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Social Welfare in the Emerging World Culture*

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Introduction

It is a widely shared view in the United States today that we are witnessing the sunset of the Atlantic age, with the declining world influence of the communities of the Atlantic rim, and the dawn of a new Pacific age. Such an historic shift is one of many taking place in the world today with important implications for social welfare. One of the most dramatic impacts of the new Pacific age upon the United States has been the recent upsurge of immigration, which has nearly reached the all-time high of European immigration in the early 1900's.¹ (Washington Post Weekly, 1988, 31.)

The bi-polar political division of the world since 1945 has obscured the emergence of other, completely new cultural unities and possibilities arising on the heels of developments in communications and transportation technology. In the age when even the American and European right appear willing to accept the spirit of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, it appears appropriate to address some of those implications and possibilities.

The extraordinary events of 1989 throughout Eastern Europe, as well as world reaction to the tragic events in Tian An Meng Square are further evidence of the essential correctness of the political convergence thesis which argues that capitalist and socialist economies are slowly adopting one another's best features and converging toward a new common mean. My hope is that, whatever turns these social developments take, the humanistic values upon which social science and social work were founded will be important components of that future.

Welfare Values

This paper, like social work itself, is an exercise in normative, value-based rather than purely objective social science. Not only is this a paper with values, it is also a paper about values. Some might even call it an exercise in utopian thinking. The paper argues for the emergence of a world-wide universal pluralistic culture, in which a common core of humanitarian values will eventually be institutionalized in the major institutions of each society in ways which are consistent with the unique historical, cultural, economic and

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political context of that society. It is this process of adaptation of universal, or at least trans-cultural, values to the unique circumstances of individual cultures which can be called "indigenization".

For purposes of this paper, I assume, without attempting to identify them in full, that there are a cluster of distinctive beliefs and values that can be termed "welfare values". Welfare values are found in many, if not all, of the contemporary societies of the world today. Among these values are a belief in the inherent dignity of human life; commitment to human rights and personal freedom; commitment to personal and social development; concern for improving the condition of the poor and disadvantaged; a general desire to diminish pain and suffering; and tolerance of individual and group diversity.

While I am certainly not naive enough to suggest that societies and governments everywhere currently operate on the basis of these values, I do wish to suggest that there is a growing community of nations devoted to their observance, and that in the international community major departures from these values are matters of world concern.

It is generally accepted that many of these values arose out of the Jewish, Christian and Moslem religious traditions; that they were secularized into the "humanism" and "humanitarianism" of Western Europe in the Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment; that they have been widely disseminated throughout the world in the 19th and 20th centuries; and that institutionalization of these values in government constitutes what we term a welfare state.² That there is great institutional variation in welfare states, each of which has adapted to the unique demands and constraints of an indigenous political culture is easy to confirm.

If this is so, it is likely that distinctive subsets of welfare values, some of which have yet to be identified as such, undergird the social welfare institutions growing up independently outside the West. The meritocratic recruitment procedures of Confucian bureaucracy, for example, perhaps should be seen as a successful case of the long-term practice of opportunity theory in human history.³ Likewise, what might be called mental health values of contemplation borrowed from Buddhism (and no doubt markedly transformed in the process), and the "holistic health" values borrowed from oriental medicine have recently had much impact on American health care practice. It is important that the international social welfare community begin to identify and recognize these values for what they are.

The world-wide dissemination of these and other welfare values--in such highly diverse forms as multinational efforts in the face of drought and other natural disasters, abhorrence to abuse of political prisoners, and international support for literacy--are components of what appears now to be the long-term emergence of a world culture, or terraculture. In the west, we

have spoken of "mankind" and "the human community" at least since the Enlightenment, even when the term really applied only to white European males. In the future, the notion of a culturally, if not politically, unified human community appears likely to become more than a vague abstraction.

The emergence of a single, uniform world culture incorporating welfare values would be one of the truly momentous events in human history, fully comparable with the agricultural, urban and industrial revolutions. We are still far from such an occurrence. However, throughout much of the current century, and particularly since 1945, we have seen the global spread of increasingly familiar international cultural patterns.

The processes of change which have occurred in the world during the past four decades are multiple and complex, and a full analysis of these changes would be a daunting task. However, we can easily note some of the most obvious changes: the end of the vast European colonial empires in Africa and Asia, together with the growth of airport, skyscraper and shantytown urbanism in virtually every major city on earth, the collapse of an enormous number of traditional cultures and ways of life together with an almost universal embrace of mass consumer culture; astonishing advances in transportation and communication, including most recently electronic computing, which have brought virtually every surviving human culture into proximity with all others in an unprecedented juxtaposition which gives entirely new meaning to the term cultural pluralism.

