

ABOUT THE “HUMANIZATION OF MONEY”

Basic Principles of an Economy in Harmony with the Laws of Life

Charly Rainer Ehrenpreis, 2010



1. The Global Situation

Today, all of humanity is living in the system of global capitalism, predominantly based on the maximization of profit by the means of exploiting a large part of humanity and nature. The only thing this system cares about is making the highest profits possible in the current circumstances, as quickly as possible, regardless of the cost to life on this planet.

Latest since World War I, this motive has increasingly driven human beings to create a colossal war society, utilizing the function of money. War is used to maintain the capitalist economic system. More than that: it needs war in order to work – war between people aided by a giant arms industry, and war of people against nature with the help of an equally giant chemical and technological industry. Every current economy depends on the modern industries of arms production and post-war reconstruction. Since the globalization of the financial market, all members of the money-based society are a part of this system.

Edward Goldsmith, editor of "The Case Against the Global Economy," impressively describes the current situation of humankind in the chapter, "Development as Colonialism."

A short summary of his analysis follows:

In 1995 when the World Trade Organization (WTO) was founded at the so-called Uruguay Circle to become the most important instrument of globalization, people were told that globalization would happen to the benefit of all creatures on Earth. Many believed that, since the reasoning made sense and globalization was “in the air” (e.g. as a consequence of the internet), it was the logical next step in the development of humankind. It is a fact, however, that the gap between the poor and the rich has increased continuously since then, environmental pollution has worsened, and criminality, unemployment, malnutrition, homelessness and disease continue to grow.

This is mainly due to the fact that most local economies have broken down under the pressure of globalization. Hardly any former subsistence economies can survive under the competitive pressure of multinationals; no “developing country” can in fact develop under the conditions of the IMF and the World Bank.

With the increasing disappearance of local autonomy, the social holding together of tribal societies (among Indigenous peoples) and communitarian entities in the western world have also disappeared. Their traditional social functions ceased to exist, causing huge problems such as the lack of care for elderly and sick people, increased criminality, etc. Globalization has an answer to this problem too: privatization of all the social functions which had until then been carried out by existing communitarian entities. Since these social services now have to be paid for, the cost of living for almost all people has increased with the exception of a few rich people who are making money with this system. Simultaneously, something like an atomization of society starts; meaning complete privatization and the isolation of the individual.

Just a hundred years ago, social functions were still carried out by big families, communities or villages. Within these communitarian entities people provided for their basic needs themselves: food as well as clothes, child rearing, care of the elderly and the sick, and social order (including jurisdiction). This “social economic system” worked almost entirely without money! It was based on the “social capital” of communities and communitarian entities.

Globalization has transformed all social activities into commodities; they are privatized, i.e. given into the hands of multinationals so that they can be globally marketed and negotiated. This process, however, isolates these activities from their natural social context; social activity is becoming divorced from the human soul which used to sustain it. Globalization does the same thing to social bonds as it does to ecological bonds in natural cycles and biotopes. Highly complex ecosystems are destroyed at an increasing rate in favor of less complex monoculture, industrialized agriculture and mega-dams, with the well-known results of the greenhouse effect and climate change.

In one sentence: globalization replaces the social services of local communitarian entities with the global money economy and the natural function of the biosphere with a technology which is not in harmony with nature.

This process is also based on the increased dissolution of local communitarian entities (big families, tribal communities, villages) into a mutilated form of the nuclear family. They are no longer autonomous social and economic unities and so human beings have been de-rooted fundamentally from their meaning of life. Also, the term “democracy” is mutilated when original social entities no longer exist. In our contemporary mega systems the individual has hardly any possibility to determine his or her life. In addition, nowadays effective worldwide political decisions are no longer made by individual states. This practice was discarded with the installation of the WTO, international trade agreements, etc., in favor of a “de-facto world government” (WTO, G-8-summit meetings, Davos, etc.) which makes decisions beyond parliamentary or democratic legitimation, hardly making themselves accessible to the public. In this way it becomes less and less transparent how much pressure multinationals put on the politicians who are making decisions, obscuring that it is them – and only them – who are the big winners of globalization.

Consequently, real democracy is based mainly on the reintroduction of local and economic autonomy. This includes rooting people in the place they live, the production of their food, their clothes and their houses. It also includes reintegrating human beings into the natural ecological systems they live in and the autonomous administration of their resources (land, water, air, animals, plants, etc.). “Only if and when a whole community is healthy can its members also sustainably maintain their physical and mental health” (Wendell Berry). Only in this way will it also be possible to let the environment be what it is in a sustainable way: it is the elementary basis of life which keeps us alive. Local economic systems can take much more responsibility for administering energy and resources in a sustainable and comprehensive way. Additionally, caretaking for the needy (elderly or sick people) can be reintegrated into local social systems.

