting rule must be in place that allows correcting for wrong or ill-advised implementation rules. We call this the meta-principle.
2. No human being must be allowed to exercise power for a too long period in whatever form.
3. Every practical implementation rule must, if feasible and possible, be the result of a well thought over deliberative process.
4. As the political activity requires economic resources, it is natural that people delegate this activity to a mandated person. The mandated person must not be in a position of power so that it can ignore its mandate and hence mandates must be strictly limited in time and in the subject.

Given that the fundamental principles recognize the locality principle in forming social interactions, one can see that many different local associations can form. A fundamental issue is that these should not result in human being's fundamental rights being undermined. This is an important element because human beings today are increasingly mobile and technical means allow us to create social interactions on a worldwide scale.

On the other hand, as local communities don't have all resources, it is natural for them to engage in social and political interactions with other communities to achieve their goal.

They can create higher-level communities to which they delegate matters of a non-local concern, etc.

6 Practical rules per domain

It should be clear that the fundamental principles are hierarchical by nature. They originate at the level of the human being who engages in social and political interactions and delegates to higher-level communities under a strict mandate. It is useful to separate the different aspects in orthogonal domains, often also found back in existing societies. It is important to keep this hierarchy and orthogonality as the practical rules in each domain must be derived from the fundamental principles. The more derivation, the more likely the rules will have temporary value and the more one must be careful that they don't replace higher-level principles. This does not exclude however different interpretations that will differ from community to community.

6.1 Jurisdiction: the domain of a social interpretation of the fundamental principles

It goes without saying that this domain must be fully independent of the application of the fundamental rules to avoid conflicts of interest. On the other hand, it must have the support and involvement of all members of human society as it creates the moral basis for human society.

Hence, this is also the domain where the citizens must be involved, not so much in terms of having politicians decide for them, but in terms of having to think about the application of the fundamental principles. This is the true domain that a direct democracy must cover. Everything is meddling in somebody else's affairs. Abusing a position of power, whether held privately or publicly, is a form of moral and economic corruption. It ultimately means a disrespect for the rightful property of fellow members of society.

Note that this is the only function that a State/Government needs to provide. Everything else can be provided by the economic sector (see the next section) provided that everyone in this sector adheres to the fundamental principles. One can even allow that the public sector also provides such services (if that is a shared decision by all citizens) provided that the public sector provides these services in accordance with the fundamental principles. In particular, this means that no abuse is made of any legal power and that at all times anybody else cannot be prevented to provide similar services.

6.2 Economy: the domain of a resource-constrained interpretation of the fundamental principles.

This domain has many subdomains that can be derived from economic principles. To name the most prominent ones:

- Financial: how do we conduct our resource exchanges? Money is a modern technical means to achieve this.

- Education: knowledge and skills are resources that allow each human person to achieve his potential and that of human society.
- Social Security and wellbeing: how to assure continuity in resources over a lifetime?

Many more very practical applications can be derived from economic principles. To name just a few that traditionally are associated with the public sector, but really shouldn't at all: Agriculture, Transport, Communication, Culture, Industrial Production, Defense, Safety Services, Security Services, etc.

7 The one-percent government

Today's public sectors easily take up 30 to 70% of the official GNP. In practice, when such high percentages are reached, the real GNP will be higher because part of it is provided in the informal sector. The latter is not a crime but often a necessary survival mechanism. At the same time, it also underestimates the portion of the economy the public sector occupies because many activities in the private sector are required to meet legal requirements and regulations.

From the analysis above, one can see that this need not be the case. Without pleading for a minimalistic public sector, one can estimate that the essential function of a government can probably be provided by allocating one percent of the GNP to fulfill its function. Moreover, the GNP will grow substantially as well as the economic sector can be hoped to be more efficient and productive. The only role that must be provided is to safeguard the Rule of Law as defined in the fundamental principles. This is not an economic good but a precondition for the economic sector to flourish.

8 Micro-socialism

Opponents and superficial readers might object that this line of thought will lead to an asocial society. This is driven by the current paradigm that only the State is big enough to provide social services and be compassionate. This is contradicted by the facts. The current economic crisis has now generated more unemployed than ever before. Moreover, people did not become unemployed overnight. The new underclass of unemployed has been in the making since the mid-seventies when the gold standard was abandoned in favor of a freely printing money press. This has made some people rich, but in the long-term it is inevitable that this makes most of us poorer. The credit money was not used to invest but was often used to stimulate consumption. The assumption was that this would create a self-reinforcing economic cycle and that future income coming from future economic growth would be able to pay for future social expenses. There are several reasons why this is a fallacy. First of all, it is a scheme whereby profits are privatized but the social costs are not. The social costs are deferred to a later stage and even to be borne by a future generation. This is a classical Ponzi-scheme and while it took a financial crisis

to make that clear, it is evident that such policies were in flagrant conflict with our fundamental principles we formulated at the beginning.

