

OUR NEW AGE CRISIS – A Different View

By Joseph Chemplavil

For the past few decades our society acted and achieved like somebody with bipolar disease. We have been irrational, impulsive and with lack of insight. Our maniacal phase has now eclipsed into, not just the recession but the *depression* phase. Lack of insight is a built-in contradiction for a successful management of the bipolar disorder. We however cannot afford to have our manic depressive personality change to the schizoid one which will be detrimental to us and others. We should be in control of our actions instead of having to react to the problems all the time.

Our attitude of synthetic authenticity, false truth and fraudulent fairness has to change. Even though the business of America is business, business as usual should not be our business any more. Excess is success should not be our mantra either.

U.S. government borrows almost without limit in global markets and until recently allowed American consumers to spend the money they don't have. Debt-driven consumerism is not sustainable in the long run, as we have realized now. We still cannot ignore what Thomas Jefferson once said: "Never spend your money before you have it", as a nation or as a citizen. We can't support and sustain an economy by spending the money we don't have. Unless we as a nation learn to live within our means again, as President Obama said recently, we will not be able to get out of this economic crisis.

Capitalism is not just to preserve, promote and profit from, for those who run it, at any cost. Free-market economy should not be based on 'gimmicks and gaming' to gain profit by greed. Capitalism is not a failure but we witness the failure of its execution by people, who are selfish and greedy, and lacking morals and ethics. We should not be forced into a situation in the future where we have to throw the baby out with the bath water.

Free market forces should not be allowed to run wild and reckless in capitalism, to safeguard the society at large, not just for the benefit of individuals and corporations, as they can't exist in a vacuum. Capitalism cannot survive at the

expense of the society and society cannot progress without capitalism, as we have seen in the decline of Soviet Union and the rise of China.

After all, controlled capitalism is not an oxymoron, any more. The recent bail-out attempts and control of banking and auto industry and Wall Street corporations by the government using taxpayer's money is a clear example of this. What the world probably will end up with, in a sense, *socialistic capitalism* as in U.S. or capitalistic socialism as in Europe. The basics of life (to be defined by each country) should be provided by socialistic programs and all other luxuries must be earned in a capitalistic fashion.

Similarly democracy cannot serve the society well; if it is run by the most expensive congress, money can buy, for the life term. "Government is too big and too important to be left to the (same) politicians", as Chester Bowles said. Our present, so called, "democratic dictatorship", in our US congress should end with constitutional amendment for term limits, for congressmen/women and senators.

Remember what George Bernard Shaw once said "All professions are conspiracies against the laity". From the words of H. L. Mencken, "The government consists of a gang of men exactly like you and me. They have, taking one with another, no special talent for the business of government; they have only a talent for getting and holding office". Most of the time they provide the pork barrels earmarked for their constituencies, with their political theater and populist grandstanding, to get elected the next time; instead of the nation's best interest at heart?

As for the citizens, we should quit being a disposable society and learn to start saving more from our disposable income. Our constitution only guarantees, Life, Liberty, and the *Pursuit* of happiness; not the possession of perverse pleasure, we try to buy with our borrowed money.

No person or society can succeed by outsourcing their obligations or responsibilities. There is an obvious disconnect now between the analog life of man and the digital age that we live in. And we need to accept the limitations of our ability to sync our analog mind and intelligence with our digital age. We have made tremendous progress so fast and achieved so much in technology and manufacturing in the 20th century that we have now almost become victims of our

own success. We really have to watch out, to avoid a backlash from changing the world.

From a larger perspective, are we more efficient and productive with our multitasking in our pursuit of happiness? We are over stressed and over extended, leading to the sacrifice of our quality of life. One would wonder whether we ourselves could be at a point of looking for 'outsourcing our own lives' so that we can be happy. Did we really achieve what Thor-Heyerdahl, a Norwegian ethnologist once said: "Progress is man's ability to complicate simplicity"?

We had to compartmentalize and micro-specialize our life with our silos mentality, so much so, that we lost our ability to manage our everyday life by ourselves, leading not only to confusion but also to chaos, frustration and anger which is the recipe for destruction, for individuals and nations, as we have been witnessing around the world recently.

One could say, even if Jesus Christ had to return, He would have a hard time to fix the current world crisis – our economic, political, racial, religious and other social problems.

It might be that the inequities that exist in the present world will be minimized, to make the living standards of the developing countries be upgraded and of the developed nations be downgraded, reducing the present gap across the board for all, in the 21st century.

The impact on the life style of Americans will be harder to bear than the rest of the world, as we had so far the highest standard of living, compared to others. As most of our present generation had not experienced anything less than the best during their life-time, we will have to learn to live with less than the ideal environment, which most of the rest of the world had been accustomed to. The higher we are, the deeper we fall. We need to reset the gauge to a lower point, at least for now.

No nation will be able to isolate, protect or insulate from the consequences of any crisis in the future, whether it is political or economic, as we all are inextricably interdependent and interconnected. We should realize and accept the ultimate

truth that the culprits responsible for the present economic meltdown are us - politicians, CEOs and consumers, living in a culture of no moral compass, pernicious greed, utter selfishness, brutal disregard for others and instant gratification in varying degrees. And as for the rest of the nations, they blindly followed U.S., being the super power in economy and politics, without using their own common sense. We are citizens of the world; we are all in this mess together and we have to get out of it, all at the same time!

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