

Healing Civilization: The Crisis of Patriarchy and the Trinitarian Vision of Tótila Albert

Preface

The Discontents of a Civilization in Crisis

Less than a century ago Freud, in his last book, asserted that the world's "discontents" or dis-ease (unbehagen) are the inevitable consequence of the incompatibility between civilization and human nature and that the necessary curtailment of instinct was bound to prelude the health and happiness of human beings.

For many years I criticized his pessimism; not only his lack of hope for the future, but also and principally his lack of belief in the natural goodness of human beings. Yet although I will probably continue to do so, I cannot help but appreciate, now at the beginning of the third millennium, the overarching truth our great pessimistic prophet formulated with a lucidity not obscured by sentimentality about the common man: that health and civilization are-and cannot help but continue to be-incompatible.

Yes: "human nature," wisely described in mythical language as having been created "in the image" of God, is incompatible with civilization, that is intrinsically anti-instinctual and pathogenic. But we need not hold on to the belief that human beings will not be able to transcend the forms of coexistence they adopted at the beginning of the Bronze Age and that they have continued to perpetuate generation after generation. On the contrary, one can expect that the implicit goodness of human beings, liberated at least in part from the prison of blindness and millenary evil, leaving behind obsolete institutions and ways of thinking, can finally evolve toward a different kind of coexistence and thereby find the happiness prophesied in the great spiritual traditions of antiquity.

As a professional dedicated to assisting individual therapeutic and spiritual development, I have been witness to innumerable instances when individuals, through self-knowledge, efforts to live a virtuous life, and other relevant practices, enter a process of transformation that, with enough time and applied effort, brings about the slow psychic death of their conditioned and pathogenic infantile personality and a dawning of a level of consciousness that reaches beyond thought, emotions, desires, and sensations, is the key to the sense of meaning and constitutes the realm that has traditionally been called spiritual.

This consciousness--as one who reaches it soon discovers--is our true nature, the one that has been obscured, asleep, or disguised in our "civilized" state.

I would even go so far as to say that the experience of most individuals I have worked with in group settings over the course of three decades has not only nourished my hopes for the liberating transformational process of the individual, but that this hope now spills over into the realm of collective transformation. And now, with humanity in the midst of a planetary crisis, I admit to feeling "apocalyptic": I believe we are facing a "life or death" crisis, but one that is within our reach to prevent from being fatal.

As Toynbee has so well demonstrated in his *A Study of History* many civilizations have been born and died, and others have been transformed through a process of reciprocal influence, yet may say that never has a civilization as a whole undergone the process of death and rebirth that the mystical traditions and transpersonal psychology alike have recognized on an individual level, particularly through the experiences of those who have gone all the way with it: prophets, enlightened beings and mythic heroes.

Yet the signs that our civilization is dying are as visible as the signs that a new humanity is in sight, so that we should wish for ourselves the wisdom of letting go of our obsolete ways, so that the regeneration of our social body occur under the best possible conditions.

How can we not wish for this when the intense commercial interests of the powerful are destroying the environment, our values, the quality of life, culture and life itself? And how can we not hope that the destruction of life and mind will stimulate consciousness and accelerate the regenerative process, just as illness, by stimulating the organism's defense systems, becomes the indirect causes of its own demise and thus of healing ?

The North American Sufi E.J. Gold wrote in a humor magazine in the 1980s: "as Brother Rabbit said, "maybe civilization is only nature's way of telling us to slow down".