

Ralph Synning *Candles for John Lennon: Philosophical Reflections on the Vision of a Pop Icon* (Montréal: Aardvark Press, 1992)

Charles Taylor *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition: An Essay* by Charles Taylor with commentary by Amy Gutman, editor, et. al.

Let me make no bones about it: Synning's is an odd book. I also want to make no bones about its being an important book. It is a prolonged reflection on the lyrics of the song "Imagine," by John Lennon. A quarter of a century ago, John Lennon was member of popular entertainment group, known as the Beatles, and shortly later, after he had embarked on a solo career as a singer and composer of popular music, wrote a utopian lyric "Imagine" that became something of an anthem among the subculture of disaffiliation that, at the time, probably embraced most people under the age of thirty. Like popular entertainments of other times of crisis this century—the depression of the 30s and the Second World War—it was edifying and appealed to a longing so important for the young, the longing for world better than that into which they were cast. Like many songs, it dreams of a *paradiso terrestre*, of the possibility of bringing the future world of goodness to earth and in the present, and the immanentization of the eschaton has been a perpetual lure for popular culture.

One oddity of the book is its backwards-looking character. The song it comments upon is from a very long time ago. I can remember when the youth of the time were quite solemn about the tune's lyrics, and would sing along to it at gatherings with a reverence that might make one believe that they were intoning a new setting of "*Dona nobis pacem*." That was a very long time ago, however, and it does seem peculiar to read commentary on it at this late date, as though the song were an artistic achievement of enduring importance.

There was another reason for the popularity of the song besides those I gave above. It also accounts for the popularity of mass-entertainments of other times of crises, but it was especially important in the crisis of the 60s and early 70s because that crisis was the loss of faith in shared ideals. About a decade a half earlier, the Soviets had put a human in space before the Americans had. This led to massive transformation of education in North America. As now, people complained that our competitors—then the Russians, now the Japanese are our betters in education—that they study longer and harder than our kids do. Only now, it is only a few business leaders that make the complaints, while the politicians in charge in education serve up "feel-good" reforms that empty education of any goal other than self-esteem and produce an educational system whose goal is essentially emotional, not cognitive. At the time of sputnik, by contrast, the politicians decided that making education more rigorous had become a political priority, since the Russians had beaten "us" in science and technology. Curricula became more demanding. It was all who could become competent in basic mathematics and science would (while, tellingly, the otherwise ineducable, could specialize in music or the visual arts). Homework expanded to an expected four or five hours a night by the end of high school. The regimen had some good results. The generation that arrived at universities in the sixties could, and did, read everything from *The Communist Manifesto*, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, *The New Course*, *Reason in History*, *Eros and Civilization*, *One Dimensional Man* and *Life Against Death* to *The Law of Violence and the Law of Love*, the *Treatise on the Middle Doctrine*, and *Twenty Verses on the Great Vehicle*. They had been trained to think, and they did think. They questioned the ideals that founded the social consensus. They began to agitate for the return to Regina Manifesto. For many of them, religious credos were nothing like the charter of the Kiwanas club, and their ideals did not in the least resemble the soft rhetoric of the social-workers-cum-self-help-psychologists that now control the agendas of social reform. Rather, they were those of a muscular social Christianity that answered to a radical disaffection with the anti-creative norms of the scientifically minded, military-trained leaders that ran the education

system. People who gather to intone with conviction, “in media vitae in morte sumus” don’t readily fit into the social system. They simply do not make either enthusiastic consumers, or ruthless administrators or dishonest teachers or writers. More generally, tyranny and philosophy coexist only in an unstable relation, and wherever people have read, deliberated upon and discussed what the wisest writers of the past have written, philosophy will flourish—a proposition whose likelihood is being endorsed by an affirmation of its contrary now, when PhD’s in Political and Social Theory will blithely announce that they have read no political philosophy written before 1900.

