



Is There Life After Facebook? The Cyber Gulag Revisited & Debate Reloaded (On the Arab ‘Spring’, London ‘Summer’ And Wall Street ‘Autumn’ – An Instructive Lesson For Asia/SEA)

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ABSTRACT

Misled by a quick triumphalism of the social-media, the international news agencies have confused the two: revolt and revolution. The past unrests started as a social, not political public revolt. Through the pain of sobriety, the protesters are learning that neither globalization nor the McFB way of life is a shortcut to development; that free trade is not a virtue, but an instrument; that liberalism is not a state of mind but a well-doctrinated ideology, and finally that the social media networks are only a communication tool, not a replacement for independent critical thinking or for the collapsed cross-generational contract. Londoners, Greeks and New Yorkers are experiencing about the same. How does the Arab ‘Spring’ correlate with the European Euro-frost, and American OWS unrest? For almost ten years now, the youth in Europe is repeatedly sending us a powerful message on the perceived collapse of the social contract. The cross-generational contract should be neither neglected, nor built on the over-consumerist, disheartened and egotistic McFB– way of life. Equally alienating and dangerously inflammatory is the collision of the entering youth generation (if/when deprived of the opportunity and handed over to a lame hope) – through a religious or political radicalization. In this word spanned between the Kantian hopes and Hobbesian fears, thus the final question: Is there life after FB? If so, how can we register our future claims?

Keywords: Middle East/MENA, Social Media Networks, Integrity and Monetization, Popular movies, Dostoyevsky, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Plato, Dante, Goethe, Fromm, Huxley, Tesla, Sagan, Cross-generational contract, London riots, Anti-politics, Europe, Radicals and Islamists, Right-wing populist parties, Austerity, Occupy Wall Street, Euro-Med, Southeast Asia, Prosperity, Solidarity, Security, Hegel and Freedom, Meaning, Common Cause.

Is there life after *Facebook*? Or after the *Spring*-ing ‘revolution’? Now, when Wall Street is occupied, how will we occupy ourselves? Could we *google* protest, *tweet* discontent, arming ourselves with all the mobile launcher gadgets powered

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by the *micro&soft, touch screen & scream* tech, then upload promenades, block a tragedy and avoid farce, and eventually download pure happiness – happily ever after?...*Pimp my revolution, Date my resolution* ...

Through the pain of sobriety, the protesters all across the MENA, Euro-Med and overseas are learning that neither globalization nor the McFB² way of life (mostly spent in the large, air-conditioned shopping-malls) is a shortcut to development; that free trade is not a virtue, but an instrument; that liberalism is not a state of mind but a well-doctrinated ideology, and finally that the social media networks are only a communication tool, not a replacement for independent critical thinking³ or for the collapsed cross-generational contract. “We are the suckers, the eternally expectant ones, the hopeful ones– and the eternally disappointed ones...”⁴

Machines, run on binary-coded algorithms (predictability of human behaviour cyber-providers) can neither compensate for an empathic human touch nor can they replace the wonders of socio-emotional interactions of individuals in a real time-space⁵. Sociableness is neither of linear, one-directional dynamics à la *Running Sushi*, nor can it be a 3-size simplified and instant portable like the *Starbucks* coffee. Personal relations are lived, not utilized by a mouse click.

²McFB is the author’s self-coined neologism (the McDonalds–Facebook), which –since 2009–he uses in his university lectures to describe the overly consumerist and instant, disheartened egotistic and cyber-austic ‘modern’ way of life. For the first time in a published text, it appeared in his *No Asian century without the pan-Asian Institution* article of May 2011.

