Matti Sarmela Comment 15.2.2017

Religion of development

> Surveillance will become sacred, facilitating the implementation of all the scientific-technological aims of the religion of development.

Religion of development: characteristics

In the postlocal digital world, it is likely that culture, man and nature gradually come under the control of planetary technosystems, which will displace the present forms of society, nation states and national cultures. The religion of development has been a real effective doctrine of governance of centralized state cultures, used to justify the creation of delocal society and to recruit the citizens to build the national state culture. Development was represented by the state culture, antidevelopment by locality, rural village communities.

In the postlocal world, the religion of development is apparently an even more dominant ideology. Structures of man's communal way of life include a global economy, continent states, ubiquitous digital environmental control, digitalization, globalization, federalization, robotization, automation... Postlocal culture is created by digital technology, computers, mobile devices, smart cards, robots. They render the entire globe structurally uniform, universal, a planetary environment. The nation state becomes an example of antidevelopment.

Cultural values, world views and ideologies are also linked to man's living environment in his time and his expectations of a secure future. In industrialized state cultures, the utopia of common good has no longer been governed by a community spirit or Christian values, but a religionized concept of development. Natural and cultural evolution is constantly ongoing, but in the world of man the development doctrine has already turned into a religious ideology. In order to do well in his environment, world citizens must believe in the canonized development of at least their own technosystems.

In common with religions, the development cult has its own development gods, etiological myths, worship rites and eschatology, as well as a doctrine of salvation that provides the justification for technosystems to take control of their entire environment, including human life. The religion of development provides final, self-evident answers to questions about the hierarchy of societal values and goals, the nature of a right, secure future, and what constitutes the highest culture of the human species.

A brief chronology

The fundamental thought structures of the religion of development are

similar to those of other religions, albeit that the message of religions has changed with the cultural setting. Religions mysticize their message, take control of real knowledge, the origin or source of which is sacritized, exclude it from the everyday environment and move it to 'the other side', to some secret world from where the ultimate world order is governed. Culture is adaptation to the future environment, and religion must also be involved in creating a secure future, adapting to the future expectations of society.

In the era of hunter-gatherers, the fundamental explanations of life were the eternal cycle, rebirth of man and nature, cycle of the seasons, return of quarry animals. In the hunters' world, answers were provided by the shaman who was privy to knowledge of the soul and its reincarnation. The future was secure, as people's souls, quarry animals, all nature were again and again reborn. Shamanism was belief in eternal reincarnation. In early agrarian societies, in the era of swidden cultures, the possessor of ultimate knowledge was the sorcerer. He held the correct knowledge and rites, through which man was able to influence the natural forces surrounding cultivating man: the fertility of the soil, coming grain crop, thriving of cattle. The sorcerer was the actor, figure, everyday hero, believed to have the ability to ward off disease, wild beasts and other threats that in the natural environment of the time overshadowed a good life and future.

Agrarian cultures were the birthplace of so-called book or high religions. Their message has been communality, the shared, social survival of village communities. The core message of village religions is contained in the concepts of fellow man, sin and conscience. The key features of communality were neighbourliness, family values like marriage for life, and respect for the elders. A good shared culture was maintained through moral rules and behaviour norms; without them, communities would have never been created or endured.

In the postlocal environment, highest culture is all the technological development that makes global technosystems and control systems possible. New, higher thinking now follows the advent of global culture and creates a new authoritative development language. Development includes global growth, global centralization and global responsibility, ubiquitous digital surveillance technology and automation – a good life, salvation, cannot exist until man and nature are under the total control of global technosystems.

Mechanisms in operation

The cult sites of subsistence cultures have also been ownership and boundary markers separating the hunting grounds and swidden lands of kinship groups from free nature. In a similar way, the cults of development religion designate the operating areas of modern technosystems as sacred, endowing them with ownership rights and control of

the knowledge, development and future of a specific culture area. Cult statues are employed to proclaim power, the possession of culture, some otherworldly knowledge, skill or creative ability, with which those believing in the objectives of the technosystem have been gifted.

