

Chapter V

(B) Liberating the Past from the Future

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to define intrinsic values of information-communication processes in human development.

The development of civilization depends upon the accumulation of wisdom, knowledge and cultural and infrastructural gain. Man is prouder of his heritage than of that which he can eventually achieve in the future. The future is often the threat of the imminent unknown, something that can destroy our stability, qualifications and position within society. On the other hand, the "future" is also the hope of the desperate for a better life.

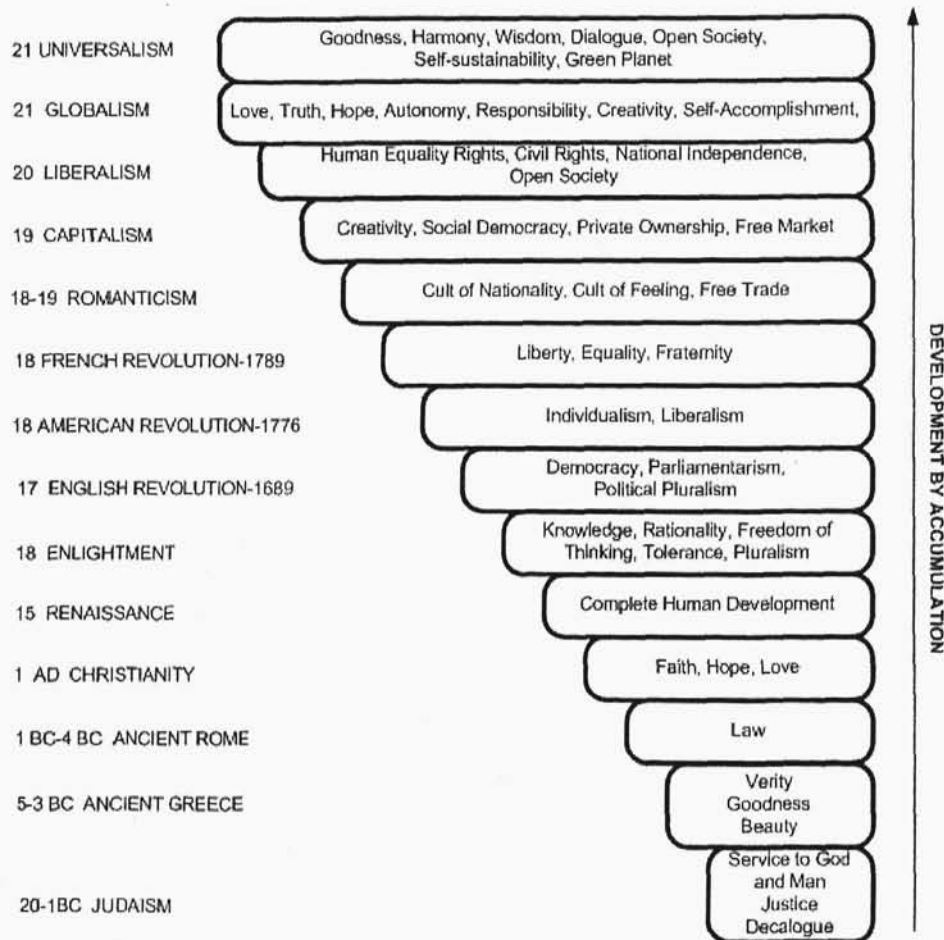
THE ACCUMULATION PRINCIPLE

The development of man's existence is directed by his wisdom, expressed in values by which he is prepared to shape his life. Figure 5-1 illustrates a pyramid of values formed on the basis of accumulation. Each era has created its own store of values in response to the corresponding needs of civilization. If we enter the 21st century with such values as love, truth, hope, autonomy, responsibility, creativity, self-fulfillment and wisdom, it does not mean that we are rejecting the values of the previous era. Has not the value of

tolerance from the age of Enlightenment already been adopted? We can say that this value has been applied perhaps more intensely in our own time than when it was first formulated. Likewise, justice, a value formulated under ancient Judaism, is applied today with even greater firmness. Of course, not all values retained from the "past" are taken uncritically today. For example, the cult of Nationalism, formulated under Romanticism (the 18th and 19th centuries) is diminishing in value in our era of the Electronic Global Village and emerging global civilization. This example may be seen, ultimately, as an exception to the rule, yet only in Western civilization. In general, each succeeding generation can interpret old values better than the last, not only accumulating them, but bestowing on them new qualities.