³Martine Heidegger diagnoses the modern man conformism as letting oneself be taken over by ‘the one’ (*Das Man*). According to him, any successful ‘prison break’ would necessitate “an attack on anxiety”. Albert Camus proclaims that “...**man is the only creature that refuses to be what he is.**” Dostoyevsky allegorizes that: “nothing has ever been more insupportable for a man and a human society than freedom”. Huxley sublimates the conformity of the brainwashed masses through the famous slogan of his *Brave New World*: “Everybody is happy nowadays!” Fromm, and Nietzsche before him, calls it a herd mentality. Nietzsche claims that: “...there have been human beings...there have also been human herds (family groups, communities, tribes, nations, states, churches), and always very many who obey compared with the very small number of those who command – considering, that is to say, ... **nothing has been practiced and cultivated among men better or longer than obedience**, it is fair to suppose that as a rule a need for it is by now innate as a kind of formal conscience which commands.” More than 50 years have passed since Erich Fromm diagnosed that: “...Modern capitalism needs men who cooperate smoothly and in large numbers; who want to consume more and more; and whose tastes are standardized and can be easily influenced and anticipated. It needs men who feel free and independent...– yet willing to be commanded, to do what is expected of them, to fit into the social machine without friction; who can be guided without force, led without leaders, prompted without aim–except the one to make good, to be on the move, to function, to go ahead. What is the outcome? Modern man is alienated from himself, from his fellow men, and from nature. He has been transformed into a commodity, experiences his life forces as an investment which must bring him the maximum profit obtainable under existing market conditions. **Human relations are essentially those of alienated automatons**, each basing his security on staying close to the herd, not being different in thought, feeling or action. While **everybody tries to be as close as possible to the rest, everybody remains utterly alone, pervaded by a deep sense of insecurity, anxiety and guilt** which always results when human separateness cannot be overcome...”

⁴The full quotation sentence states the following: “The world is one great object for our appetite, a big apple, a big bottle, a big breast; we are the suckers, the eternally expectant ones, the hopeful ones - and the eternally disappointed ones...” (Erich Fromm: *The Art of Loving*, 1956, page: 80)

⁵Today’s scientists have substituted mathematics for experiments, and they wander off through equation after equation, and eventually build a structure which has no relation to reality...” – a great physician and inventor Nikola Tesla noted almost 100 years ago.

Human integrity is self-molested (brutalized) and self-reduced (trivialized) to a lame shop-window commodity which is purchasable 24/7 by 'poking' on the photo of someone's personal profile. And, *likies* are available to give a rating for 'displayed commodities'.

MORPHEUS TO NEO:

Your appearance now is what we call 'residual self-image'.

It is the mental projection of your digital self.

TRINITY TO NEO:

The Matrix cannot tell you who you are, but who you are seems to be at least in some sense related to whom you think you are in the Matrix.

MORPHEUS TO NEO:

You have the look of a man who accepts what he sees, because he's expecting to wake up.

Ironically, this is not far from the truth...

Unfortunately, no one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself⁶.

This grotesque of self-imposed cyber gulag, called 'social media networks' might end up like a smoking of 21st century. In early 20th century, smoking was cool, sexy, brave, rebellious, liberating and most of all: social. As such it was glorified and promoted by that time Western press, film and other entertainment industries. However, as soon as the physical and mental exposures and distortion, as well as the dependency, submissiveness and heavy-addiction have been credibly verified, smoking was barred from all public places, from children and elderly, schools and hospitals. First opposing for some decades, the tobacco industry was eventually forced to visibly and clearly state warnings about all hazards associated with its products. Today, smoking is proscribed in the OECD countries, ghettoized, and effectively reduced to the specially designated glass-boxes with powerful ventilations systems and sensitive fire-alarms. The developing world will maybe follow, one day, successfully. As for the OECD states and media networks: London/UK's *tweet and loot* nights of early August 2011 and NY *feed, occupy and camp* autumn days of 2011 is an indication enough.

Misled by a quick triumphalism of the social-media cheerleaders and TV reporters–nomads, the international news agencies have definitely confused the two: revolt and revolution. As they later missed to co-relate a massive EU bail-outing and the UK loot-outing. Negotiating on the coined "Euro-zone debt crisis" (debt bound economies) without restaging the forgotten Lisbon strategy

⁶*The Matrix Movie*, written and directed by the Wachowski brothers, Larry and Andy in 1999 – far before the 'explosion' of the cyber – social media networks. The quoted dialogue refers to the first motion picture of the Matrixtrilogy (1999-2003).