What, in this brave new world of Coke, Pan Am, IBM, Sony and Hyundai, is the proper place for universal welfare values and what is the proper role for the distinctiveness and traditions of nations, cultures and subcultures? The issue is certainly a cause for concern for thoughtful persons everywhere. Because of the sensitivity of social problems and social problem-solving techniques to cultural and subcultural influence, the issue is also a major one for the internationalization of social work practice. It is in this context that the interplay between universal values and indigenous cultures, which is the theme of this conference, takes on its greatest importance for us.

Indigenization

The term indigenization is used here in contrast with homogenization or blending, as the cultural process most likely to impact upon social welfare values and ideals in the short-term future. It has already been clearly established that culture contact does not lead directly to homogeneity (sameness). For example, after three centuries of African, European and Asian immigration to the United States where the idea of the "melting pot" originated, major ethnic and subcultural diversities remain. It is likely that contact between stable, non-immigrant cultures may contribute instead to cultural diversity and pluralism, political pluralism and a gradual, long term adjustment process as established truths and cherished folkways and mores

from each culture are fitted to new circumstances and other different, but similarly deep beliefs and values.

Such adjustments has always been part of the immigrant experience. What is different about the world today is that the marvels of transportation and communications are imposing the same requirements for adaptation and adjustment on those who stayed at home as well. We can call this process indigenization: In its intercultural aspect, it is the peaceful adjustment of separate, stable, territorially located cultures to one another via international trade, transportation, communication, and other avenues of diffusion. In the late twentieth century, this process is already far enough along that one might be brash enough to speak of an emerging world order or "terraculture".

The Emerging Terraculture

The term terraculture was chosen here because it appears that this emerging cultural order is very rapidly being embraced by the majority of the entire earth's population. Although many aspects of post-industrialization have been criticized by cultural high-brows, romantics and latter day Jeremiahs, the onslaught of prefabricated clothing, refrigerators and appliances, automobiles, electricity, radio, television, pop culture and other "consumer goods" which characterize and mark the advance of this revolution is universally and warmly embraced by peoples everywhere. From a social welfare standpoint, many of these developments (such as refrigeration) have also brought with them major improvements in public health and social welfare.

The story today is much the same everywhere: Formerly rural, isolated peoples regret deeply the loss of traditional ways of life and fear for the loss of cherished cultural heritages of beliefs, rituals, ceremonies and other folkways. However, they are also unwilling to abandon pickup trucks, indoor plumbing, electricity and refrigeration and other accoutrements of "modern" life and return to the old ways. This is as true in rural Appalachia as it is in Nigeria or rural Korea.

The force of tradition in a given culture may not always go gently into the night -- as anti-modernist movements as diverse as the English Luddites, the European Counter-Reformation, the Iranian Revolution, Quebec Nationalism, the American Indian Movement, the Northern Irish, Basques, Kurds, Sikhs, and American evangelical Christians attest. There even are cases of successful long-term holdouts against modernization, such as the Shakers, Amish and Mennonites, and the Navaho in America, for example. There would appear to be no cases in the world today of major cultures which have completely and successfully turned their backs on modernization for any length of time, however.

Cultural diffusion always occurs unevenly. In every contemporary culture today, one could find locals, people whose entire world view is internal to culture and community and whose concern for "the rest of the world" is slight. Each of us--Japanese, Korean and American--has had our own native traditions of isolationism and xenophobia (fear of strangers). In many, perhaps all cultures, one also finds the cosmopolitans, cultural natives with an interest in, curiosity about, and knowledge of the outside world with its great cultural variety and many options.

In America, missionaries, anthropologists, journalists, diplomats and "internationalists" -- persons from all walks of life with an interest in and curiosity about the world have been among the key cosmopolitans. Since 1940, those performing national military service have emerged as one of the largest and most varied groups of American cosmopolitans, because of the extensive system of American military installations outside the U.S. More recently, American businessmen -- long an important bastion of isolationism -- have emerged as a key class of contemporary cosmopolitans.

The challenge for internationally minded persons in every society is how to assure that universal welfare values are supported and advanced in the emerging world culture, without falling into the well-known traps of ethnocentrism. Although this may be a formidable challenge, it is not entirely without precedent. In some respects, the task is not unlike that faced by social reformers in New York or Chicago in the early 1900's, when dozens of different ethnic, racial and language groups often lived on the same city blocks. It was in this environment that the social work commitments to respect for individual differences and personal uniqueness were first forged.

