

The Decline of the World Knows No Mercy

The Decline of the World Knows No Mercy (1999)

Eija-Riitta Korhola is a wise thinker: a ray of light in the wretched panorama of Finnish culture (and, what is most important, the European Parliament). In a splendid article of hers, Korhola addresses the issue of survival. This fundamental theme is very dear to me — as Korhola herself points out; I would here like to add a few more comments on the subject. I have dealt with the issue before, but audiences change; and besides, not even Korhola can be familiar with all that I have written.

The way the future of billions of wastefully consumerist human beings is envisaged depends on one's imagination: are we capable of vividly imagining the final days of humanity in their unfolding? I think that Korhola falls into a slight contradiction when she discusses the subject. On the one hand, she provides a keen and obviously correct portrayal of the contemporary age: "What if humanity had already said farewell to goodness? This impression is conveyed not only by the horrible, inconceivable news we find in the papers, but also by the general cynicism that characterises our day." On the other hand, when censuring my criticism of Mother Teresa, Korhola writes: "I would rather see the whole of humanity step into the grave while continuing to express mutual love until a distant, honourable end, than witness a future without love."

But it is not honourably, I would argue, that humanity will disappear: the coming years will prove increasingly cynical and cruel. People will definitely not slip into oblivion while hugging each other. The final stages in the life of humanity will be marked by the monstrous war of all against all: the amount of suffering will be maximal.

My own dream is to avoid a similar end by means of both emotion and reason. Logically, the only option would be to implement a controlled pruning (of both the population and its material standard of living) before chaos breaks loose. In this manner, violence could be minimised, and life could go on.

Of course, in reality, chaos and a ghastly end are far more plausible alternatives. My own dream is perhaps only a fraction more realistic than that of Korhola.

I am not altogether satisfied with Korhola's use of the term "charity": I myself have outlined a model of living where brotherly love is held in high esteem because without it the life of any community would be intolerable or even impossible. However, I have a literal understanding of the term "brotherly love": a brother to me is a human I have direct contact with. I will always be friendly with such a person: I will ease his grief, give him my advice and rescue him when he is trapped in the ice.

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”Species solidarity” — the extension of love to faraway populations — is a completely different matter for me: a forced, artificial behaviour that goes against human nature. Species solidarity is unnatural — and fortunately so. There is no need for us to practise such a twisted form of charity, for it contributes to the depletion of natural resources: it spoils the ecosystems of land, sea and sky by nurturing and feeding overly-dense populations across the world that have squandered the material prerequisites for life, thus inevitably guaranteeing torment and inhumanity.

Eija-Riitta Korhola, in her article, has brought up the fundamental questions of life. Yet, she is still wrong as regards one fundamental point. Evolution has developed — the Creator created, if you prefer — millions of species of organisms on the globe. All these organisms have cultures, activities, joys and sorrows of their own. The swelling mound of human flesh that now already weighs three hundred billion kilos is suffocating all its sisters and brothers. Is it ultimately destined to choke itself as well? Yet what must take priority?

One minor detail remains to be clarified: what position must the friend of nature adopt here? Are we first to worry about the tragic disappearance of our own species rather than that of all others — a tragedy a million times greater?

Human Nature and History

Human Nature and History (1998)

Again and again, “human nature” is fatalistically invoked as one of the reasons for the impending collapse of the world. The deeds of mankind are determined by “drives and instincts”; as such, they are inevitable and irreparable.

It is of course a truism that human nature is behind all human actions. This, however, does not make all deeds unavoidable — not those perpetuated by individuals or communities. It would be intellectually absurd for anyone to argue that the prevailing culture and way of life in his era, the direction life has taken in his age, has been unavoidable. For example, the well-known statement by a Finnish prime minister that economic growth, the EU, EMU, competition and information technology are the sole options in this epoch and for this country, is foolish. These options have nothing to do with historical inevitability: they are arbitrary choices made by a small group of individuals — small, yet amazingly powerful and influential in its folly.

Even a brief glance at history brings forth a vast spectrum of alternatives. The human species has developed a huge variety of cultures and ways of life. Now, at the brink of global ruin, the most interesting of these cultures are those that are preserving, life-affirming and humble towards nature, and which adopt a conservationist approach to natural resources. It is a notable fact that similar cultures include not only the local societies that still flourish in parts of Africa, Australia and the rain forests of Brazil and Indonesia, but also what were once dominating societies. This was, for instance, the case with the Neolithic culture that ruled Europe a few thousand years ago: a culture that did not go to war and, most importantly, was in control of technology (then a useful tool rather than a master).