The religion of development also has its good message, its gospel, containing a promise of the ultimate good, paradise-like final state eventually reached by mankind with faith in development. The eschatology of development faith promises to fulfil the perfect future, finalization. Scientific-technological development will save all the peoples, nature, man's entire environment and the future of the Earth. And, like prior religions, the religion of development also wants to disseminate its good news all around the world; it is the foundation of globalization and planetary development.

The religion of development has taken possession of the future of the human species. Its message of salvation proclaims that science and technology will create the perfect culture, a new society where all man's psychological and physical problems are removed. When the paradise of development arises on earth, there will be no more poverty, sickness or death. The new knowledge of development and top technology will correct the evolutionary errors, imperfect genotype and harmful mutations, regrow faulty organs; the developed culture will recreate all creation and man's living environment.

The subtext of scientific journals, especially populist science news, is always an eschatological promise and prophecy. If the people believe in the salvation message of science and adopt all new technology as part of their lives, society is freed from insecurity, the primitiveness that overshadowed living and happiness in pre-industrial and industrial societies.

Consecrated knowledge

Becoming a shaman or great sorcerer required special spiritual abilities: they were guardians of knowledge selected by the grace of the other world. The nature of scientific-technological knowledge controlled by the religion of development is also something hard to comprehend and existing beyond the visible world. Space exploration, nuclear physics, genetic engineering, nanotechnology and many other sciences have already been raised high above common sense, but the terminologies of the humanities also place the secret development knowledge in some other reality, fractals, cultural memes, or it is subconscious, virtual, intertextual... Development texts are increasingly reminiscent of word magic, sorcerers' incantations, which could ward off evil if the right words were known.

Acquisition of scientific-technological knowledge demands exceptional talent, know-how and faith, dedication to the service of some

greater entity. Effective knowledge is secreted in the deepest data sets of the technosystems, the world brain – it is magic, sacred and secret like the right knowledge of the cult-makers of the past. The greater the proportion of postlocal man's environment that is controlled by technosystems, the less 'ordinary people' can influence their lives; culture is skill and expertise within the technosystems.

The future secure society is controlled by the absolute hegemony of scientific-technological development. Research provides the answers to all individual and societal problems. Studies already permeate all areas of life, directing the future, proclaiming development and invalidating the past. The gospels of the development faith produce world-class achievers able to breach all human limitations; consciousness technicians interpret all the emotions and experiences of the individual – postlocal man has no higher life without control by the highest development.

Technosystems must be capable of convincing their cultural setting that they are in possession of the only proper future, and making the citizens living in the technosystem believe that there is no future outside technological development. In urban gigapoles, where the individual's living space and contacts have become minimized, the consciousness and experience industry – production of entertainment, mysticism, eternal life and oblivion – becomes the basis of intellectual culture. The sorcerers and shamans of ever more culture areas compete ruthlessly over the markets of happy living and control of the human mind, breaking down all the taboos and boundaries of the past. When communal ethics and the moral norms of local cultures have gone, humanity also vanishes, leaving a belief in scientific-technological development, all-encompassing digital surveillance.

Compulsory religion

Western culture is governed by a hegemony of innovation, with cultural importance placed increasingly only on 'development' that changes the existing and destroys the past. Compulsive innovation already pervades the culture of technosystems: no production has value unless it creates innovations, changes the environment of people's thinking, breaks boundaries and destroys the 'taboos' of the past.

Development meritocracy still maintains the idea that hunter-gatherers and other people in subsistence cultures were dependent on their supernatural guardians and deities, taking it for granted that the thinking of subsistence culture man was magical, fear of 'spirits', and that primitive man would undertake or do nothing without rites. All prehistoric images or sculptures are interpreted as religious, at least related to 'fertility rites', regardless of hunter-gatherers not needing or performing fertility rites. According to modern beliefs, man would have

freed himself from the shackles of beliefs during his cultural evolution, become refined and created a humanistic culture, where the individual was valued for the first time.