(knowledge-based societies) is simply a lame talk about form without any substance – **it is a grand bargain about control via austerity, not a vision of prosperity.**

The very precursor of the Arab ‘Spring’ was the winter of the (still unsettled) global financial crisis with its severe impact felt or misused locally. Consequently, the Arab unrests started as a social, not political, public revolt over high unemployment and soaring costs of living (Tunisia and Egypt), over the inter-tribal inequalities (Libya, Bahrain), or over a combination of all factors (Yemen and Syria). Besides publicly ‘crucifying’ a couple of scapegoats, it has then failed to bring about structural change (r/evolution), and is paradoxically ending up with more debts, ever higher living costs, and more unemployment than before the real or fabricated austerity measures were imposed in a response to the mounting global financial crisis. Finally, it is not clear whether these popular revolts have been preempted (or diverted by *hacktivists*), and at the end, scrutinized and criminalized.

How does the Arab ‘Spring’ correlate with the UK/London (looting) ‘Summer’ and the Wall Street (walking charade) ‘Autumn’? Well, **the difference between a dialectic and cyclical history is a distance between success and fall:** The Arab Oil Embargo of 1973 (that interestingly enough also included the non-petrol exporting republics of Egypt, Syria and Tunisia) was an attempt at political emancipation. In the aftermath of the Oil Shock that the Embargo subsequently triggered, the Arab states have found themselves within ever stronger external financial and politico-military dependences...History also rounds over the virtuality, (of) taxation and representation. *No taxation without representation!* – isn’t it?!⁷

MORPHEUS TO NEO:

Welcome to the desert of the real!... How do you define ‘real’!?

If you’re talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, what you can taste and see, then ‘real’ is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain...

⁷“...As one people, united, we acknowledge the reality: that the future of the human race requires the cooperation of its members; that our system must protect our rights, and upon corruption of that system, it is up to the individuals to protect their own rights, of their neighbors; that a democratic government derives its just power from the people, but corporations do not seek consent to extract wealth from the people and the Earth; and that no true democracy is attainable when the process is determined by economic power. We come to you at a time when corporations, which place profit over people, self-interest over justice, and oppression over equality, run our governments. We have peaceably assembled here, as is our right, to let these facts be known...” – this OWS unofficial manifesto appears in the country that harbors the *Tea Party* new speech. It is the state that came to its existence through the *Boston Tea party* revolutionary emancipation struggle, a country that dreamt Keynes’ dream to “euthanize the rentier” by abolishing unearned income... Most of the contemporary protest gatherings in the West remained as the *Ad Hoc* movements that dissolved as soon as the emotional charge has been compromised or tranquilized. Exceptionally, the European ecological movements of the late 1970s and early 1980s managed to profile themselves into political parties – Greens. However, it took them decades to evolve: e.g. the German Green movement was supported by over 1/3 of the youth in 1983& subsequent elections, but rejected to enter the government for nearly 20 years.

The world exists now only as a part of a neural interactive simulation that we call the Matrix.

CYPHER TO TRINITY:

If I had to choose between that and the Matrix... I choose the Matrix.

TRINITY:

The Matrix isn't real?

CYPHER:

I disagree, Trinity. I think the Matrix can be more real than this world⁸.

The Ancient world of the Roman Empire was one of the first legal systems to extensively practice the institute of the so-called Civic death⁹. This savage, inhuman but effective sanction medieval Europe eagerly continued for centuries, before it was finally abolished by the post-Napoleonic age. What would be the modern equivalent to this Antique criminal law penalty? Imagine that instead of a fine or imprisonment, the convicted individual gets a sentence which bars him from any access to the mobile phone, internet/FB and to shopping malls. Science fiction? Not really! That is exactly what the Prime Minister Cameron asked for in the British Parliament, as to put the London riots under control in August 2011¹⁰.

CYPHER:

I know that this steak doesn't exist. I know when I put it in my mouth, the Matrix is telling my brain that it is juicy and delicious.