Many people will have to learn once again how to survive outside the globalized economy. Autonomous communitarian entities will have to emerge, bringing the fulfillment of their needs of living back into their own hands. Those communitarian entities will not “develop backwards” though, they will make use of the natural inventions of our times such as the decentralized production of energy, insights from modern ecology, nature-harmonious building, alternative medicine, etc.

This amplified anti-globalization movement, this “party of communities,” will at first have little financial resources and power but over the course of time the number of their members will increase by necessity. “If such a party came to power, it could develop and realize a coordinated strategy for a less painful transition toward the kind of society and economy which could offer our children a future on this threatened planet” (Wendell Berry).

2. Basic Ideas About an Economy in Harmony with the Laws of Life:

What we need for a new economy are new self-sufficient communitarian entities, which we call “Healing Biotopes.” In these vessels people re-learn to become aware of their source and cosmic origin, to get to know the natural resources of their lives

more deeply, and to protect, honor and sustainably consolidate themselves. Such places need a completely new perception of the economy of life.

The new peace culture which will develop from the cooperation between these Peace Research Centers is going to give a whole new meaning to money. How will the role models for this new economy be found?

There is an economy of nature, and this economy has been developed over millions of years over the course of evolution: wouldn't it be recommendable for us to take this kind of economy as an example for developing an economy for humanity? What are the basic principles of nature? How do living beings organize their co-habitation naturally and in cooperation with their surroundings in order to build small but stable biotopes and cycles in bigger dimensions?

Some of these basic principles are:

1. Building systems with maximum complexity to reach utmost stability.
2. Connecting or combining these systems to reach ever higher levels of order by means of this increasing complexity.
3. Recognizing that all systems of nature are systems which are open toward the whole – not closed systems.
4. Disposing of a high degree of decentralization and job-sharing.
5. Symbiosis: mutual support by means of exchanging “waste products” which are nutritional for others. A beautiful and simple example of this is the air we breathe: plants “exhale” oxygen and “inhale” carbon dioxide, animals and people do the exact opposite. They need the oxygen exhaled by the plants, exhaling the carbon dioxide the plants need in turn. This is a simple form of global symbiotic support.
6. No equivalence of giving and taking, but rather the building of the greatest possible energy, information and material cycles for the best possible sustenance for all participants.
7. Adjustment of the living being to individual environmental conditions (flexibility).

Without these principles of evolution a constant upward development of life on Earth wouldn't have been possible at all. The very ecology which evolved in this process as the interplay of living beings developed certain basic economic principles and structures:

1. The building of self-sustainable systems or biotopes (autonomy or self-sufficiency).
2. The development of ever bigger networks of interplay toward the construction of a communitarian atmosphere as the condition for all living beings.
3. A decentralized way of working, based on the division of labor whereby their members mutually support each other by means of their individual special qualities (symbiosis).
4. A complete lack of waste. Nature doesn't know “waste.”
5. Each member automatically giving all they have to give; “trade” doesn't balance

what one member gives and what they receive from the whole.

6. Flexibility to adjust to new conditions if, for example, one member lacks something.

A new economy of human beings that follows these principles is first and foremost a gift economy. Georges Bataille developed such an economy when he perceived the sun to be the biggest giving organ of our cosmic environment. It gives itself without limits, thus enabling the development of all life on our planet. Also, living creatures give away everything they don't need for themselves, and in turn receive everything that they need for living. It is this basic principle of giving which Jesus stated with scientific precision: "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." This is not a biblical miracle but the result of millennia of evolution. Only when the ecological cycles of nature are destroyed to the extent they have been up until now by human beings will this principle no longer apply to and work for living beings. It is not the fault of evolution when animals die of thirst or hunger in the desiccated zones of Africa, but rather it is the deed of the human being who decided to act consciously or unconsciously against nature.

Firstly, the economy of nature is the unconditional giving of all that is not needed for survival. Secondly, it is the creation of sufficiently complex, well reflected systems of lasting self-sustainability. Autonomy is a paradigm that guarantees the survival of biotopes.

In the same way, decentralization and work sharing are essential features of a functioning biotope: each member of the biotope "knows" exactly what it has to do, what it has to give, what it needs from the whole, and with whom or what it is symbiotically connected.