Shamanism and sorcery were not organizations, churches, nor did shamans and sorcerers hold a permanent social position of power. Rather, they were people on the margins of their own community. It was not until the emergence of the so-called high cultures that it has been necessary for gods to subjugate man, maintain organizations, social hierarchy and centralized ideological power. Modern man does not want to look in the mirror of anthropology to see his own ideological uniculture, but believes he is free, individual and critical, intellectually above his culture.

In reality, centralized culture man must believe in organizatorial ideology and ideological violence, and modern western society is no less dependent on its cults and human gods than previous centralized cultures. The freedom and individualism of the western world consists of mass ideologies, mass fashion, mass industry, incessant manipulation of market mechanisms, unrelenting development liturgy. The religion of development needs sacred sites, cult statues, focal points of worship rites, to keep its message constantly in the public eye. From an early age, modern people must adapt to systems, their economic or scientific-technological aims: man's environment has never before been as full of influential rites as today, and never before have the various cult-makers tried to manipulate the human mind as relentlessly as in the modern commercial mass culture.

Cult-makers and rite creators

In the postlocal environment, the belief in scientific-technological development is becoming a hegemony rising above everything, an ideology of global meritocracy that has become a religion. The culture is directed by actors maintaining the development cult: cult creators, myth-makers and guardians of faith.

The cult creators of development faith create development rites and erect cult statues in the postlocal environment in the same way as the sorcerers of subsistence cultures did in the local natural environment. The cult priests, consciousness technicians and mind engineers of the consciousness industry, are intent on penetrating the consumers' consciousness, influencing their thinking and world views. Postlocal culture requires ever greater human gods, world's most influential people, the greatest achievers of the postlocal environment, global heroes, around whom a culture develops, above all the marketing of the culture. The cult creators' culture is news of influence, sensations, quantity analyses, ranking lists, legends, and great personal histories. The human heroes sacritize the importance of technosystems, their image and brand, the magnitude of their development. Everything the

technosystem does is supernatural, cultlike, ideologically good and secure, well controlled.

Those proclaiming the religion of development use rhetoric just as enraptured as that of the previous holders of religious roles, and it contains the same elements as other religious rhetoric. Miracle narratives, legends, heroic epics and spectacles are all used also in the tradition of the development religion. Delocal and postlocal cultures are replete with development liturgy and development promises; positive development rhetoric and indoctrination of change. The development priest's persuasive proclamation contains the religious sanctions, the elements of paradise and hell: a good message for all believers and eternal damnation for the servants of antidevelopment, development infidels.

The successful actor – politician, chief executive and consultant – must learn the positive development rhetoric and constantly proclaim the message of development. Among the meritocracy, those who profess their faith are the most successful: they are trustworthy and with them, the goals of the technosystem come close. Technosystems constantly create new gods, supernatural guardians of their own field, development myths and miracles greater than great people and life.

Power of heroes

In the postlocal culture, an ever larger part of the meritocracy lives by creating development guardians' cults, marketing idols and gurus, pop and rock stars, sportsmen, statesmen, or goods produced by the new development. The cult-makers themselves are mostly on the margins of society, acquiring their importance as servants of development. Nevertheless, they have taken possession of development. The cult priests of development religion constantly repeat great names; without the names of the authorities the rhetoric or text is not believable or developed. Centralized, postlocal culture is hierarchies and people worship, more and more elaborate development rites and cult statues to bring together global masses in shared thinking and shared experiencing of greatness. In delocal state cultures, human deities have been national; in the postlocal world they represent something international, transnational, the whole mankind.