Today, the challenge for social work internationally is to translate those same approaches and that same sensitivity into international contexts. What may be needed today is the functional equivalent of the settlement house. It will be truly unfortunate if social work remains what it all too often is today: A simple transfer of American methods to different cultural contexts. A far more productive strategy would be to pursue a vigorous program of indigenization of social work: to begin at the level of basic universal values and to develop social technologies appropriate to the unique time and place characteristics of individual cultures.

Yet how is this to be done? One major starting point would involve a research program of vast proportions: the identification of those elements in each culture which contribute to social welfare values and to an assessment of the likelihood of success in applying those values in other contexts. Harry Stack Sullivan proposed just such an undertaking more than 50 years ago, and certainly the knowledge of fields such as philosophy, anthropology and history will be very helpful in such an enterprise.⁴ This is precisely the kind of study my colleagues, Sung Lai Boo and John Peters, have undertaken

in their examination of the contemporary social welfare implications of the traditional Korean concepts of *Hyangyak* and *Ture*.⁵

A second major project might involve the promotion of special forms of cross-cultural education, in which the welfare values and practices of one society are systematically introduced to citizens of another. Certainly, this is what the American missionaries attempted on a world-wide scale during the 19th century with the introduction of orphanages and schools. In the world of social work practice, such social change activity probably would be placed somewhere between contemporary social development planning and education. Let us not forget, however, that in the world of the emerging terraculture, advertising, marketing and mass communications strategies probably also have a role to play in such ventures.

Because some welfare values have already been so widely disseminated in the world, we now already observe the ways in which this indefinite core or what we might term universal humanitarianism are being adapted to the unique needs of individual societies and states. The political use of the welfare state by the conservative and liberal parties of Great Britain, for example, as a tool in the class conflict gives special meaning to the concept of "universal services" as it is used there. Likewise, in the United States, which has a long legacy of commitment to the application of scientific management concepts to social welfare administration, the symbolic importance of "efficiency" takes on an importance in welfare policy debates which many non-Americans find difficult to understand.

Welfare States

One of the issues which requires some examination in light of the phenomenon of post-modern conservatism in Great Britain, France, the United States, Canada, and elsewhere is our continued allegiance to the concept of the universal welfare state as the preferred provider of all major services as well as income maintenance programs.

In general, social workers and some sociologists tend to use the term welfare state to refer only to public, tax-supported transfer programs of social insurance, social assistance and social services. By contrast, political scientists and economists tend to extend the term "welfare state" to also include many forms of regulatory activity, such as workers compensation or agricultural subsidy payments as well as transfer payments and public services. This latter approach gets very close to the distinction Richard Titmuss made between fiscal, occupational and social welfare.

Highly important for modern welfare state theory and the process of indigenization is the distinction between several types of modern states in relation to the people being governed.

On this dimension, there are the states, like Japan and South Korea, and many of the states of 19th century Europe, where the people are a single racial, cultural and language group. In such cases, those who control the welfare state and those who benefit from it are members of a common community. In one way or another, the struggle for adoption of social welfare policy and the building of social welfare institutions in these societies is a community development effort and can be grounded in the mutuality, unity and fellow-feeling of the people.

By contrast, there are bi-cultural states, like South Africa, Israel, or the United States before desegregation, where the population is divided into two distinct (and antagonistic) groups, one of whom controls the state apparatus, to the disadvantage of the other. In this case, the prospects of a universal welfare state with uniform coverage seems highly unlikely, and the problem of institution building is particularly difficult for the group out of power. The dominant group, of course, has a definite advantage in its control of the state, while welfare state institutions for the submissive group are either distinctly inferior or built indigenously outside the state without its obvious advantages of financing and social control.

Finally, there are the pluralistic states like the contemporary United States, the Soviet Union, China, the states of western Europe, and many of the emergent states of post-colonial Africa. Welfare institutions in these cases must either be group-specific or grounded in universal values with considerable political cogency, such as Anglo-American "natural rights" or the French "universal rights of man". The political problem faced by welfare proponents in these societies--even when they are in the majority--is whether appeals to such universal values can be made sufficiently powerful and convincing to overcome traditional ethnic, tribal, racial and other cleavages. Far too often in the past the answer has been negative. The American struggle with racism, which has been ongoing for more than 100 years, offers a sobering example of the difficulties involved.