After nine years, do you know what I've realized?

Ignorance is bliss.

AGENT SMITH:

Then we have a deal?

CYPHER:

Reinsert me into the Matrix... I don't want to remember nothing. Nothing! You understand?

And I want to be rich... Someone important, like an actor... You can do that, right?

⁸*The Matrix Movie*, (ibid).

⁹*Civiler mortuus*: Instead of a beheading (capital punishment of decapitation), a person – by a proclamation of Civic death – was either physically expelled beyond the Roman Limes or the 'outlawed' was punished by the general communication bar – excommunication.

¹⁰The social media explosion of last years' finally enhanced the (self-)authentication of cyber residents. This, in return, has further assisted the monetization of information on the cyber lives and cyber data, as well as the (*Minority Report* movie-alike) data fusion including the pattern-based data mining and the so-called predictive network analysis – all that for the unspecified number of state and non-state actors. According to a cyber-pioneer turned scholar, Eli Pariser even "the private data broker *Acxiom*, for example, has an average of 1,500 items of data on 96% of Americans currently in its database".

AGENT SMITH:

Whatever you want, Mr. Reagan.¹¹

For over ten years, Europe's youth (in France, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, Spain, Ireland, Norway, Britain) is repeatedly sending us a powerful message on the perceived collapse of the cross-generational social contract¹². So far, the only consolidated response was the impressive build-up of the so-called 'Wing/s front'. These movements, seemingly rightist political parties, are effectively exploiting mounting frustration of electorate over the main center-left and center-right political parties (that lost most of its traditional ideological platform and specific political content, but far too often co-habituating in a form of grand-coalitions across the EU), and the potent emotional charges related to 'migration question'¹³.

The history of Europe is a story of small hysteric nations, traditionally sensitive to the issue of otherness (as the ethnic, linguistic, religious or behaviourist minorities were misused far too many times in history by assertive neighbours all over the continent, or domestically presented as a *Hassobjekt* for the locally surfacing hardships). The present-day, aged but not restaged, EU is (in) a shadow of the grand taboo that Europe can produce everything but its own life. The 'Old

¹¹*The Matrix Movie*, (ibid).

¹²The (OECD states') youngsters are surfacing as the underclass (in a decisive generational shift that never materialized in the ageing society), trapped more than ever; of their youth interrupted, of their adulthood replaced by 'wait hood', of dream-careers that never materialized – the underachievers with a disillusion and (self-)exclusion as a way of life; the collateral damage of corrosive over-monetization (of everything and everyone) that silently corrupted globalization. In Japan, they call them *freeters* (free loading), in Britain *neets* (not in education, employment or training), in Spain *ni-ni's* (*indignados*; neither working nor studying), in Germany *Nesthockers* (nest squatters), in Italy *bamboccioni* (grownup babies), in Ireland *twixters*, and in the US the *boomerang generation* (over-indebted students and unemployed or underemployed graduates) – all of these 'basement dwellers' or 'double zeros' who return to (or never leave) *Hotel Mama*.

¹³ The over-financialization and hyper-deregulations of the global(-ized) markets has brought a low-waged Chinese (peasant converted into a) worker to the spotlight of European considerations. Thus, in last two decades, the European economic edifice has gradually but steadily departed from its traditional labor-centered, to the overseas investment-centered construct. This mega event, as we see now with the Euro-zone dithyramb, has multiple consequences on both the European inner cultural, socio-economic and political balances as well as on the China's (overheated) growth. That little, rarefied and compressed, labor which still resides in ageing Europe is either bitterly competing with or is heavily leaning on the guest workers who are per definition underrepresented or silenced by the 'rightist' movements and otherwise disadvantaged and hindered in their elementary socio-political rights. **That's how Europe departed from the world of work, and that's why Europe today cannot orient itself** (both critically needed to identify a challenge, as well as to calibrate and jointly redefine the European path). To orient, one need to center itself: Without left and right, there is no center, right?! Contemporary Europe has helplessly lost its political 'left'. The grand historical achievement of Europe – after the centuries' long bloody class struggle – was the final, lasting reconciliatory compromise between capital and labor. It resulted in a consolidation of economically entrepreneurial and vibrant but at the same time socially just and beneficial state. This colossal civilizational accomplishment is what brought about the international recognition, admiration, model attraction and its competitiveness as well as inner continuity, prosperity and stability to Europe... In the country of origin of the very word *dēmokratía*, President of the Socialist International has recently introduced to his own citizenry the most drastic cuts that any European social welfare system has ever experienced in last 80 years. The rest of official Europe (and the rest of unofficial us, spectators) chews the so-called Greek debt tirade as if it is not about the very life of 12 million souls, but a mere technical item studied at the secondary schools' crash-course on macro economy. As if **by trivializing what we (want to) see, we are not ourselves brutalizing what will (later) happen to us**. (A non-elected government is silently pervading the EU, in ever more states.)