Consequently, the students produced by the educational reforms that sputnik motivated posed a danger, at least for a short while, until people figured out how to enfeeble education. Popular entertainers, too, did their part in rallying people around a new consensus. As popular entertainments usually do in a crisis, the song presented the consensus ideals of the time, in an ennobling way and helped rally people to the consensus. This is the basis for the importance of the book, for the book uses the vehicle of commentary on the song’s lyrics to theorize some pressing issues for our time and to expose the dystopic character of its utopia. To be sure, Synning does not deal with historical conditions that produced lyrics to be analyzed, and so his work comes forth not as inquiry into the ideological role of the lyrics but into their philosophy. This is an unhappy mistake, for it makes it impossible for Synning to understand the historical role of the work. After all, the “Oneworldism” of John Lennon, the “Oneworldism” of multiculturalism (touted among others, by Muldoon and Maggie Thatcher), and the “Oneworldism” of George Bush’s “New World Order” are not far apart. Synning’s book would have been more trenchant if had. Furthermore, after so many years of Althusserian analysis, its absence here, where it might have shown its power, is a disappointment.

Synning makes the utopian ideal of a single, united, universal world—what I like to call “Oneworldism”—the central topic of his book. This is not wholly original, for two decades ago the great Canadian philosopher George Grant recognized that the question whether the universal, homogeneous state—the state of which all humans can become citizens, “not simply because of their common ethnic or geographic background, but because they shared a common [humanity],” and in which they are all are treated the same—is the best social order is among the most important questions of our time. The key text that anticipates Synning’s inquiry is George Grant’s great essay, “Tyranny and Wisdom,” his text in which he the question of the goodness of the universal, homogeneous state is most central—and a text that says things more important than we find in Synning or anything written on the related question, whether multiculturalism is a social condition we ought to embrace for its goodness. However, Grant, because the thinking of the classical philosophers informed his own, was farseeing; the strength of Synning’s book is that it focuses upon what is near to hand, on the contemporary forms under which business leaders and academics promote the idea of the universal, homogeneous state. Social theorists commonly present the proposition that the universal, homogeneous state is the best social order as a moral truth too obvious to be argued for; it has much the same status in the dominant ideology of our time as does the proposition that there are not absolute rights and wrongs, that assessments of good and evil depend upon merely culturally relative beliefs. Synning has had the insight, and not inconsiderable courage, to question the idea of that the universal, homogeneous state is the ideal social order—that which best suits humans.

Synning argues that Lennon’s “brotherhood of man” in which all “will live as one” lacks a higher purpose and that it is a social form created by market relations. Writing about the unity of One World, Synning writes:

The uniting end, *par excellence*, is the global end solely concerned with getting and spending; the end which is worldly yet transcends all human specifications of difference by admitting a plenitude of human differences. The

worldly “higher” purpose of universal business involves setting up a global free market in order to serve and satisfy the material needs of diverse individuals. Universal business transcends our human specifications of difference by catering to the highly particular, and yet thoroughly universal appetite for things . . .

In its course, history poses and works out philosophical questions. For some time now I have suggested, usually *molto sotto voce*, that the question that is being tested in our era is whether human beings can live without any higher ideals—religious, philosophical or aesthetic. It is this fact, I think, and not, as Harold Bloom claims, that American religious thinking is constitutionally Gnostic, which explains the tendency of our time to immanentize the eschaton. For, *contra* Bloom, in our time, all ways for knowing higher truths, whether intuition, contemplation, prayer, or aesthetic experience, now have merged into a single route, reason, or its latest version of the dogma, into the model of intelligence as computation that rests on the symbol processing theories of Herbert Simon and Allen Newell. That the condemnations that academics brandish over the heads of living artists are not, as they ordinarily have been, that contemporary artists have abandoned the true and noble artistic ways, but that they claim the special gift of higher insight tells it all. In fact, an artist needn’t overreach humanity to be subject to academic abuse, for merely to outreach the common run of humankind, to display their special talents for all to see, just as good footballer displays his talents for public view, is sufficient to invite the criticism of elitism.

It is a particular strength of Synning’s book that he has understood this. He writes, perceptively:

Clearly, Lennon’s “today”—which is our own today—lacks what we call *transcendent* purpose . . . If we want to know that for which “people living for today” live, we must look down and around us at this common earth which we inhabit. To live “for today” means, then, that our ends are not transcendent and other-worldly, but this-worldly; therefore, far from being purposeless, people living “for today” are charged with a purpose which is derived solely from themselves and from the world around them. (p. 25)

This, I think, encapsulates modernity’s distemper.