From a world perspective, the problem of welfare in any world culture which emerges in the future, is not unlike that of the pluralist states, and the problems of the unitary states are not unlike the problems of distinct ethnic communities within those states.

Beyond The Welfare State

Each nation state which has embraced all or part of the welfare state ideal has done so in its own way, and in light of its own unique history. Great Britain, the Netherlands, and other European welfare states have, in fact been slowly building welfare institutions on the foundations of the past for at least 500 years. In the United States the legacy of constitution, rugged individualism, federalism and social darwinism have created what is sometimes referred to as the "reluctant welfare state" committed to

gradualism and disjointed incrementalism in policy development, and also committed to the pluralism of coexisting public, nonprofit and commercial institutions.

In discussing welfare in international context, we should not continue to be preoccupied exclusively with the state. Certainly, the coercive powers of the modern state are formidable weapons in dealing with social problems such as family violence, economic exploitation, and dependency. Likewise, the ability of the democratic welfare states to peacefully redirect portions of the surplus production of their economies without undermining productive enterprise is still one of the strongest weapons available against the historic scourges of all societies: poverty, illiteracy, disease and violence.

We need to remember, however, that welfare values have their origins and take their strength from outside the state. In particular, Judaism and Christianity have been foremost among the world-religions in the promulgation of welfare values.⁶ Likewise, it was religious missionaries, and not political vanguards, who carried welfare values outside the western civilization of the Mediterranean/ European community. This is as true for the United States, with its Quakers, Lutherans, and its embrace of the English Poor Law tradition, as it is of the rest of the Americas, Asia or Africa.

Likewise, we need to remind ourselves also that welfare values are also embedded in the mutual aid obligations of family, neighborhood and community members in most of the world's cultures. One of the first things which most immigrant populations did (and do) upon arriving in the Americas, for example, is locate one another and form mutual benefit societies and associations.

Welfare Society?

Full indigenization of welfare values in any society, therefore, is not merely a matter of developing comprehensive welfare state coverage. It is a matter of attaining the welfare society. More than two decades ago, Wilensky and LeBeaux suggested the likelihood of a gradual transition from welfare state to welfare society.⁷ However, much like the earlier suggestion by Marx of the eventual "withering away" of the state, their comment was little more than a passing remark, and no detailed analysis or argument in support of this development is offered by them. In the two decades which have passed since their comment was first offered, there has been relatively little systematic attention to this idea in social welfare thought.

The belief that welfare is in some way the exclusive concern or preoccupation of the state is one of the most serious fallacies which has crept into recent social welfare thought. Among other things, it has reduced American social policy concern in the 1980's to a preoccupation with Presidential politics, when Presidents seldom, if ever, have had a positive

impact upon American social policy, and President Reagan has proven to be no exception. The "neo-conservative" budget cutting and program reduction activities which are attributed to him were already underway prior to 1980, and his influence in the domestic social policy arena in other ways has probably been grossly exaggerated.

It is the major thesis of this paper that the world-wide process of indigenization of welfare values is not exclusively a process of implementing pension, social insurance and other public transfer payment programs and regulatory mechanisms governing public health, and personal and economic security within the unique legal and political contexts of separate states. Nor is indigenization simply a process of integrating humanitarian values into the dominant political culture of each of the world's nation-states.

The ultimate measure of the indigenization of social welfare values into any of the world's cultures is the integration of welfare values into all of the major institutions of that culture. In the welfare society, not only government, but also religion, education, business, leisure, mass communication and all other social institutions will reflect the impact of welfare values.

One can see many diverse signs of this trend already in the developed countries, whether in the form of "social issue" movies, television, newspaper and magazine coverage, the growth of commercial health insurance, or religiously organized voluntary social services. In this respect, the growing influence of "privatization" and the expansion of commercial social services in the United States probably represents an indigenous response of a predominantly business culture to universal welfare values, however much American social workers may dislike or distrust this strategy.

In the "post industrial" world where service industries are supplementing or replacing manufacturing industries, one thing seems increasingly clear: Expansion of health and welfare services--whether as commercial services for middle class clients able to afford them, or occupational welfare "fringe benefits" associated with employment--are important emerging forms of economic development.