It doesn't account for its giving and taking in a direct sense; what we call money doesn't exist in nature in this way. All the same, there is something like an "economic consolidated balance sheet," a "general gross product of nature" and both are positive because so far the development of life (evolution) has always moved toward ever higher complexity, toward the creation of an ever growing general balance of "inner" energy and consciousness on Earth, as Teilhard de Chardin described it.

A new economy of humankind is based on the gifting interplay of autonomous centers. Eventually money will no longer be needed, not even as a means of exchange or payment, for there will be nothing that ought to be paid for. We have arrived at the point where the economy of life on Earth assimilates the actual essence of love. In the end, the one who loves doesn't ask what she or he gets in return. When there is resonance in love – and love is always based on resonance – we will receive what we are searching for or what we need, right now or later. The question is merely about how wide or how big one can see and experience the field of one's own power of love. Watched from a distance with a clear perspective, love in a community such as a Healing Biotope always happens on a higher level of order; it wants to be shared and passed on, in the same way the sun gives its light and warmth.

The Beatles sang “Can’t buy me love,” and I would like to add: “but it is given to you when you understand the rules of the game.”

When we re-learn to give and to allow ourselves to receive in the areas of money or work we will also re-learn this in the area where it seems most difficult: the area of love. Giving love from the abundance of the heart is true affluence and certainly also a part of the entelechy of every human being.

3. The Connection of Money and Love

The connection between love and money is very deep: the notions about economy that we create are determined by our experience in love.

The human economy we know makes the cycles of giving and taking very small. As a rule, two people negotiate with each other what they consider to be equivalent; giving and taking have become the private issue of a small mental cycle – the same as in love. The way human beings act in the realms of love and money are in the end the same as our habits in the realm of money are a result of our experiences in the realm of love. The decisive question in both cases is in how far we dare to integrate ourselves in the bigger cycles of the universal existence of ourselves.

We are not yet really capable of imagining a planetary gift economy as we are accustomed to mistrust, calculation, fear, disbelief, etc. Disbelief in the area of money results from the fact that we translate everything that we experience in the realms of love and trust to the realm of money. And as the experience in love has been very painful, our contemporary capitalism and war society has developed from this wounded psychological basis.

When the expansion of love began to be suppressed it couldn’t grow anymore. Therefore the thought of revenge and destruction against everything that exists developed deeply inside of the human being. This is why our environment is so destroyed. When love couldn’t grow and give itself any longer, nature and its evolution started to be rejected and the idea of private ownership came into being – not only regarding one’s own wallet but also regarding all the gifts (resources) of planet Earth. This is what we now experience as the globalization of private property.

When love couldn’t grow anymore people started to calculate, thinking: how can I get the best of everything for myself now, how can I secure and insure myself? How can I tailor my private happiness to what I can get for myself? This was when human beings started to fear and dominate each other.

When love can grow again, however, when a peace culture that helps restore our original trust for creation and love for human beings begins to grow, we will no longer calculate; we will fully dedicate ourselves to the development and the blossoming of more such places of trust on this planet. We will do this for our benefit and for the benefit of those we love.

Once we have become grounded in our spiritual anchor and love, the question of

economy will have dissolved by itself: why shouldn't we freely give everything to a world whose being and essence we love? Building Healing Biotopes is the first step in the creation of such a world, beginning on a small scale. Thus, the internal economy of a Healing Biotope will be characterized by the idea of communitarian property (i.e. the abolition of private ownership). At first, this refers to all communitarian possessions, mainly in the appreciation, caretaking and maintenance of the land, buildings and infrastructure. Gradually, it would also begin to refer to all services: which members will provide for the community without pay, for the communitarian entity takes care of the needs of all its members.

A brief historical insertion: in the history of our project we have been almost entirely financed through donations and gifts, and we are very grateful for that. We call this economic principle "spiritual economy" because in this context money flows along certain spiritual lines. Of course, to go for this kind of economy requires a considerable amount of faith and trust. We practiced this in our project from the very beginning and experienced a lot of miracles, and in the same way we created miracles for others too.

4. The Transition: The Humanization of Money

On one hand we are living in times of capitalism and war, on the other hand we have the vision of the gift economy in a new peace culture. But how do we get from here to there? In these transition times the concept of "humanizing money" is essential. As long as there is money we must do everything in our power to see that it is invested in a new peace culture.

Here is an interesting statement from Pia Gyger, co-founder of the Swiss Lassalle-Institute: "Humanity must learn and practice peace with the same dedication as they do war. Unless we invest the same financial resources into peace research and peace education, peace will remain an illusion. As soon as we invest our mental, spiritual and material powers to learn peace, the 'historical wheel of war' will start to turn into the opposite direction."