Information society no longer functions without publicity cults and top achievers: they govern development, influencing, both the past and the future. The role of development heroes is much more important than that of supernatural guardians and seides for the people of bygone times. Culture is entirely oriented to development and its quantification. A person's life must consist of development and achievement in order to be culturally significant. Today's cult meritocracy incessantly churns out ranking lists, lists of the most influential people in the world, global iconostases; they erect statues in their

memory, name cult streets, even whole cities to honour their human gods. They want to show that great persons are ever-present in the lives of the masses, and the environment is nothing without the memory of the sacred.

No area of life is excluded from the cult hierarchy. The environment of the little meritocracy is ruled by the world's richest, most beautiful and famous human gods of the new Olympus, their lives are followed by ever larger hordes of people, and their names are used to sell the past, history, and the sacritization of power.

To the cult-makers, history still consists only of great personalities, leaders who founded dynasties, scientists who revolutionized technological development or the entire world view, legendary artists, writers, composers; the finest consciousness technicians and mind engineers. In the narrative and cult language of modern media and history, there is no nationalist socialist Germany, only Hitler, no Soviet Union, but Stalin alone. In the postlocal era, when there are no more national states, the history of little meritocrats is the history of global human gods. In the postlocal world, the economy, society, whole culture focuses on boundlessness.

The narratives of development faith are an element of product development and marketing, the creation of success and an image. Businesses buy mega-achievers for their advertisements as if their presence would sacritize the product and bring happiness to its owner. Human idols bring publicity and create a corporate brand; the advertising heroes of the market environment are like supernatural guardians and bringers of good fortune, and with them success will also follow the buyers. The development elite manipulate the masses by creating development rapture and mystifying their own status as implementers of common good. Modern consciousness technicians seek to turn adverts and development messages into sacral texts, incantations with a magical power, and indeed make a better job of it than the sorcerers of past times.

Culture of development assessors

A global culture does the best if the lives of the masses can be turned into idol worship, experiences of development mysticism, and illusions of the future. Development faith is also power rapture and fulfilment of idolatry, experienced by the believers when they encounter all that is new, boundless, and perfect, that western culture can offer.

Western meritocracy constantly talks about equality, democracy and freedom of choice, but no culture has made inequality the basis of its whole existence. The creation of hierarchies is the fuel of development culture, the centre of its existence, its focus. Culture equals the world's greatest rock musician, the most famous author, film star, sports personality; the most influential politician or head of state. The

meritocrat sits within all centralized technosystems: he organizes achievements, measures, classifies and groups infants, schoolchildren, students, labour forces, the living and the dead. He creates superpersonalities, western winners of the life competition, sifts, discards and eliminates.

The performance systems are augmented by the cult-makers of the media, little meritocrats, milling around pop, sport and film stars, erecting political cult statues, naming the world's greatest people. The media operate a lackey culture of global imitation. There will never be democracy in such a world, and the ordinary person has no significance even in cultural terms.

In future, culture will involve ever greater development rituals, manipulation of novelty, and only ever greater global human gods will remain and rise up to the heaven of hundreds of millions of people. For more and more detached and lonely world citizens with no community, the consciousness industry has become their life's content. Ordinary people perceive their surroundings as product experiences, virtual events, or their cultural content consists of identifying with consciousness producers, paying homage to gurus, fandom, karaoke, performing alongside with and imitating actors. As an experiencer of culture, the world citizen is able to wallow in his own emotions, rapture, mystical experiences, his personal pleasure, endless self-centredness. Culture is assigned the same function as intoxicants: obliterating the reality.

Mythologists of the development cult

The structure of a typical development myth includes the primitivization and demonization of the past: it is necessary for the glorification of the new development. Myth-makers produce the creation myths, cosmic narratives and ritual language of development faith, the religious phraseology and terminology the meritocracy uses to analyse its environment. The myths of development faith also justify the cult: they are sacritized narratives about the origin of the technosystem and its development. Again and again, the myths and rites are used to bring forth the great primordial events and turning points, to justify the history and legitimacy of the technosystem's goals. The ideologists of centralized culture turn the lives of communities into a real utopia and sacritize their shared future. They are the holders of the secret of development.