The urges and instincts of humans do not vary only according to geographical distribution: even the same population — Finns, for instance — might be at one time furiously devoted to killing other men (Germans,

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Poles, Hungarians, etc.) and getting its own population killed; and at another time (e.g. the 1990s), seek to preserve human life with an hysterical lack of common sense (through incubators and rescue helicopters, with no regard for costs).

One must be unflinchingly attentive and open-minded in assessing the cause-effect relations, connections and influences on the lives of various cultures, of different stages in the same culture, as well as changes in the spiritual climate. A complete detachment from the confusing spell of one's own age, an ability to perceive the tendencies of that age objectively, externally, by comparative means, are an absolute requirement. Knowledge of history is critical for thinking, but most essential of all is to be able to examine one's own epoch — the only epoch one is capable of influencing.

What will an objective historian of his own time, an observer of human movements, a cultural anthropologist, make of contemporary Western culture? No doubt, what he will find is a truly unique spirit and way of life that has exceeded all bounds. Western culture, pervaded by capitalist market economy, knows no historical parallels in terms of greed and frenzy: even the slightest humility it has turned into its opposite, particularly in its relation to nature (but also in the relationships it fosters between humans). So far, it is the lowest point ever reached by humanity.

Never in history has economy — money — played such a central role in culture as in the countries leading world culture today. Never before has the kind of vile, hellish gambling connected to stocks, exchange rates, basic interests, prime rates, investment funds, options, derivatives, trading incomes, annual profits and other similar variables spread from a limited band of crooks to the very core of society.

Never before in history have natural resources been so depleted. Almost the entire globe has already been stripped bare. The few resources that still remain — oil in the Barents Sea, wood in Siberia, Karelia and the Pacific Islands — are being preyed upon by crooked claws striking with unparalleled efficiency (Finnish claws, as always, are even longer and more crooked than those of others). Construction, the suffocating of green land, knows no boundaries; nor do the production, transfer and consumption of goods, or the bolting of tourists from one place to another.

Never before in history have the distinguishing values of a culture been things as concretely destructive for life and the quality of life as democracy, individual freedom and human rights — not to mention money. Freedom here means the freedom to consume, to exploit, to tread upon others. All rights, even the most seemingly beautiful — women's rights, children's rights, rights for the disabled — only express one thing:

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ME, ME, ME. Pure selfishness has been given a new name: “self-realisation”, now considered the noblest of all morals. Words like responsibility, duty, humility, self-sacrifice, nurturing and care are always spat upon, if they still happen to be mentioned.

For all their mistakes, even such recently buried ideologies as fascism and socialism, both of which emphasized communal values and contained restrictive norms, were on a higher ethical level. The same goes for Christianity: only a while ago the Church spoke of fear of God, of humility, and of the need to counter sin with virtue, altruism, and care for one’s neighbour. Now this yes-man of an institution, hankering after earthly power, is promoting only forgiveness and mercy. How tremendously distant this feels from the guideline “we came not to be served, but to serve” that only a few decades ago the Church was following!

Cultural anthropology is familiar with failed, merciless cultures, in which fear and terror rule the life of man. These cultures have only developed in small areas, lasted for a short period of time, and have never threatened the whole biosphere. Now, all those countries that hold sway over the Earth are experiencing the most uncontrollable, menacing and cruel of all ages.

When such a colossal amount of faults have been piled on human culture that the whole human society has become one uniform, giant Fault, the resoluteness of an attentive and mindful guardian of life is truly put to the test. How to unravel this chaos, how to fight against some flaw when it is linked to a thousand other flaws? The market economy of contemporary capitalism – this veritable religion of ruin, global destruction and extinction – might seem overwhelming. Many are crushed, and choose to end their own lives. Many more surrender, paralysed, and attempt to find a tiny hovel of their own, a place where they can keep busy and cover their ears. It would be easy to draw a long list of such people among our “Green”, “environmentalist” brothers and sisters.

And yet... History, and history alone, will strengthen the faith of he who strives to keep his wits about him and use his energy to change the course of the world. Enormous, stunning changes have taken place even within single cultures or regions: some of these positive changes, aimed at improvement.

A reasonable man will thus always choose his models from history. The known history of mankind is already so vast that it contains all the positive exemplars required. The past will always provide the best guidelines when fighting for the future. But if the future is fashioned after a madman’s belief in progress and development, delusions and science fictions, the game is most certainly over.

