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On the lanslide of common ground, or the inevitable decline of god and finance

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Yet again the financial markets are crashing, like all the Gods of men eventually must, and like everyone's faith in lenders like god and in the "credit" or "paradise" they promise eventually loses all importance. There is no gold behind the fake credit "money" the system incurs fake "debt" to create, and no god behind the fake hope and fear of the thousand and one doctrines. And even if there were, what intrinsic value do gold or god really have? This new stock market crash and economic recession are good indicators of the ongoing utter collapse of a system of values based on abstraction.

Abstractly speaking, "value" is whatever you say it is, or what whoever holds the most "value" already says it is, and that hollowness comes out in full regalia during a bear/stearns style "run" on the investment "bank." Concretely speaking, people have no principles or standards for behavior that are not completely worn out and inadequate to life. There's no basic common sense shared by all anymore; depending on which shows you watch most, or what style of music, fashion, god or ideology you've picked, or have had imposed on you early enough for you to never have been able to pick anything else, you surround yourself with the appropriate people.

Where do we start from? How to have any dialogue with each-other when we're drowned out by the vastly different sets of values and moralities offered by the world as they clash before our eyes? Should we take sides in such stupid, wasteful conflicts? But to stop them, or even to participate at all, requires knowing how to approach the issues somehow. But what to approach? One American may be a frequenter of G movies and sports games, and another a devotee of some political ideology or another; another may like sado-masochism, another war and violence-oriented video games. Some impose their trips on other people with glee; others' trips are already imposed on everyone they surround themselves with. But to approach a stranger is somehow exceptional for all, since there's no sure common ground to approach them on — even the silly abstract concepts we all have fed to us are open to a million silly interpretations. So our mouths are stuffed full of words to muzzle us and keep us from really communicating.

All of them will pride themselves on their "ethnic origin," will ask you what your "nationality" is and "where you're from;" all because they can't seem to face it that we're all Americans here and have nothing more than meaningless words to attach ourselves to, words for countries we've never been to that describe "identities." "I'm Irish Italian German and Dutch," someone says; what is this but a frightened running away through all these lands that so many different peoples have tread upon and lived in — running somewhere else? And this, the fear, the alienation, the miseries of a mass broken into small, closed off social groups ever seeking differentiation — yes, this is the trademark of a good business in human bodies, a rootless, precarious, timid mass in an utter economic, emotional, and physical mess.

The American Government's historically increasing willingness to trample those who transgress the tacit law of its global hegemony is perhaps a good index of our progressive loss as Americans of the openness and ability to communicate fluently and intelligently that once was the inherent quality of our hemisphere, a hemisphere borne of massacres and mass rapes, mutilated languages and force melded cultures, where a total clarity of understanding and solidity of mutual aid was always the usual experience with strangers, whether in spite of this history or because of it.

Latin Americans retain much more fully this quality of America which we North Americans seem to have forgotten, perhaps because of their acute awareness of an exploitation that can't really afford all the bells and whistles ours gets up here. I've found much profounder and more prevalent kindness and hospitality when hitch-hiking around down there, at least, than here (although I certainly had a lot of good times doing it in the US). But after all, don't we vaguely remember that in North America the natives were all just killed and moved into isolation whereas in South America the natives were integrated by force and rape? No one ever had as much luck in making the Latin dictators' years US co-engineered mass murders look fair and honorable as they have had in making a century of US imperial

wars, from Filipino water-torture to water-torture in Cuba today look good and even advertising-glossy.

There's hardly any more one thing that everyone knows about, that everyone holds as a basic self-evident truth " but we all have been told our whole lives how the stock-market is doing, even though it had no relationship to our lives whatsoever. Dirt poor on the street listening to the radio, you will still hear how the Dow Jones is down 3 points and the S&P plunged 12 and a half. Whether you care or not, it is imposed on you that you must be aware at the very least of the fact that other people are making money, and that that's what people do.

That private control over every natural resource is a just affair, even though all people have need of them to live; that the simultaneous exploitation and pollution of these resources is to be taken for granted as a necessary evil " these are some of the unspoken basic assumptions playing havoc in our minds with the urge to be happy and to live fully, to have free access to the things you need and want, to the means of being creative. Our frame of mind is defined by these constant reminders of wall street's existence.

Our points of reference are all awry, scattered around and across the ranks of social hierarchies that everyone tenses up to keep their place in; we're lost and don't know how to talk to each-other; one man's English is an incomprehensible foreign language to another man's English " but at least we know how the Dodgers are doing, or where the NASDAQ market average is at. Like horoscopes, are they always in the paper somewhere only because some like to read them, or because the subconscious propaganda message is that external, uncontrollable, unaccountable forces must and do guide and determine us?

Freedom is transparent and playful, as Democracy, and the total socio-economic self-management it implies, is intended to be. But we have become opaque and work-obsessed, as capitalism intends, while getting riled up about "freedom" and "democracy" as mere words, words that no one really knows how to define anymore, whose meanings have lost their clarity. Over-filled by the mass production of ideologies for social consumption, we can't see the living trees for the petrified forest.