Continent' is demographically sinking, while economically just keeping afloat. The cross-generational social contract is silently abandoned (as one of its main operative instruments – the Lisbon strategy – has been eroded, and finally lost its coherence). European youth feels it correctly, still does not express it right¹⁴: The escapist, defeatist/rejectionist, retreating and confrontational anti-politics is on a rise in lieu of the visionary, dynamic far-reaching policies, towards the knowledge-based economy and solidarity-based society.

Imagine human beings living in an underground, cave like dwelling, with an Entrance a long way up, which is both open to the light and as wide as the cave itself. They've been there since childhood, fixed in the same place, with their necks and legs fettered, able to see only in front of them, because their bonds prevent them from turning their heads around. Light is provided by a fire burning far above and behind them. Also behind them, but on higher ground, there is a path stretching between them and the fire. Imagine that along this path a low wall has been built, like the screen in front of puppeteers above which they show their puppets... Then also imagine that there are people along the wall, carrying all kind of artefacts that project above it – statues of people and other animals, made out of stone, wood, and every material. And, as you'd expect, some of the carriers are talking, and some are silent¹⁵.

What is the possible message of the Arab 'Spring', London 'Summer' and the Wall street 'Autumn' for Asia in general and for Southeast Asia in particular? Well, there are few. The cross-generational social contract should be neither neglected, nor built on the over-consumerist, anti-intellectual, trivialized and brutalized McFB way of life. Equally alienating and dangerously inflammatory is the radicalization of the entering youth generation – be it a religious or political radicalization. There must be the third way! – especially for the newly arriving SEA middle class that is also rapidly urbanizing. The middle class formation and urbanization is closely related to the identity-crisis, too. The forthcoming task of intellectuals is to offer the best ways for accommodation of these new arrivals and their integration. It is the political parties who should then promote those policies and best practices for the lasting benefit of all stake holders and the social cohesion which, not only "pleases the markets" and complies with the spooky and shadowy rating agencies but, stabilizes the entire nation.

¹⁴Observing my students for years, that is how I noted it once: We have hardly ever had the generation of youngsters like these of today, which is so educated, so mobilized, well fed and informed, still so apathetic, lacking the imagination, creativity, action or ability to grasp and challenge the status quo. (They seem so well-fit to the moral myopia around them: not to think and not to question things beyond a certain point – and by acting so, in fact, perpetuating the system of status quo.) They somehow appear as the generation (self-)deprived from the common sense and fulfilling purpose, as being self-constrained by a combination of *here-now-us* consumerism and the related residual economic stress, locked out from the inside by the existential anxieties of (linear, non-verticalized, non-transcending) high-expectations' pressure. Hence, they rather shiver to instinctively maintain the status quo, although not understanding what exactly it is all about. I named it: a **non-conceptual state of flux**. (2008)

¹⁵Plato's *Republic*, the so-called Cave description, probably one of the most quoted pages of this masterpiece (514a1-515a3).