The World at the Turn of the Millenium

The World at the Turn of the Millennium (1999/2000)

Man is not a sensible creature, not in the least. Rather than *Homo sapiens*, the wise primate, man should have called himself *Homo insipiens*, the insane primate. Every zoologist, even an amateur, can see how inexplicably more practically and reasonably animals arrange their lives than humans, who are now getting ready, according to their strange calendar, to enter a new millennium. Amidst the vast chaos and devastation it has wrought, humanity will just barely make it to the year 2000 — it will hardly make it much further.

Man is a lunatic, not a *sapiens*; but *Homo*, the handed one, that he certainly is. Hands have made man a luminary: thanks to his technical ingenuity, he has turned into the great bully of all living creatures. If only some other animal species were as dextrous as man with its hands, and endowed with reason, it would have long ago wiped the human species off the planet.

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Democracy: The Seal of Ruin

Stupidity reaches a climax among those people who argue — without having learnt a thing from history or being able to read a single sign of our times — that man knows what is good for him: “the people know”. From this absurd assumption derives a suicidal form of government, parliamentary democracy, born among the tyrants of mankind, the West. Alas, it looks like the bubble of democracy will never burst: as we struggle to enter the new millennium, we can abandon all hope.

Democracy and the public right to vote guarantee that no one other than the sycophants of the people will rise to power — and people never clamour for anything other than bread and circuses, regardless of the costs and consequences. Even the one possibility, comparable to winning the lottery, that some intelligent exception might rise to the positions of power, is completely lost with democracy. Our hapless species might also produce a rare mutation within its ranks: someone capable of controlling the people without being led by it; someone capable, when necessary, of taking a stand against the people. But unfortunately the era of hereditary kingship and feudal lords is over, and even the rise of dictators has been made impossible: mankind is carefully planning its own demise.

What Do We Mean by “End of the World”?

In the human mind, the end of the world does not mean the end of the universe, nor that of our solar system or planet. The globe will continue its course. Surely, some form of life will survive after man is gone, at least in the depths of the ocean, whose creatures will take their energy from the warmth of the Earth’s core rather than the sun. The “end of the world” is understood as the extinction of one’s own species, its death down to the last individual. A few millions of these ends have taken place in the past and will take place in future centuries. For mammoths, the end of the world meant the disappearance of the last mammoth; for the Glanville Fritillary butterfly it means the death of the last Glanville Fritillary.

People who speak about the human end of the world, which looms in the very near future, are belittlingly labelled doomsday prophets. The gift of prophecy, however, is no longer necessary to predict certain events: only an ability to differentiate between uncertain optimism and actual reality is needed. The end of the world is a calculable fact. A pair of eyes is all that is needed to predict it — a pair of eyes wide open.

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Is There Anything Good in Us Humans?

Man, no doubt, deserves even the most painful of labels: “the cancer of the Earth”, a terrible mistake of evolution, etc. But is there (still) anything good in the human species, as part of the biosphere? I am here thinking in terms of my own culture and country.

Science (standard research, science for the sake of knowledge) and art are still being practised: these represent the original contribution of humanity to the animal kingdom. The essential achievements of science took place long ago: the Golden Age of visual and musical arts occurred centuries ago. Thankfully, even today there are some humans who are doing things wise and beautiful. And — something even more rare — here and there some civilised people still lurk.

Individuals can still be found who perform deeds of compassion with all their heart, in the Church, social services and health sector. Similar people can also be found in everyday life: individuals who are good in the most genuine sense of the word, who brighten and warm the whole human community around them; people who are not swayed by the “passing fancies of the world”.

All of these people look out for their friends and relatives, and practise neighbourly love. True greatness, however, is only encountered among those few rare individuals who extend their protection to the whole of Creation, the whole living layer of the globe. Amid the raging and clamouring rabble, among the frantically accelerating *häkkinens* and *mäkinens* [race drivers Mika Häkkinen and Tommi Mäkinen], there is still a group of people committed to environmentalism and the guarding of life. Some of these people, each in their own way, attempt to influence others through associations and unions.

It is a miraculous thing that this small, sane core of humanity, which combines knowledge with emotion and is still attempting to preserve what is fair and good for as long as possible, is able to show such patience amid all of the fuss. While these people cannot tilt at windmills, they still cling to the last shreds of nature that have not been raped by man, the last remaining forests, in an attempt to delay the coming end and give the biosphere some extra time, however short it may be.

These people still ponder, discuss, write, negotiate and try to develop conservation programmes, which are then inevitably torn to shreds by ignorant property owners and their lackeys. The greatest wonder at the turn of the millennium is the fact that there are still some protectors left, who in their hearts still cherish the values of faith, hope and love.