Similarly, the development of knowledge occurs by accumulation (Figure 5-1), with great scientific discoveries serving as a corrective. We do not discard books containing outdated knowledge from the libraries, nor, even less, do we burn them. In this regard, we build even bigger libraries which, in the Electronic Global Village, we transform with digital knowledge, to fit onto a computer disk no bigger than a dime. We can find room on such a disk for both discoveries and solutions by **astronomers**: Copernicus, Galileo, Brahmagupta, Kepler, Lagrange; **mathemati-**

Figure 5-1. The values pyramid developed by accumulation (The Kawczak-Targowski Model, numbers identify centuries)



ciens: Euclid, Pythagoras, Archimedes, Leibniz, Gauss, Bernoulli; **physicists:** Newton, Ampere, Bohr, Celsius, Doppler, Einstein, Fahrenheit, Faraday, Fermi, Heisenberg, Hertz, Kelvin, Kirchhoff, Maxwell, Oppenheimer, Planck, Roentgen, Rutherford, Volta, Cavendish, Galvani, Gibbs; **chemists:** Mendeleev, Nobel, Curie-Sklodowska, Pauling; **biologists:** Darwin, Fleming, Freud, Galen, Hippocrates, Jung, Pasteur, Pavlov, Salk, Warburg, Watson; **computer scientists:** Babbage,

Boole, Hollerith, Pascal, Turing, Von Neumann, Cray, Wozniak; **technicians:** Newcomen, Savery, Coulomb, Jacquard, Henry, Colt, Bell, Edison, Marconi, the Wrights, Ford, Monroe, Sikorsky, Crey and many, many others. Although the achievements of these pioneers of science and technology have, in the meantime, been perfected or superseded, they nevertheless determine the immortal achievements of man from the "past."

One of the measures by which we judge a university is the extent of its bibliographic store. Harvard, for example, recognized as one of the world's best universities, has also the biggest library, comprising 12 million volumes. In other words, the measure of Harvard's greatness is its relationship to the past.

The development of culture is the development through the past which we either embrace with the greatest enthusiasm or transform with the greatest passion. Great **musical works** composed by such geniuses as Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Brahms, Debussy, Chopin, Liszt, Dvorak, Tchaikovsky, Sibelius, Verdi, Puccini, and Gershwin are immortal. We sit in a concert hall absorbed and fascinated by the greatness of this eternally beautiful music, which allows us to forget not only about the often stressful present, but also the threatening, uncertain future.

This is equally true of **literature**. Works by Shakespeare, Dickens, Conrad, Shaw, Andersen, Balzac, Dumas, Hugo, Moliere, Zola, Goethe, Mann, Neruda, Borges, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Gogol, Sienkiewicz, Pasternak, Singer, Twain, Huxley, J. D. Salinger, Hemingway or Tagore are, to my mind, a constant source of meditation on our destiny. Although these works deal with the past, it is in them that we seek the solutions to the challenges and struggles of good and evil, love and hate, faith and betrayal, and life and death. Sometimes the answer to these questions is richer when it comes from a study of the "past." The best example of this is the contemporary Italian writer, philosopher and journalist Umberto Eco who for example looks for solutions to present-day dilemmas in a medieval monastery, *The Name of the Rose*. In this novel, the narrator, a young monk, employs logic to solve a murder, and although the murderer is unmasked, the quest for knowledge leads to a dead end.

In **painting**, where a work can be created very quickly—in, as it were, an act of creative ecstasy—there occurs a certain negation of the past, since it seems that its scope has been fulfilled and

there is no need for further protest and manifestos. The works of past great masters such as Vermeer, Rembrandt, Raphael, Velazquez, Goya, El Greco, and Leonardo da Vinci are (always) immortal. We look at them and admire the genius of a man who could raise himself to such heights of beauty. In the 19th century, painters began to discard the burden of patronage, which had often obligated them to paint family portraits of their sponsors. They left the studio and became awestruck with the beauty of nature in sun-drenched France. The result was the birth of the Impressionist movement with works by artists such as Degas, Manet, Monet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Renoir and others. A further avalanche of protests, initiated by Picasso ("anti-da Vinci") and Dali, rejected past achievements and led to the avant-garde movement in art, which presented a total breach with the "past." Many avant-garde works of the twentieth century, being both beautiful and captivating for a moment, have quickly receded into the past, if they did not contain some sort of genius-driven art. In any case, the development of avant-garde art in the 20th century, having set itself the unrealistic goal of defining a "future" in utopian form, has become so inert and static that it would seem to herald the death of civilization itself. Since this is not the "future" we want, let us therefore return to the past as well as to the present, which instantly becomes the past. The avant-garde movement is directed at finding new rules of art and new forms of presenting them. This approach is based on the premise of perfecting method, so spectacular in 20th century technique. This is not such a bad thing, since to do otherwise would be to promote stagnation, or a "living death."