No doubt, just as the cyber-autistic McFB way of life is the same in any European and Middle Eastern city, so are the radical, wing politics! Have you spotted any critical difference between the rhetoric of Norwegian serial killer Breivik and the Al Qaida Wahhabi 'Islamists'? "Just like Jihadi warriors are the plum tree of Ummah, we will be the plum tree for Europe and for Christianity"—many news agencies reported these as words allegedly written by the Christian Jihadist Anders Behring¹⁶. The European (right-wing) parties opposing e.g. Muslim immigration are nothing but the mirror image of the MENA's Islamist/Brotherhood parties. In both cases, there are: (i) Socio-political outsiders (without much of an coherence, integrity and autonomy) that are denouncing the main, status quo, parties as a 'corrupt establishment'; (ii) Extensively exploiting domestic economic shortcomings (e.g. unemployment, social inequalities, outsourcing, etc.), but they themselves do nothing essential to reverse the trend; (iii) Making ethnic and religious appeals (preaching there turn to tradition), attacking foreign influences in their societies and otherwise 'culturally purifying' population; (iv) Generally doing better in local rather than in national elections (the 'Rightists' win on the national elections only when no other effective alternative exists to challenge the governing party/coalition block); (v) More emotionally charged populist movements than serious political parties of the solid socio-economic and socio-political program (per definition, these parties have very poor governing score).

NEO:

What is this place?

MORPHEUS:

More important than 'what' is when!

NEO:

When?

MORPHEUS:

You believe that it is the year 1999...

I can't tell you exactly what year it is, because we honestly do not know...¹⁷

So far, the Middle Eastern/MENA and European political establishments responded to these developments in similar fashion: (i) the Middle East: became more sectarian Islamic in its orientation, symbols, practices; (ii) the EU/Europe: mainstream (center) parties adopted rhetorics and promoted the measures advocated by the right-wing, anti-immigrant parties.

¹⁶Tim Lister *Europe's resurgent far right focuses on immigration, multiculturalism*, CNN (July 24, 2011).

¹⁷*The Matrix Movie*, (ibid).

The calamities all over the EU and Euro-Mediterranean zone are showing us how dangerous, disastrous, and short-sighted these (anti-politics) policies of exclusion are¹⁸.

Is Southeast Asia able to prevent its own Middle Eastern ‘Spring’, London ‘Summer’ and ‘Occupying Autumn’ social-cohesion ‘Fukushima-Daiichhi-like’ meltdown?¹⁹

The Arab world’s population growth is considerably higher than its economic growth. This means that besides the grave indigenous political and regional security problems, domestic disparities, unemployment, pauperization and inequalities are on the sharp rise. Past the prime age of the “baby boomer” generation, Europe suffers the worrying negative demographic growth and rapid ageing. The EU replacement ratio is between 1, 3 and 1,7 (and is afloat only due to steady and silent but massive naturalizations all across Europe over the last decade). The EU’s economic growth is very symbolic, despite huge territorial enlargements in the past decade. Actually, the EU’s growth in many categories could be portrayed as negative²⁰.

Ergo, both regions are in a socio-economic retreat, naturally reflected in their political defensive. To reverse the trend, both regions would need an extra effort (which is not presently lurking on the horizon).

CAPTAIN TO AUTO (SHIP’S COMPUTOR):

That’s all I’ve ever done! That’s all anyone on this blasted ship has ever done. Nothing! Nothing!!

AUTO TO CAPTAIN:

On the *Axiom*, you will survive.

¹⁸ If a force is measured by the speed of coercion of a brute power over an argument, and if the anti-intellectualism is a sum of arrogance and ignorance, then the absence of common sense must be a presence of anti-intellectualism aided by a sum force of stiffness and blindness/short-sightedness. (Bajrektarevic, A. 2011)