Synning leaves this thought behind to conduct of quasi-Hegelian analysis of the emptiness of the conception of the universal as the negation of all differences, as “the night in which in which all cows are black” as Hegel said of Schelling. We arrive at the notion of a common, universal humanity only by negating all differences between actually existing human beings until only an empty, formal concept, without concrete content:

Alas, emptying our thoughts of human differences yields the thought of our human sameness, our oneness—that is, we rise to the “lofty height” of conceiving our equality. But notice: we only arrive at this “height” when both desire and the real world of multiplicity and difference—and this means above all the multiplicity and qualitative difference between human beings—is devalued and negated. . . . It is no wonder, then, that in conceiving *this* equality, we may all come to recognize our universal brotherhood and all equally share all of the world—there is neither desire for the world, nor any real world to share! Need we add that it is easy to be equal in the share of emptiness. E pluribus unum vacuum!

In popular jargon, the word for this doctrine is *humanism*. (p. 59.)

I think that Synning here unfolds with startling precision the dynamic of the idea of universal

humanity that underpins the “Oneworldism” that advocates of the global market promulgate and the “Oneworldism” that advocates of multiculturalism propose—who are anyway mostly the same.

There are issues on which I think Synning is wrong. One his is proposal that there exists a reasonably straightforward relation between a word’s everyday meaning and its poetic meaning; indeed, I think the fundamentals of his conception of meaning in art are simply wrong. If meaning is something that we conceive, and explain, with concepts, then I think that the aesthetic worth of any work of art has anything to do with meaning, for the very nature of nature of an aesthetic object is that elicits a type of experience whose content we cannot unpack into determinate concepts.

The question whether and, if so, how a work of art can be philosophical presents itself now, after so many years of analyses of artworks as semiotic objects, as the most pressing issue of aesthetics. The appeal that our intuitions of affinity between aesthetic and conceptual forms exert on us is easy to understand, for it satisfies an emotional need to see cultures and human minds as whole, and not as sundered parts. That the need is emotional explains why the arguments for “contextualism” (the idea that characteristics of their cultural context determine the forms of artworks) were emotional and rhetorical. Mostly their substance was, without exaggeration, “Greenberg [or whoever was due for a whipping that day] isolates a work of art from the culture that produces it. We don’t like that. So, off with his head!” Those who made such proposals might have asked, but did not, whether being enfolded within a conceptual medium of reflection vitiates our experience of a work of art or whether, to the contrary, it is the capacity of artwork to elicit a type experience that evades being thought in terms of determinate concepts that gives artworks their value. This is question that again has become pressing, but we cannot deal with here. Suffice it to say that Synning’s comments are inadequate. It just does not do to assert that:

Our problem concerns the meaning of what the lyric is saying, and we assert that this meaning is an integral part of what constitutes the artistic merit of *Imagine*. Or what does merit mean, if it has nothing to do with such meaning.

Let us note that the interpretation of any poetic verse is best accomplished through saying it but to truly say it, to speak *poetically*, one must do more than merely mumble the sounds of the words. One must understand them, one must use one’s intelligence to grasp their meaning: one must grasp the relation between the words spoken and the intelligibility inherent in the things to which they refer. (p. 20)

This is too hasty; it assumes that intelligence is the faculty through which we relate to artistic works and that understanding works of art is, at least in part, a matter of grasping the denotations of the work’s semiotic elements. Perhaps artworks are precious because we grasp their worth through an act that eludes intelligence and their value has nothing to do with apprehension of meaning but with the apprehension of pure form.

These cavils are not really germane to the basic argument of Synning’s essay, however. For all need say that the cultural importance of Lennon’s song has nothing to do with its aesthetic value, that we can take the song on (what I presume are its) own terms, as an anthem for ritual occasions. One might note, however, that Synning would have escaped these problems had he attempted to analyze the ideological role of song, and relegated his comments on its aesthetic structure and value to a secondary place.

A problem of another sort troubles the fundament, one that we cannot so easily detach from his central argument. Not only the lexicon that Synning employs, but also his beliefs about what constituting the good for human being derive partly from Martin Heidegger, probably the most important philosopher of the twentieth-century.