The infrastructure of settlements, that is, villages, towns and cities, was not built suddenly as an entity, but developed over centuries and millennia: a new street next to an old street, a new house next to an old one, and so forth. The older the "house," the greater the care we bestow on it, often even attaching to it the status of treasure, be it a national settlement or one of world

historical value, recognized by experts from UNESCO. Of course there are exceptions to the rules of accumulation—cities such as Brasilia or Chandigarh, which arose from a single one-time event, a spontaneous act of creation, by a political-architectural union such as Kubitschek-Niemeyer and Nehru-Le Corbusier, respectively.

Such an act represented a brutal wish to cut with the past and build at once a modern city, ideal and immediately embedded in the “future.” These experiments were not fully successful, since these towns have not developed according to the will of their residents (Brasilia is a city of bureaucrats) but from the top down, directed by city planners. Lately, the opinion prevails among urbanists that the development of a city should reflect the development of the individual. That is, it should be non-schematic, “polymorphous” rather than “linear,” almost a network-island, the way Los Angeles, for example, has developed spontaneously and adapted to its own needs. It is, in other words, a historical development and thus based on honoring the achievements of the “past.”

THE WISDOM PRINCIPLE

The search for wisdom is as old as *homo sapiens*, that is, thinking man. After medicine, meteorology, and astronomy (as observational studies of events), the first abstractive science created by man was philosophy which, translated from Greek, means the love of wisdom. The development of **philosophy** has been marvelous from the earliest times of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, through the times of Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, Walter, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Comte, Mill, Marx, Husserl, Spencer, Kierkegaard, Brentano, Nietzsche, Pierce, Bergson, Russell, Whitehead, Carnap, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Sartre, and in our own time, Levi-Strauss, Popper, Kuhn, Foucault, Derrida, Habermas, and others. Together with these men, billions of people are searching

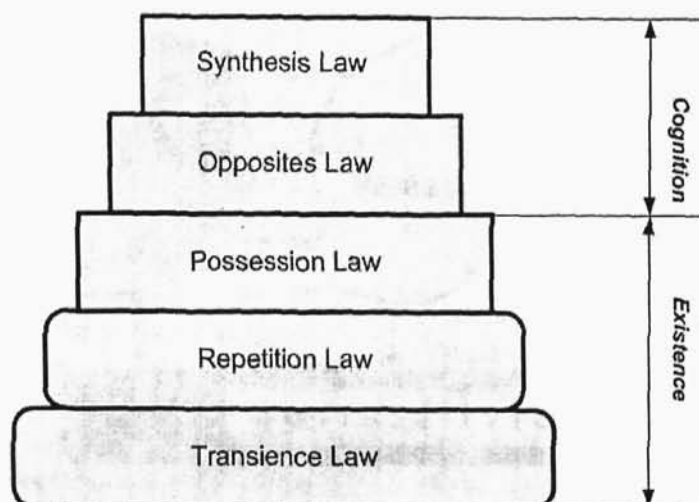
for the sources of wisdom, yet the capacity for wisdom remains beyond our grasp. Wisdom means, after all, understanding the essence of existence and its rules, the better to adapt oneself to a civilized life. Wisdom is also the capacity to distinguish fact from fiction, truth from falsehood, good from evil, and beauty from ugliness. In a wise approach to solving problems, man establishes a broad context of time and space. A wise person solves his problems through the prism of a central viewpoint whose values he holds dear. Such wisdom reveals itself gradually and manifests itself in thought and action. Each of us must have his own approach to wisdom, which is why wisdom is so hard to understand, to assimilate and especially, to put into practice.

To achieve wisdom, man must have at his command the achievements of all civilization and his own existence, and therefore, according to the principle of harmony, bring together two areas of existence: his own and that of civilization. Accepting what is good and rejecting what is bad, he must then file his own choices in his long-term memory, or in a computer, since one cannot create wisdom, as it were, from nothing or from the mere fact of existence.

Thus it is necessary to harmonize the rules of existence with those of civilization, or, plainly put, Hegelian philosophy with existentialism—that is, to formulate a bio-social system. To this purpose, we will introduce the concept of the harmonized laws of existence and cognition, as illustrated in Figure 5-2.

If the terms of human existence derive from man himself, human activity is directed primarily by the *law of transience*, which no one has ever broken. (There is a proverb supposedly taken from the Persians. A Persian king once told a sculptor to create a monumental inscription that would be valid forever. So he did. The inscription read: “and this too shall pass.”) Nothing acts forever: Everything has a beginning and an inevitable end. Human existence begins and ends. The *law of repetition* follows from the law of transience.