¹⁹ Each and every crisis (however called and manifested) is primarily a crisis of thought and of ideas on the ways we produce, transport, distribute and consume, and how we contemplate and plan each of them. It is undeniably a crisis of thought on how we articulate our socio-cultural, economic and political life, and how we interact and correlate them as individuals and societies. Witnessing recent crises, I missed one thing – an extensive and wide debates of academia and practitioners. This silence, I could only ascribe to either intellectualism in retreat or to the forces of status quo which are overly strong. A neutral stance of ‘wait-and-see’ attitude in times of crisis is the most frequent advice or self-assurance. Either occupying position at which one should generate ideas (per definition, the idea questions and challenges the system of status quo), but failing to do so, or having the idea but withholding it, comes to the same – a deep moral crisis. Therefore, a **crisis of thought and ideas leads inevitably to its final stage – moral crisis!** Dante gives a powerful reminder: “The hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who remain neutral in times of moral crisis”. Goethe is more reconciliatory, but equally instructive: “Freedom has to be re-made and re-earned in every generation”. Is it a high time for our generation to earn for the living?!

²⁰ To worsen a hardship, nearly all European states have wrongly responded to the crisis by hammering down their respective education and science/R&D budgets. It is not a policy move, but an anti-visionary panicking that cuts on future (generations).

CAPTAIN:

I don't want to survive. I want to live.

AUTO:

...must follow my directive.

WALL-E:

Dirrrrr-ect-ti-veee?... Eeeeeee!

EVE:

Waaaaalll-eeee!... Wall-E!

WALL-E:

Ta-dah!²¹

Finally, what is the karma and dharma of current financial crisis? Where is a thin line between *too big to fail* (so, bail) and too heavy to fly (but, expensive to buy)? Is the 'Occupy Wall Street' a spontaneous outcry, a stress-eliminator walk (usually recommended by medics), a camping charade over run by a bluffing demagogue of anti-corporate populists and mid-term elections opportunists? Is this in fact a Woodstock-remake TV show, just another US exporting item²²? Or is it the (only way out for domestically needed) solution? Is OWC a mix of all, or neither of these?²³

AGENT SMITH TO MORPHEUS:

Did you know that the First Matrix was designed to be a perfect human world, where none suffered, where everyone would be happy? ... It was a disaster. (... entire crops were lost.)

²¹ *WALL-E* (2008), a computer-animated science-fiction robot romance, directed by Andrew Stanton. The quoted dialogue is taken from the official movie's script written by Andrew Stanton and Pate Docter.

²² By exporting the revolts all over the place, Al-Qaida (seats in a cave but) treats a state – identical to the early Bolsheviks – as a revolutionary cause, not as a geopolitical, socio-cultural and geo-economic reality. Let's hope that OWS will not follow the same logics. The FB's *flesh mobs* hold a cross-national reach, but the political agendas are always and only national.

²³ Why is the current financial calamity still mounting, unsettled? The crisis triggered by incompetence and disheartened greed cannot be solved with the austerity aided by brutality. Austerity will never turn into prosperity but into obscurity, as the brutality will never result in creativity, but in spiral violence and in a dismissive polarizing exclusion. After all, the one who causes the particular hardship will seldom be able to offer a solution, but can often play a cover-up by waiting for a while and then delivering a little bit more of the same (e.g. privatizing gains and socializing losses). What is the additional pervasive effect of (any) crisis on democracy? 9/11 is just one in a series of confirmations (e.g. from the 'Nixon shock' to the ongoing Greek/Euro debt saga) that any particular crisis converts beneficial to those seeking the non transparent power concentration. Once a real democracy starts compromising its vital contents, it corrodes degenerates and turns formal. Many contemporary examples show us that for a formal democracy, it is not far from ending up as an oppressive autocratic dictatorship with either police or military or both residing outside a strict civil and democratic control. A real democracy will keep its financial establishment (as much as its armed organs, and other alienation-potent segments) under a strict popular democratic scrutiny and civil control through the clearly defined mechanisms of checks and balances. That is the quintessence of democracy.

MOUSE TO NEO:

To deny our own impulses is to deny the very thing that makes us human.

CYPHER:

Ignorance is bliss!

Revelation 21:4, KING JAMES BIBLE

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

MORPHEUS TO NEO:

Most of these people are not ready to be unplugged, many of them so inert, so hopelessly dependent...

IVAN, in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*

So long as man remains free he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find someone to worship.