To substantiate this quote in figures I want to add two price examples in the arms industry:

1. A new Leopard-2 tank from the German arms factory Krauss-Maffei costs about 10 million euros. Depending on the country, the same amount could finance a few Healing Biotopes for several thousand people to live and research peace.
2. A stealth bomber costs 1.5 billion USD, which could finance about a thousand Healing Biotopes for several hundred thousand people all over the world.

If the money that is now being invested into the arms industry was invested in the creation of a peace culture, the settlement of planet Earth would look very different very soon.

We assume that the new peace culture is going to develop from a few models (Healing Biotopes) in different regions of planet Earth. Healing Biotopes are places

where the basic features of a new peace culture are being researched and developed. Here people can learn how another life is possible. As soon as these models are working they will function as a crystallization impulse for the development of further models and, in the end, for a completely new peace culture.

These models will be autonomous to a large extent, ecologically as well as socially. Far-reaching economic autonomy is now a must for setting the right course for the creation of a new model of living. In times of transition, economic inventions like regional currencies and “trade rings” (Local Exchange Trading Systems), which ensure that money stays within the region, are groundbreaking, as are regional networks for the autonomous supply of water, food and energy. This process will strengthen regionalization, increase neighborly support and lead to far-reaching independence from global markets.

Autonomy (or self-sufficiency) is not to be (mis)interpreted as “back-to-nature,” rather, it is the full use of regional wealth, the integration of sustainable technology and the building of dwellings that are in harmony with nature and ecological intelligence.

In the area of integrated knowledge, the advent of “open source” technology is worth mentioning: a worldwide network of specialists working together on complex developments without remuneration. This could one day also lead to overcoming the concept of patent rights. Technological know-how must be generally available for everyone; this is the only way humanity can grow together in peace and cooperation.

Creating these regional networks and infrastructures needs financing. Each investment toward this goal is a direct investment for the future of independent but open biotopes. As long as money and a regulated economy still exist the only positive function of money is investment toward the building of regional structures which re-enable people to live in a meaningful way, connected with nature. “Humanizing money” means money being invested in the development of these regional networks and appropriate living models (Peace Research Centers) to virally spread the idea on a global scale.

With “investment” we don’t mean investing money to create a financial return after a certain period of time. The return, rather, lies in the creation of a new quality of living and a new culture. When peace projects are successful, the peace creating intelligence and healing forces on Earth will multiply, as well as the awareness for the need of a genuinely nonviolent culture.

And the possibilities will multiply for more and more people to lead meaningful, healing and fulfilled lives. Thus, an “investment toward peace” does not create a financial return but rather a return that serves peace and the creation of new living structures. Future generations will be grateful for it.

Together with Sabine Lichtenfels, in 2008 I founded “The Grace Foundation” in Switzerland. With the help of this foundation we collect money internationally to

finance the worldwide building of peace research models. So far we have mostly been financing the creation of the Peace Research Center Tamera in Portugal, the Peace Community San José de Apartadó in Colombia, the construction of their new center in Mulatos, the development of the “Global Campus” and its training and education spaces for inner and outer peace work, and the annual GRACE pilgrimages with which we support cooperating peace initiatives in Israel-Palestine and Colombia.

Once more: as long as the current financial system exists, one of the tasks of every peace initiative is to ensure that as much money as possible is detached from the system of violence (including banking systems) and flows into the creation of peace models.

5. Summary

1. Today, all of humanity is living in the system of global capitalism and war, and the economy is dependent on war to exist. In our vision of a future peace culture we need to think about what meaning money is supposed to have.
2. When we look into nature we discover a global economy of exchange which supplies each element with what it needs to live via an amazingly complex network of open cycles. The economy of a new peace culture is therefore going to be a gift economy.
3. Our fear and mistrust, which have been preventing such a system, have been caused by our first experiences in the realm of love. We have transferred these experiences to the system of money. Just as much as we need to learn to give and trust in the area of economy we can and have to re-learn it in the realm of love.
4. If the money that is currently being invested in the war industry were directed into the development of a peace culture, the settlement of our planet would very quickly look very different. The transition from war society to a peace culture will only succeed if enough money is invested into the development of peace models as “crystallization impulses” toward a global field of peace. We call this process the “Humanization of Money.”

6. Closing Words

To summarize, I want to repeat the core statements of this text: the notions of economy that we create for ourselves are characterized by our experiences in love.

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