The fundamental principles do not take away social responsibilities. They are part of it. Its day-to-day application makes us continuously responsible towards other members of society, starting with the members of our own family, then with the members of our local community and finally with all members of human society. The closer we are to our fellow beings, the higher the social interaction and responsibility will be. Hence, in contrast to the macro-socialism of the nation-based ideologies, fundamental principles result in a very strong form of what we could call "micro-socialism". This is not a new concept. Most societies, especially the less industrialized ones practice it. The "extended" family is there the norm whereas our modern industrialized nations have often achieved the opposite providing social support by law but social alienation the practice. In our modern socialized societies, many people live on their own, living from benefits and missing the social support that family and work can provide.

9 Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité

Many modern constitutions (when nations still made sense) are based on the ideals of the French revolution formulated as "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" (Liberty, equality, fraternity). While these terms have received different interpretations and were gradually eroded over the years, their original intentions very much reflect the spirit of the fundamental principles. Liberty is not absolute but limited by the liberty of others. Equality is not the same as being identical but is about equality before the law. Fraternity is the most controversial one, but it is at the essence of our social responsibilities. It also expresses that social responsibilities are first of all towards the persons that are closest to us.

Over the years the spirit of these three fundamental principles has gradually eroded in our constitutions. Most often by replacing the principles with positive, but often opportunistic rights and by defining exceptions and opportunistic interpretations. The ever-growing list of rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is such an example. Too often the declaration has been used to change the moral right into a political plight to justify ideologies.

It is therefore very difficult to "undo" all this value erosion by attempting to change the existing law as it is today. Often, this erosion is tied in with vested interests. The only option therefore, is to restart from scratch.

10 The law of robotics and of humanoids

Surprisingly maybe to some, we might have another angle that gives us a new view on what are the fundamental principles that should govern our social interactions. It was

triggered by technology, that as always requires us to review known principles. In this case, it is the advent of robotic, read artificial, machines that prompted it. As often science-fiction writers are the ones first confronted with the new issues and we might all remember the three laws of robotics by Isaac Asimov.

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws.

Later on, Asimov added a zero-th law as follows:

0. A robot may not harm humanity, or, by inaction, allow humanity to come to harm.

It is tempting to reformulate these laws in terms of human actors. After all, robots are made by humans, so humans remain responsible. So this is what we get for the first principle for the Law of Humanoids:

1. A human may not injure another human being or, through inaction, allow another human being to come to harm.
2. The second principle is a bit more difficult as it speaks of someone giving "orders", assuming that human beings are superior masters over the robots. In reality, this is not unlike the situation we have in social organizations or definitely in the context of a family where parents have the moral right to expect (within limits) obedience.
3. The third law is trivial. The result is as follows: A human being should respect human beings that have moral authority, except when this would conflict with the First Law.
4. A human being must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws.

Regarding the zero-th law, it is straightforward to transpose it, but it also raises issues like the interpretation of the second law. However, it is at the essence of the social debate. The difficulty is here that it creates a moral responsibility that transgresses a single human lifetime.

0. A human may not harm humanity, or, by inaction, allow humanity to come to harm.

We can see that these robotic laws, while still open for interpretation, clearly follow our first principles defined at the beginning. Of course, we have provided some interpretation already just like Asimov spent complete books on it.

11 Conclusion

Albeit short, we have given evidence that our current laws and political systems were started with the right intentions but that gradually first principles were eroded for opportunistic reasons. As the zero-th law demonstrates, and this principle was never mentioned in our current nation-state constitutions, this has violated fundamental principles.

As it is almost impossible to undo the current situation, unless one favors revolution and bloodshed, the only sensible approach is to rethink our social and political system from scratch. Even if many will likely consider the conclusions to be utopian and unrealistic, the analysis will serve its purpose. It has shown that the essential function of governments is not in the social or economic realm. Its essential role is to safeguard the Rule of Law, to safeguard the fundamental principles. It must do so very intentionally. If not, humanity will be doomed and we will be enslaved forever to our own egoistic impulses and power struggles.

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