In particular, Synning adopts Heidegger's decisionism. A central distinction in traditional philosophy was that between theoretical and practical reason. Good intentions sometimes produce bad results, and bad intentions sometimes issue in good results. How are we to evaluate such deeds, by their intentions or by their actual results? Kant considers the importance of the distinction between theoretical and practical reason more thoroughly than any other philosopher. Kant's ethical theory was a version of what philosophers sometimes call immanentism (as opposed to consequentialism) for it proclaimed that considerations of the actual results of human actions are irrelevant to deciding their moral worth, and that value depends only upon the character of the end that agent willed. Kant showed that the purpose for which reason attaches to the will is that thereby reason, not inclination, can decide our actions. If inclinations decided our actions, our actions would be determined, not free, and they therefore would not be subject to being assessed as good or bad. Thus, Kant reconstructed a Lutheran morality without petitioning to the idea of God. Like other Enlightenment thinkers, Kant placed great importance on the idea of the autonomy of human agents (and of thinkers).

Above all other purposes he conceived for it, the purpose of Kant's entire philosophical system was to reconcile his Lutheran piety with his enthusiasm for Newtonian science. On the one hand, he wanted to defend Newtonian science against David Hume's withering attacks on the concept of causality and on the other, strove to defend human action from the determinism of the Newtonian science that would place all behaviour outside the scope of good and evil. Kant undertakes to show that when one acts without any irrational motive, but solely out of respect for reason, one's acts are free. To derive one's ends from some source, such as considerations of prudence or enlightened self-interest or by any external interests is to allow those interests to subjugate the will. Only a will that can will an action on grounds internal to itself can be autonomous. Kant shows that reason's being attached to the will assures this autonomy.

The idea of autonomy is a key to the Kantian philosophy. Thus, in the very famous, first sentence of *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, Kant offers the ringing affirmation, "*Es ist überall nichts in der Welt, ja überhaupt auch ausser derselben zu denken möglich was ohne Einschränkung für gut könnte gehalten werden, als allein ein guter Wille.*" The will is a faculty that transcends determination by conditions in which it finds itself. Only individual that considers the situation free of accidents of his or her place or inclinations, and resolves to formulate and to act on a maxim that can be used universally, i.e., by any agents whatsoever, is acting rationally—in a way that does not depend on the accidents of one's situation. Kant's argument for freedom seems to rest on two pillars, the first, the conception of reason as pure potency actualizing itself without any external constraints and the idea that any being that acts from its own nature, unconstrained by any external force, acts freely. For, the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas points out, Kant overcomes the alterity of the subject by installing a representative of the object within the subject in the form of the categories of the understanding, those principles according to which, the Kantian philosophy proposes, the mind organizes the world of its acquaintance.

Heidegger's *Existenzphilosophie* is an attempt to bridge the chasm that separates being and doing, thought and action, theoretical and practical reason. It carried farther the programme that Heidegger found in Kant and Husserl. His philosophy responded in part to the Romantic conceptions of a soul too pure to be sullied by involvement in the real world and of a yearning that cannot be given a determinate content lest one pay the price of destroying the yearning; so, like Kant and Husserl, Heidegger strove to integrate subject and object. He succeeded in this, but at the cost of making the existent a brute facticity whose intelligibility belongs entirely to the subject. Heidegger's conception of value was set with this move.

It was exfoliated in Heidegger's analysis of the condition in which *Dasein*—roughly, the being of human existents, or, as Heidegger explains, that being for which Being is an issue.

*Dasein's* initial condition is 'thrownness,' Heidegger explains, for it finds itself awash in an abyss of existential contingency. Traditional truths and contents have lost their substance, and all that remains of them is their 'facticity,' the sheer, naked fact of their existence. We even experience *Dasein* as factual. We encounter meaning, and discover the truth of *Dasein's* authentic character, by taking a genuine decision. The inward resolve that characterizes a genuine decision elevates authentic *Dasein* above the mass (*Das Mann*, as Heidegger refers to it), above the hegemonic hold of mass thinking, and creates him or her as a true individual. Because human existence is groundless and because the objects of everyday life are lost in a sea of contingency, we require a decision to give an action worth. A decision blasts away the inertia of everyday inauthenticity and routinization; it enlarges life with its force.

