

Alliance for a responsible, plural and united world

World citizens assembly

Lille December 2-10, 2001

Socioprofessional Group

ARTISTS AND PUBLISHERS

After a global reminder of the week's program, we summed up the objectives of the day :

- To know one another thanks to a quick introduction and answers to questions like : 'What motivates me?'
- To tell one another what our expectations for this meeting were.

The exchanges will start with the question : From our point of view as publishers or as artists, what should change in the next years and how ?

So, the first part was dedicated to the introduction of our names and where they came from. For example we learnt that in some countries it is the grand father's name that is chosen, in someone else's case, the name meant 'transition' as a tribute to the political fight of a member of the family and that in another country, one never says : 'My name is' but 'You are given the name'.

We were still getting to know one another better. Our exchanges were :

- Who are we ?
- What do we think we can bring to the assembly ?
- What are our expectations for the assembly ?
- What questions do we have about the assembly ?

The richness of the exchanges between the world assembly participants was also reflected in our group. Even more so because several among us had taken with them some works to introduce themselves. Thus, what was produced was creative. It reflected long experience and a well-tried methodology. This richness could also be found in each of our existence that we introduced since each individual is unique. And finally, our exchanges allowed us to deepen our conceptions of the role of the publisher or the artist in tomorrow's world.

The different expectations of the participants were a concrete exchange of experiences, the expression of a certain creativity and the setting up of human bounds, for we were all conscious that they are more important than material bounds.

The question was : 'from our artist's or publisher's point of view, what seems the most urgent things to change ?'

We discussed informally then worked with little papers and then returned to the informal discussion.

Etienne joined us. He worked at the intercultural library. For him, the hyper-centralization of the media must be stopped. He wondered how it could be possible to reinforce independent publishing.

Tony (Australia) favoured the progressive interaction between cultures. He asserted that it was important to promote those experiences.

Thomas agreed and stressed the danger of the crushing of publishing companies and that the media did not represent the voice of people.

Christine intervened as a representative of a publishing association and said that that was a way to guarantee independence but on the other hand it was impossible to take advantage of the commercial distribution networks. She wondered how to develop co-publishing to compensate that impossibility.

Maryline felt there was a need for a change of mentalities. Artists should be encouraged to invest their own local space. An artwork consumption market should be created to make them put into question their way of functioning so as to stimulate creativity. As an organism for the development through artistic actions, she worked at the development of the relationships between the actors of the city and the inhabitants.

One of the major issues for the artists is the question of cultural identity. One cannot satisfy oneself with accusing globalisation, it is also modernization. When an artist thinks about development, he does not merely think about local development but also cultural development.

Against globalisation, Hamilton thought it necessary to stimulate and develop any form of local development. We were endowed with the very important role of valorising existing ways of life. We have to change things but keep the gist. Apart from this role to change cultural life, it is important to stress the poetical potential of society. We should give life to that poetry of society, to stress beauty, mystery, cultural and intercultural exchanges.

For Thomas, there was another major challenge which was the invasion of television. Liberty, equality and fraternity no longer meant anything because of television (which showed violence.)

Tony denounced two types of romanticism :

-

“The one of genuine and beautiful culture. History is made of cultural mixes”

-

“The all-written romanticism. Culture is transmitted also through cinema and the electric guitar.”

“It is important to place life in the centre again. Life is essential to aesthetics. I come from a culture where we planted a tree each time a child was born.

When we kill animals, we also kill men. Art is also an artificial object, it is man who gives birth to art.”

One of our Chinese friends : “We live in a commercial society. The role of artists should be questioned. There is a change in the role of artists. They no longer have a critical role of the modern world. Some works are filled with violence.”

Pierre : “The observation is that there is an imbalance in the circulation of culture and a dysfunction in the exchanges the moment it is goods and merchandizes which mainly circulate.

Culture or cultures do not take part in a balanced dialogue between different...

To give and to receive : the one who receives but can't give is humiliated. There is a passive consumption of an imposed way.” His wish is to create links between different cultures.

The Arab journalist stressed the essential problem of censorship : It has different origins :

-

the government,

-

the street : the Islamists in the name of their religion

-

censorship

“A militant's handling of the problem of censorship in the world is very important.”

Another exercise : the little papers

Thanks to this instrument, the suggestions will be mixed with those of the entire world Assembly. The cross subjects will be for instance :

-

the citizen's participation

-

censorship

-

environment.

Finally there was a presentation of the process of the notebooks of suggestions: the two notebooks with the suggestions of the artists and the one with the suggestions of the publishers.

Pedro introduced the one of the artists.

There are key elements :

1)

The re-enchantment of the world thanks to art.

Max Weber talked about the disenchantment of the world because of technique. The world re-enchantment issue is not the question of a return backward but how mankind can re-enchant the world without the new means of communication.

The difficulty is that this subject raises many philosophical questions and it is difficult to express it in few words.

2)

Cultural identity : notably when this identity lives a crisis (and when the notebooks were worked out, human cloning hadn't appeared yet.)

