

## *Imagination and Social Regeneration – Reflections*

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Although the imagination is traditionally associated with art and culture, it is, in fact, the instigator of all creation. Through the creative imagination and the production of thought images, energy is transferred from one level of the Divine Mind to another – the direction of travel being dependent upon the type and quality of the image produced. Thought-images representing the set of values, institutions and laws of all of the great societies of the world become embedded in the collective subconscious of their populace, and the energy that passes through them guides social evolution forwards.

This may all sound highly esoteric, but it isn't really so these days, as the concept of the "Social imaginary" is quite well-known in disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis, philosophy, and media studies. The social imaginary represents the system of meanings that govern a given social structure. Professor John B Thompson a sociology professor at the University of Cambridge and a fellow of Jesus College, describes the social imaginary as "the creative and symbolic dimension of the social world, the dimension through which human beings create their ways of living together and their ways of representing their collective life."<sup>1</sup> And in 'The Imaginary Institution of Society', the philosopher and social critic, Cornelius Castoriadis, wrote: "...the imaginary of the society ... creates for each historical period its singular way of living, seeing and making its own existence... the central imaginary significations of a society... are the laces which tie a society together and the forms which define what, for a given society, is 'real.'"<sup>2</sup>

So, its in this dimension of the social imaginary, or the realm of mass thought images that are conditioning human behaviour, that we must look to understand, not only the problems of various societies around the world, but also the big world problems of modern civilization as a whole. And one thought-image in urgent need of attention of our global society concerns humanity's relationship with money. The pursuit of money for selfish purposes has not only frustrated the more equitable distribution of the world's resources, but it is now so insidiously dominant that many nations appear to be morphing into plutocracies. The general public have become caught up in this trend for under the thought-image of global free-market capitalism, referred to as neoliberalism, *where trade barriers are lowered through privatization, reducing state influence in the economy*. People are led to think of themselves more as competitive, creative entrepreneurs in the global economy than as predominantly social beings.

Since the late 1990's this view has been embraced and promoted through the related thought-images of the "creative economy" and "creative industries" – which link culture and creativity to economic growth. While this form of creativity is celebrated as the driving force sustaining contemporary society, it prioritizes individual success over collective flourishing. As Dr. Oli Mould, a lecturer in human geography, comments:

"...capitalism's rendition of creativity...sells us a...vision of creativity...that is individualized, profitable and autonomous... We are told to rely on the self as the sole proprietor of change in the world. Focusing on your interests at the expense of others is the only way to get ahead. Releasing the creative person inside every one of us is how we will all progress as a civilization. ...resisting this division, and empathizing with each other...negates this negative form of creativity and proves that a new way is possible. Sharing experiences and stories, we can journey into unknown worlds where, impossibility simply doesn't exist.

...And what if we demanded more for our politics? What if we could recalibrate creativity to mean radically altering the way politicians behave? What if being politically creative meant abolishing the current systems and coming up with entirely new forms of government? Sortition, local currencies, direct action: these are all actually-existing alternative political modes of practice. Sortition is the selection of political officials as a random sample from a larger pool of candidates. Today, sortition is commonly used to select prospective jurors in common law systems and is sometimes used in forming citizen groups with political advisory power.

They have radical forms of democracy in-built. They attempt to foster political engagement. They enact autogestion. [workers self-management] They give everyone the opportunity and agency to speak and act. They remove the politics of disavowal and despair. They shorten the ‘distance’ between a specific desire for change, and realizing it. No wonder they are gaining traction all over the world.”<sup>3</sup>

Whatever the future of capitalism may be, there needs to be a different way of looking at the relationship between money and society. And an idea that has been gaining traction is that of contributive justice<sup>4</sup> – a radically different way of working towards social regeneration than that of distributive justice – which is the focus of so many debates in democratic nations around the world as they try to work out how to share the fruits of economic growth between the successful and the unsuccessful more equitably. Contributive justice focuses on the growth of society first and foremost, proposing that “each flourishes by advancing the flourishing of others,” and that we are most fully human when we contribute to the common good and earn the appreciation of our fellow citizens for the value of the contribution we make. It is a discussion about what constitutes a valuable contribution to the growth of society and sense of community.

As well as the inspiring new thought-images of money that are growing around the world, redemptive work also has to take place within the prevailing thought-image, for the rapid destruction of an established global paradigm would only bring about chaos. And good work is being done here by many individuals and NGO’s, including the United Nations which has designated 2021 as the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, under the slogan “Prosperity for All.”

The creative challenge before esoteric servers is to fuse the energy and quality of all positive thinking into one united planetary thought-image that can best serve the whole at any given time. The nucleus of this can then be constantly energized in creative meditation by evoking the potencies that are awaiting precipitation into human consciousness from the Spiritual Hierarchy. This is the work that lies before us today.

So to return to the idea of the social imaginary, let’s work to energize a thought-image that was discussed in the recent Lucis Trust letter on Freedom through Community. Here, we pointed out that as new, diverse branches of sociology emerge to study all the changes in political behaviour, social relationships and concepts of the self that are occurring, (such as the social imaginary) it is of value to note that Sociology literally means “the study of companionship.” It is derived from the Latin word *socius*, meaning ‘companion,’ and the Greek word *Logos*, meaning ‘word’ or ‘knowledge’.<sup>3</sup> We might, then, call the esoteric dimension of sociology *The WORD of Companionship* – a study of the divine, creative sound as it is unfolding in social groups around the world. Letting our imaginations soar, what would it be like to experience *The Word of Companionship* sounding throughout the entire field of human relationships, infusing it with meaning? What might the social structure of planet Earth be like if people everywhere were simply open to the idea of a Divine Plan – the sense that evolution

is being driven forward by a majestic purpose, and that the unfolding qualities of every single unit of life, no matter how small and seemingly insignificant, are needed in order to fulfill it?

Well let's draw on our group imagination to explore this and use the following simple thought-image to help us do so.

#### References

1. John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, p.6.
2. *Ibid*, Quoted by J Thompson, pp 23-4
3. Oli Mould, *Against Creativity*, pp 140-2, 146-7.
4. Andrew Sayer, *Contributive Justice and meaningful work*  
<https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/resources/sociology-online-papers/papers/sayer-contributive-justice.pdf>