In a postlocal environment – information society, media world, attention economy – no technosystem can exist without an etiological myth and sacred narratives. The history of the technosystem is mythicized and attached to persons. The myths of development faith are about the founders, pioneers, initiators of the development and innovators, who were victorious despite the opposition of their hostile environ-

ment – or development heroes who died as martyrs. The sacred of development faith are also crowned by a history of suffering.

The basic structure and message of development myths is always the same. Man is surrounded by development that turns the primitive past into an advanced future. All that existed before the present cultural evolution is undeveloped, and – as ever in mythical narratives – development and its realm begin from the point at which the messenger of development himself stands. Development is juxtaposed with undevelopment; development is something positive, new, mankind's salvation, while lack of development, underdevelopment means standing still and the demise of culture. Development sanctions envelop all areas of culture: if the economy fails to grow and develop, unemployment and poverty will follow; if a technosystem does not constantly improve its technology and operational strategy, it will lose the competition; if a person does not constantly develop himself, he will be left behind other achievers and the requirements of the labour markets. Development is the only route to salvation, and in order to develop, technosystems must continually grow and centralize; centralization is the cultural law of meritocracy.

Development rhetoric is full of slogans and clichés, great quotations and distinguishing marks crystallized in words, through which the religious hegemony is maintained without the need for explaining what development really means or all the consequences of the change. All innovative activity must now have a global dimension and perspective. Opposing change defined as development is 'backward', 'yesterday', it no longer belongs in the present day or future; the individual goals of the technosystem's pioneers form the new generation of development. For believers in development, all that is new and declared innovative is positive: it is a case of a faith validated by the hegemony. The other alternative of the development narrative is doom. The characteristics of a religion include polarity, black-and-white nature, salvation and perdition. The repertoires of development priests, too, contain threatening scenarios of what will happen if the development they advocate is not followed. They, too, want to own their god and believe in the existence of only one development truth that permeates all surrounding reality, from the cosmos to every person's living environment.

Guardians of development faith

Global economic and cultural technosystems cannot function without ubiquitous digital control. It is no longer possible for world citizens to exist outside the digital reality. The guardians of development faith will demand that every world citizen must accept the security arrangements: implants, smart cards, monitoring and surveillance equipment capable of checking his identity, consumption capacity, health and

location at all times, similarly his personal security profile.

Ideological cruelty has been inherent in the structures of all centralized systems. Control meritocrats have been pious clergymen and laymen, who in the organizations of the Christian church created the witchcraft culture, doctrine of diabolism, witches' Sabbath and serving the Antichrist, developing instruments to help identify the devil's servants and make them confess their deeds. The process of the witch-hunts was repeated in the communist countries and Nazi Germany, and will evidently be repeated in all centralized ideologies. The guardians of the ideologies of their time, good communists, party members belonging to the elite in society defined, investigated, passed judgments and eliminated the opponents of the ideology, enemies of the people. They were those who seemed to withdraw from the good society and failed to faithfully serve the system.

The witch-hunts were political power use of their time, not folk belief in sorcery originating among the people. Persecution does not arise when an ideology is spreading, but only later when the new dominant culture has reached a hegemonic status. Persecution is internal power struggle between centralized organizations, civil war between meritocrats, which starts among the elite but spreads across all strata where the centralized system operates and provides an opportunity of eliminating other people. Maybe no single large ideological power system will arise again, but every technosystem will operate like a centralized ideology, one way or another silencing those who question its practices and social ethics. Like any religion, the religion of development cannot tolerate unbelief that would question its doctrines and visions of the future.

Computers, the world brain, permit the storage and real-time exploitation of data on all the people in the world. The instruments of total surveillance and world domination already exist. How could their application be prevented, when it is a question of the future, development and growth of technosystems and saving planetary culture?

(Translated by Annira Silver)

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