3)

This refers to the question of the significance of mankind.

4)

The suggestions are :

-

connection between art and society

-

to stimulate.”

Discussion on the Charter of Human Responsibilities

Michel Sauquet

Historical background to the framing of the Charter

(...) The proposal for a Charter as it exists today is the result of long cross-cultural work. The more we discuss a text and work on it cross-culturally, the more we “restrict” it. This is why what you have in front of you is a framework, which must be filled and completed by you. It is a skeleton upon which flesh has to be added.

Hamilton Faria

I have taken part in the cross-cultural drafting of the Charter. The basic idea was to write a collective text as cross-culturally as possible.

Questions: Who is going to implement the text? How are we going to apply it? We decided to discuss the Charter in groups that were established according to their working language.

The Kazakh Group

Overall remarks: Respect for others is not sufficiently mentioned; it is a very important concept in our Kazakh culture.

Principle 1:

Justice is an abstract notion in our language whereas in French it is related to the idea of institution, and also there is the idea of justice as opposed to injustice. We think that the notion of mutual respect is lacking.

Principle 2:

In our culture the word “strive for” was very often and very strongly used in the Soviet period. Again, the word “respect” is more suitable.

Principle 5:

This is in fact a question: Who is supposed to regulate market mechanisms? (regulations mentioned in the text). We agree with the other principles.

The English-speaking Group

We focused on the principles; one of the first things that we noticed was the question of languages, language suitability in particular. Language is relative.

It is not only a matter of translation; we have to go and look deeply into social contexts. This group suggested a

very interesting idea: the creation of a lexicon, a glossary for certain keywords. This is not only a cross-cultural exercise; we could reset these words in a historical context, go back to the historical sources of words such as “justice,” “peace,” etc... in different cultures.

The idea is also to get away from all “legal,” “globalized” words used by jurists worldwide. This would make it possible to study the issue thoroughly.

From a practical point of view, putting publishers of all backgrounds and countries together to work on the keywords would be a very interesting project.

Preamble

We think that three more principles should be added to those existing in the Preamble; two of them come from African concepts.

1/ The “UMBUNTU” concept, brought up in the opening session by Regelia Bonn. Principle: An individual only becomes a person through others.

2/ The “all children are my children” concept

3/ The aboriginal concept: “Land is my mother” ; we were all born on this land and we all belong to the same family; men are part of Nature.

These three concepts may be included in the Preamble.

Principle 2:

“... freedom and dignity and the human potential . . . of others and human potential.”

Principle 3:

“... of transparency, caution, and precaution”

Principle 4:

We did not like the word “satisfaction” because it is too directly related to the word “consumption.” We did not agree with this: “human needs...”. In the case of a specific word like “satisfaction,” an exact explanation of the meaning given to the term should appear in the glossary.

Principle 5:

The word “concern” should be replaced by the word “policy” or “measure”; once again, a glossary specifying the historical meaning of words would be necessary. They suggested an equitable-sharing policy.

“... be regulated by people who represent the majority and who must be accountable to this majority .”

Principle 6:

The word “development” was rejected; it was replaced by “advancement” twice: “Material advancement... at the service of human advancement”.

Principle 7:

The word “conserve” was considered to be too static; the meaning has to be made more dynamic; make cultures meet and intermingle. Exchange among cultures and the meeting of cultures have to be fostered. Idea of “picking up” things from other cultures. “Stimulate,” for example.

We especially liked the idea of a glossary of keywords. Every culture should give its definition for a given word in the Charter. The procedure used with the collection of keywords in the Intercultural Library should also be applied to the text. In the United States, for example, the word “Justice” is used in a consumerist way, especially after the Sept. 11 events, something that makes the word lose its meaning .

Also, we would like to add a Principle 8, where it would be stated that everyone is a creator.

The French-speaking Group

Overall remark: The idea of “human dignity” is not sufficiently brought up in the text.

Methodology of the group: Reread every part and saw if the text reflected their way of feeling things.

Proposals for modifications that seemed essential to us.

Preamble

Paragraph 1 of the Preamble: They suggested that “on one another’s” be suppressed and that “acquired” be replaced by “possessed”; deletion of “natural.”

Paragraph 2 of the Preamble: “... acquired by a certain part of Humankind. ”

Paragraph 3: “Widening economic gaps within and between nations, the concentration of economic, political, and cultural power in increasingly fewer hands, and also the over-utilization of natural resources threaten the

diversity of cultures and human dignity, and create unrest and conflicts worldwide... ”

Paragraph 6: “...this context, every human being has the duty to assume his or her responsibilities ... ”: replacement of “each of us.”

The lines under the heading “Nature of responsibilities”: We think that this paragraph deals more with the exercise of responsibilities; similarly, the heading “Exercising responsibilities,” which appears further down, became “Nature of Responsibilities.”