Synning invokes these ideas when he writes:

It is always something beautiful to see thought and action *united* in a deed. In a democracy like ours, however, where there is such a tremendous pressure to engage in so-called "collective actions," it is all too often forgotten *thought* is *not* a collective phenomenon. Only the individual thinks—if he thinks at all. Hence, only the individual can unite thought and action in a *deed*. A *deed* is not any action whatsoever; it is an act which presupposes risk, an act which implies consequences. The *value* or worth of any deed is directly proportional to the risk and consequences which are involved. (p. 7. Emphases in original.)

In choosing to emphasize Heidegger's decisionism, Synning repeated the move that the first generation of Heidegger's followers made, of privileging Heidegger's *Existenzphilosophie* over other aspects of thinking and of stressing the *Existentiellen* (the essential structures of Being-in-the-World—"care," "thrownness," "fallenness," and "Being-toward-death.") The move is fraught with problems that have one major source: emphasis on the moment of decision and on the unity of thought and action ends up by dissolving the idea that both one's being and actions incarnate something transcendent, that is to say, we do not choose our goodness, it is imposed upon us from the Beyond.

Even Synning's terms for praising deeds are telling. "It is always something beautiful to see thought and action united in a deed," he writes. The idea, popularized in the current film "*The Architecture of Doom*," that German thinkers of the 20s and 30s elevated aesthetic categories above political and moral categories, already has become a commonplace in the specialist literature on the period. Jeffrey Herf, in his excellent *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* describes the 'central legend' of reactionary modernism (of which Heidegger's philosophy is a part) in aesthetic terms:

From Nietzsche to Jünger and then Goebbels, the modernists' credo was the triumph of spirit and will over reason and the subsequent fusion of this will to an aesthetic mode. If aesthetic experience alone justifies life, morality is suspended and desire has no limits. . . . As aesthetic standards replaced moral norms, modernism indulged a fascination for horror and violence as a welcome relief to bourgeois boredom and decadence. . . .When modernists turned to politics, they sought engagement, commitment, and authenticity, experiences the Fascists and Nazis promised to provide (p. 12.)

Michael E. Zimmerman also discusses the idea in his fine book *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity*. It also comes up in Allan Megill's fine survey text, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* and they are implied in *The Rites of Spring* by the Toronto writer, Mordris Ekstein. All these writers do a good job of explaining the dangers inherent in the

position, so Synning should not have blundered into accepting it unawares.

My friends and acquaintances know that the ideology of “Oneworldism” is the subject of my most despairing tirades. Beliefs in the goodness of “One world” and in “a universal humanity” give shape to the present’s leading political ideals. Yet, as the central ideas of ideology so often are, these ideas are hardly ever acknowledged, and almost never questioned, since they operate without our being aware of them. They are basic to the policy of multiculturalism, for example, but are rarely brought into question in discussions of that policy. Globalization is the means by which the American empire seeks to defend and expand its global hegemony, and the rhetoric of “multiculturalism” is simply the moral language that globalization speaks. It is an effort to evacuate a culture by installing at its centre the mere simulacrum of a culture—one in which Japanese Buddhist dances honouring the coming of spring, performed in hermetically sealed shopping malls, replaces a culture that draws out our higher potentials and forms our highest ideals. By evacuating culture, it creates the conditions under which the non-morality of *laissez-faire* liberalism can become its moral voice. The right to expand one’s economic interests, the right for everything to compete in the market, for all sensations, including those that derive from our intimate being, to be explored for their commercial potential become the moral principles of our time. However, few have seen that benefits of the policy of multiculturalism are essentially commercial, and that that is why the policy has won such easy acceptance. Synning should be read exactly because he has discerned the economic meaning of multiculturalism and given us a cogent statement of its dangers.