Human Welfare and Patronage

Along with growing awareness of the proliferation of welfare societies should come increased attention to the domain of voluntary, nonprofit, associational and citizen action efforts along this line. Such efforts have long been a stable characteristic of American social welfare. As Kramer and other voluntary action scholars have shown, voluntary social welfare activity is not limited to the United States, but is also found in the Netherlands, Britain, Israel, France, Canada, Japan and many other nations.⁸ Yoo has recently made the case for increased volunteer effort in Korea.⁹

There are many interesting and vital issues of indigenization which are opened up for the societies of the Pacific Rim, including Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and others by the prospects for indigenization of welfare values associated with voluntary community action. Given the economic growth of this region, however, none is more important than what might be termed the indigenization of the principal of patronage.

For those familiar with the dual uses of this term in American social science, I am not referring here to vote buying, nepotism, controlling appointments to political office or other behavior sometimes associated with the term political patronage. I am referring, instead, to the conscious cultivation of an indigenous philanthropic tradition in which wealthy members of a community voluntarily devote portions of their wealth to community improvement, development or betterment projects.

In the United States, it was the "new rich" of Chicago--particularly the wives of meat packers, real estate men, manufacturers and department store owners--who underwrote the support of Hull House, and much the same was true of the 1,500 other social settlements which developed in the United States. And it was the industrial wealth of steel, railroad, auto, and other industries which resulted in the great American foundations which have played such an important role--both for good and ill--in American social welfare both domestically and internationally.¹⁰

The issue facing the new industrial rich being created all along the Pacific rim today is a familiar one: How is their wealth to be allocated among personal consumption, savings and investment, taxation, inheritance, philanthropy and other objects? This is not merely a personal decision. It is an issue of great social importance throughout East Asia today, and one of sufficient complexity that it can only be approached indigenously.

Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and other rapidly developing Asian economic powers may wish to adapt American institutions such as trusts and endowments, foundations, fund-raising campaigns and other related practices to their own contexts. Or, they may need to develop completely indigenous ways of doing things.

However, in either case, the advent of the enormous private industrial wealth occurring here today makes the question of what form the indigenous patronage of these new Asian rich will take. The issue is probably not whether or not such patronage will occur. Asia, like Europe and the Americas, is full of monuments to past patrons. The real issue is where welfare values will fit in the emerging mixture of philanthropic priorities felt by these new rich. Will future Asian industrial philanthropists only build fountains, temples and other monuments, and commission works of art? Or, will they also come under the influence of welfare values and also support public health, education, and social services?

Conclusion

The future direction of social work in Asia, and the prospects of more complete indigenization of this American import rest heavily on the answer to that question. If social welfare values have a direct impact upon the future direction of Asian industrial philanthropy, one can expect to see an important financial base for voluntary sector social welfare efforts well beyond those which currently exist. On the other hand, if social welfare values are ignored or neglected, the welfare state may be the only viable alternative for the expression of indigenous welfare ideals.

Footnotes

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1. Zita Arocha. "A Wave of Immigration to Match the Turn of the Century's"
Washington Post National Weekly Edition. (August 17, 1988). 31.
 2. Robert Morris. **Rethinking Social Welfare: Why Care For the Stranger?** New York: Longman. 1985.
 3. Opportunity theory refers, specifically to the social policy of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which sought to deliberately create opportunities for social and economic advancement for the poor. More generally, the term can also be applied to any meritocratic policies which create opportunities for upward mobility.
 4. "The thinking out of constructive, functionally coherent, revisions of any one of the major cultures of the world, so that the personal imperatives which derive from them--whether in the obscure, very early inculcated, patterns of conscience or the subsequently acquired, less recondite, patterns of acceptable rationalizations and potent verbalisms--shall be less restrictive on understanding and more permissive of social progress; that, truly is a task to which unnumbered groups of the skillful may well apply themselves." (Harry Stack Sullivan, "Toward a Psychiatry of Peoples." **The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry.** Norton: 1953. p .383.)
 5. Sung Lai Boo and John Peters. **A Renewal of Traditional Korean Community Practice in Contemporary Social Welfare: Examining Concepts of Hyangyak and Ture.** 1988.
 6. Robert Morris, op. cit. pp. 65-120.
 7. Harold Wilensky and Charles LeBeaux. **Industrial Society and Social Welfare.** New York: Free Press. 1965.
 8. Kramer, Ralph M. **Voluntary Agencies in the Welfare State.** Berkeley: University of California Press. 1981
 9. Sung Lai Boo and Pan Soo Yoo. **Volunteerism.** Pusan Korea: So-Moon Publishing Co. 1987.
 10. O'Connell, Brian, editor. **American's Voluntary Spirit: A Book of Readings.** New York: Foundation Center, 1983.