Figure 5-2. Model of harmonized laws of existence and cognition



Each person must begin anew, learning and experiencing life independently, regardless of the wealth of humanity's accumulated knowledge and wisdom. Thus, at any given moment, one person is learning "this" while another is learning "that." Because the *law of possession* works atavistically (that is, as a regression to animal-like characteristics), both of the aforementioned people will defend the knowledge which they have acquired and not that which is right. At this point we can "insert" Hegel's *law of opposites*, that is, the attempt of one to defeat the other. If the *Law of Possession* were not valid, and, for instance, the *Law of Right* (the ability to accept only what is "real" or "valuable") were to gain acceptance, then the *Law of Opposites* would also be invalid because it would be redundant and it would not be necessary to apply it at the next step. The *Law of Synthesis* follows from the *law of opposites*.

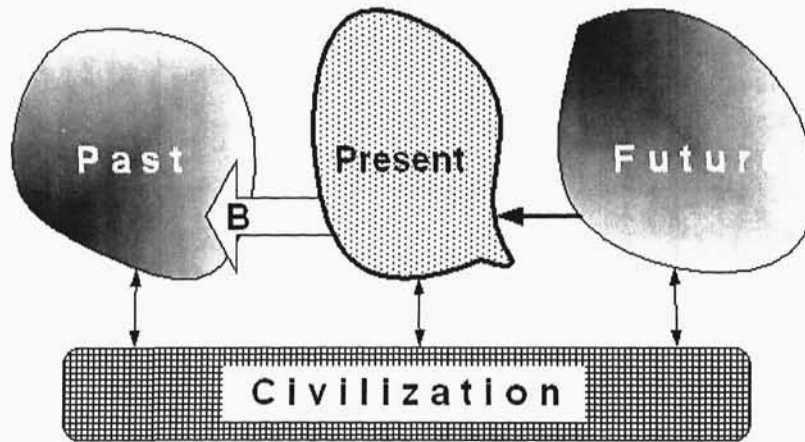
From the view-point of "liberating the past from the future" the wisdom hierarchy illustrates the fact that existence is deeply embedded in the past. The *Laws of Transience, of Repetition and of Possession*, are precisely laws that derive

from the past, since they derive from evolution, that is, from records in the genetic memory. In the context of the future, the agent of acquired culture enters into the game only at the level of the last two laws. This future does not emerge of itself but from the current level of knowledge and information which result from the collective memory of civilization, which is, from present and past conditions. This claim is illustrated by the example of *science fiction*. Images of the future, often the most fantastic ones, are indeed the result of civilization's current store of knowledge as well as the author's interpretation of it.

CONCLUSION: THE "FRUITLESS" PAST

In synthesizing whether it is possible to "liberate the past from the future," we draw the conclusion that, yes, indeed it is. This is because man accumulates his achievements, perfects his wisdom and raises his awareness, thanks to the continual survival of symbols of language and

Figure 5-3. The architecture of time in a mode of "B" liberating the past from the future



the modernization of past results. Thus we can propose a model, in Figure 5-3, which reflects the confirmation of this thesis. Adapting the words of Heine, "where books are burned, there thoughts are burned," we can generalize that "where the past is not valued, there no hope exists for the future." From here, the next step is an incantation of "vivat passé." Those who are aware of what the "future" can be for about 12 or 20 billion people would prefer even to "halt" the "present" in order to prevent the future from being a "final happening."

The mere flow of time, by the same token, gives nothing. Only when you provide conditions for remembering and understanding does the "past" acquire meaning.

A. Further Research Directions

- Verify values of the global civilization and explain their impact on the success of the globalization processes.

- Verify values of potential universal civilization and explain their application feasibility and their impact on the betterment of the human race.
- Investigate the harmony of existence-oriented and cognition-oriented laws and their impact on wisdom application among humans as the key factor leading to a successful life and human existence.

B. Research Opportunities

- The research opportunity is in interdisciplinary study; including philosophy, psychology, cognition science, ecology, and anthropology.

C. Additional Ideas

- The civilized world is driven by ideas, even if common people are not aware of it in their daily activities. Very often, even politicians

are not aware of this fact. They are so engaged in tactical and operational activities and in enjoying power that it is enough for them. On the other hand in a very *long-term* cycle, the world is developing and complying with the hierarchy of values, which so far have the tendency of constant improvement of human status within civilization. Therefore, the key solution to the majority of civilization conflicts lies in the realm of conflicting values. The study of civilization's evolution in terms of values should bring us closer to civilizations' and individuals' wisdom. It is an important focus, since philosophy neglects to a degree (in a sense to convey its findings to the public) the issue of wisdom, which, however, is not only the most critical cognitive process, but that which determines mankind's success or failure in all facets of human activities.

D. Rationale

- The current status of world civilization indicates that at least the most advanced civilizations (religion-oriented) are in conflicts either internal or external. These conflicts can be eventually solved or minimized if mankind will find enough motivation and ability to apply wisdom in evaluating their values and driven by them actions; in other words, to make better choices in decision-making on life. It means that understanding and applying of "harmonizing values and wisdom" is the key leading to better future of civilization.

E. Additional Reading

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