In a recent work by a Montréal philosopher Charles Taylor, *The Politics of Recognition*, we experience the travails of a great thinker wrestling with this key moral question. Taylor’s work on Hegel (including *Hegel* and *Hegel and Modern State*, both essential texts for any students of the modern era), his moving little book *The Malaise of Modernity*, and the monumentally important *Sources of the Self* provided him with the resources to formulate a knockdown argument for the according the vagaries of situated existence political acknowledgement—to cast them as essential to our being as humans and so requiring consideration by any adequate theory of the form of social existence that fits our nature. Hegel recognizes that persons recognize themselves as human through the mutual recognition provided by membership in a particular group or society. He analyzes the deleterious conception of freedom in “civil society”—a term he uses differently from Locke and other English writers, to mean, roughly, the form of governance that prevails under *laissez-faire* liberalism, or, as we might say today, “minimal government.” Hegel pointed out that in civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*), “A man counts as a man in virtue of his manhood alone, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian, etc.” and even relates the abstract conception of freedom to property, to buying and selling: “The concept of liberty, as it exists as such, without further specification and development, is abstract subjectivity, as a person capable of property.” The concept of freedom that Hegel discusses under the heading of civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) is similar to that of the advocates of multiculturalism, and Hegel recognized that attaches to the free market and bourgeois (*bürgerlich*) individualism, in which a person is an empty and abstract universal, nothing other than the ability to possess. The purified, entirely formal structures of mutual recognition in the *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* constitute a pure and entirely formal individuality, without any substantive content. It defines the identity of the modern individual vacuously, as a free person, and because freedom forms the very character of that being, her choices are not fully identical with her desires. Her identity is simply that of a chooser, paradigmatically a chooser of possessions.

The term under which Taylor incorporates Hegel’s social theory is “dialogical”—likely to acknowledge the roles of Richard Rorty and Mikhail Bakhtin in these discussions. In saying that human life has a dialogical character, he means that the languages that code our human interactions—through speech, gesture, love, and art—are anthropogenetic, that we become full

human agents in acquiring those human languages, and that we acquire them through are interaction with others, most importantly, “significant others,” in George Herbert Mead’s term which, unfortunately, has entered the lexicon of psychobabble.

Taylor has the basis for strong argument against multiculturalism. However, he seemed, for whatever reason, unable to carry such an argument through. There are, I think, two reasons for this. The first is that, while he does acknowledge the anthropogenetic power of love, he does not grant it sufficient scope in the formation of societies. The topic of love is so disturbing to reason that, despite its importance, it remains all but unthought. Love is, as almost everyone has experienced, not only creative but also destructive; it not only makes us human but, when intensely felt, it virtually dissolves our identity. The paradoxicality of such intense feeling is something that the understanding really cannot encompass. But George Grant has spoken of the power of “loving one’s own” and indicated the exclusivity that is characteristic of love and of how it directs itself towards a particularity. His assertions about love are few, but I think they are true, and they undo many current theories of political association. The second reason is that Taylor passes too lightly over the expulsion of the key idea of classical, and all premodern political theory of the West, the idea that humans have significance because of their place in an order of existence that enfolds them, from its central place. The displacement of this idea by the idea of authenticity, that each of us discover our being in our inner depths and that task of good life is plumb those depths and then to bring our lives into accord with what we discover there, is characteristic of the modern age; it is, for example, the sole moral precept with which many undergraduates seem to have an acquaintance. The second reason is perhaps a consequence of the first. For the greatest political theologian of recent times, Simone Weil pointed out that obvious truth, that hell is to be one’s own, and the redemption she proposed was the power of love.

Taylor treats the problem of acknowledging the importance of the claims of various groups to recognition as a conflict between the claims of universal rights and the claims of particular peoples for recognition not as part of a universal collective of humanity, but as different from other groups. Taylor tries, not unsurprising, to sublimate the contradiction, arguing for a liberalism that may, under certain conditions, accord certain communities and cultures special considerations to ensure their survival nonetheless enshires certain universal human rights in its juridical principles and policies.

Taylor is surprisingly unforthcoming with arguments to support the viability of such a state. *Prima facie*, the argument would seem to invite the criticism that it would be hard to distinguish between universal rights and the special rights that follow upon membership in the protected community. Perhaps Taylor could propose a way of distinguishing between the two, but he doesn’t.

Taylor wants to accept that there are rights which the state may not infringe. I do not think there are. The state owns us, fully. Only the vigilance of its citizens can ensure that the state does not exercise certain of its powers over us, by taking steps, at every turn, to help maintain a policy of openness and compassion. No constitutional guarantees of universal rights, no bills of human right are worth a jot—only informed, politically developed populations can ensure that tyranny, the conditions under which most of the people in most places have lived most of the time, not become a universal condition. I fear that failure to acknowledge that fact is bringing us ever closer to that condition.