AGENT SMITH TO MORPHEUS:

Some believe that we lacked the programming language to describe your perfect world, but I believe that, as a species, human beings define their reality through misery and suffering.

The perfect world was a dream that your primitive cerebrum kept trying to wake up from²⁴.

GARCIN, In Sartre's *No Exit*:

Hell is – *other people*.

Sagan is very precise and instructive: "If we are to survive, our loyalties must be broadened further...Many of those who run the nations will find this idea unpleasant..."²⁵

As one of the exceptionally few world regions, Southeast Asia so far holds both what is otherwise missing in the other two mentioned theaters – stabilized demographic growth and an impressive economic growth. However, the demographic and economic growth poses an additional environmental stress, which – if not under check – may result in confrontational domestic policies and practices aimed at to maximize a grab for finite, scarce resources.

Hence, be the outside world Kantian or Hobbesian (be it driven by the sense of higher civilizational mission and common ASEAN destiny, or by the pragmatic

²⁴*The Matrix Movie*, (ibid).

²⁵ Carl Sagan: *Cosmos* (1980) Random House, NY /Carl Sagan Productions Inc. (page:327)

need to strengthen the nation's position), all necessary means are here! To register its future claims, the SEA – as well as any other theater – necessitates its lasting and decisive will now.

Tentatively, we can cluster that will around three main tasks:

- (i) Prosperity: Support to all three sides of the knowledge triangle: research (creation of knowledge); development/innovation (application of knowledge); education (dissemination of knowledge), as well as the promotion of life itself;
- (ii) Solidarity: developmental solidarity of (primarily human dimension) through promotion of cohesion policies, including the authenticity respect: preservation and promotion of indigenous socio-cultural and environmental diversities;
- (iii) Security: Enhancing the Human-centered (socio-economic) safety, based on freedom, justice and inclusive collective (environmental and socio-political) security.

This opportunity should be understood as history's call – which both invites and obliges at the same time. Or, as Hegel reminds us that as: “reason is purposive activity...” so the state should be: “...the actuality of the ethical Idea, of concrete freedom...” for all. An effective long-range prosperity, solidarity as well as (external or internal) security cannot be based on confrontational (nostalgia of) ‘religious’ radicalism and other ideological collisions, or on escapist consumerism, corrosive socio-economic egoism and exclusion, restriction and denial, but only on promotion and inclusion. Simply, it is to be centered on a pro-active, participatory policy not a reactive, dismissive one.

TRUMAN:

Who are you?

CRISTOF:

I'm the Creator

...of a TV show that gives hope and joy, inspiration to millions.

TRUMAN:

Then who am I?

CRISTOF:

You are the star.

CRISTOF:

I know you better than you know yourself.

TRUMAN:

You never had a camera in my head!²⁶

Post Scriptum

NEO TO AGENT SMITH:

...You can't scare me with this Gestapo crap. I know my rights...

I want my phone-call.

AGENT SMITH TO NEO:

Mr. Anderson, you disappoint me...

Tell me, what good is a phone-call if you're unable to speak?

Note:

An early, shorter version of *Is there life after Facebook?*, the so-called **fb1**, article appeared at first in China (Beijing, the 4th Media) on 12th August 2011, and subsequently on many portals all over the globe (including the US Foreign Affairs Magazine). *Is there life after Facebook? – The Cyber Gulag revisited & Debate reloaded*, the so-called **fb2**, article was an extended version of that text published by the Addleton Publishers, New York, RCP 10(2), 2011.

The present text is an expanded, unpublished version that includes SEA and elaborates on OWS for the first time in this article. It is exclusively prepared for the International Media Conference in Paris, France (23–25 November 2011).

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²⁶*The Truman Show*, written by Andrew Niccol and directed by Peter Weir in 1998 – far before the ‘explosion’ of the cyber social media networks. The quoted dialogue is taken from the official movie’s script. (Another intriguing negative utopia is used as a main plot for the SF thriller movie *In Time* of 2011. Andrew Niccol is an author of that script too.)

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