Strong disagreement with the idea of proportionality of responsibilities and that of dependence between the capacity to exercise responsibilities and wealth, access to information, etc. Responsibility must not depend on wealth. Thus, the second paragraph of this section was replaced by:

“All people must be entitled to human rights and must be able to exercise their responsibilities. Everyone exercising a collective responsibility must account for his or her acts.”

Paragraph 3 in this section: “...past damages, including the debt of the countries of the South, caused in the name of a given community must be morally assumed by that community (“concerned ” was deleted).

Paragraph 4: “Insofar as human beings know but partially ... ”.

The third paragraph in the section “Exercising Responsibilities ” was replaced by: “All human development is the search for a balance among all these values and economic growth must be subordinated to it.”

The fourth paragraph in this section was put into brackets: it might be rewritten if need be (not absolutely necessary).

Principle 1:

“Establishing justice and respecting human dignity must be part of the quest for peace”.

Principle 2:

Disturbed by the cause-and-effect relationship; “We can only protect our own freedom and dignity by striving for the freedom and dignity of others.”

Principle 4:

Behind the idea of “satisfaction ” of human needs, there is an economic concern.

The natural environment is a human need as well: there is no opposition or distinction.

Principles 5 and 6 merged:

The pursuit of economic prosperity must be subordinated to human development. “The pursuit of economic prosperity, which includes material development, research, and innovation, must serve human development and the preservation of the planet and must include the concern for an equitable sharing of wealth; market mechanisms ... ” (to the end of paragraph 5).

Principle 7:

It was suggested that the word “unity” be replaced by “union.”

The Chinese Group

We would like to present the idea underlying our proposals: In our opinion, the Charter of Human Responsibilities must be different from that of Human Rights. More importance should be attached to the idea of ethics, which hardly appears in the framing of the Charter.

During the framing of the Charter project, the authors stressed the material and technical aspects. Ethical values were not sufficiently taken into account. Consequently, we suggest that the project of the Charter of Human Responsibilities be based on ethical values, that is to say, philosophical, artistic, and cultural ones. Such values underlie material and technical problems.

We suggest that we do not limit ourselves to correcting terms but that we modify the global structure of the project. This is why we mainly corrected the Preamble and we added another essential principle: it is the most important one and it underpins the other principles.

Preamble

We would like to introduce two changes to the Preamble:

Modification to the first paragraph: “... These impacts show very clearly that there is a serious imbalance between fast-developing technology and ever-decreasing ethical values.”

Modification to the fourth paragraph: “...increasingly less efficient. The guiding role of philosophy, art, and culture has been undermined by an excessive desire for material things. Ethical values, in particular, have been

widely neglected.”

Principle 1:

The most important one, in our opinion. “Every human being should endeavor to have some common ethical knowledge, establish a more reasonable, more balanced, more harmonious relationship between people and society, material and spiritual life, man and nature.”

The words “the quest for peace and development” were added. Instead of using the words “establishing justice,” we should use “justice within society and among people”.

Principle 2:

“Strive for” was deleted and replaced by “preserve.” The following words were added: “Every one must be responsible for his or her dignity and freedom. But to attain freedom and dignity, we should preserve the freedom and dignity of others.”

Principle 6:

The word “technical ” should be used instead of “material”. Principle 7:

“Globalization and the plurality of cultural values should uphold each other. In the quest for unity to meet the challenges of the future, equal importance should be given to innovation and tradition so as to exploit the potential of cultural diversity.”

Portuguese-speaking Group

We think that the text must be more open; it must reflect the contradictions, the tensions, the consensus, the intentions and antagonisms. It has to be truer to life.

It would be better to consider the questions that arise from the text rather than asserting things. The text must also have a poetic dimension that exalts life. This implies the creation of the culture of peace. We are stressing the notion of culture of peace and not that of peace alone. We should see life as a something extremely positive. We need to look into the philosophical aspect of the text more thoroughly.

We find that the idea of power, with all its meanings, was not sufficiently mentioned in the text: from creative power to repressive power. Conquest of imagination is also important since subjectivity interferes with the materialization of life. “Everything can be bought and sold ”: This idea is too widespread. From now on, much more importance must be given to what we are than to what we have.

In this society, based on material possessions, the power of the media is too important: they spread the aesthetics of violence. Some statements in the text are too cut-and-dried, manichean; they do not leave space for different opinions. The question of language was also mentioned: cross-culturality should be emphasized, which means learning with others, and this is stronger than tolerance.

Efficiency is not everything, it is not enough. Ethical questions are important.

We would like to know why there is a presupposition that there should be a world government. Emphasis should be on the different possible forms of government. The different forms of terrorism, including state terrorism, should be condemned.

Lacking: Explaining that economic development as we understand it today is contrary to the protection of the biosphere. This model of development must be condemned, as well as the fact that the United States have refused to sign.

This document must not be a cold one. Collective transformations cannot be carried out without implementing individual ones. Material development and internal development must be balanced. Our current model of development must not continue. It is possible to foster development in terms of quality in all simplicity, and not a sophisticated life style as the one we have in Western countries.

This text must be a call, an appeal for happiness.