GOOD NEWS: NOTHING *ideological* WORKS

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ELLIOTT THINKSHEETS
309 L.Eliz.Dr., Craigville, MA 02636
Phone 617.775.8008
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Explain it however one may, nothing ideological works for long, and most ideological schemes never work at all. My favorite explanation is that history must be open else we'd not have the freedom God wants us to have to fail, to succeed, to fail, to grow, to journey homeward. Metaphors help communicate the feeling: the metal must be melted down for reuse; the clay must be pressed down again for reshaping (Jer.18.4: "formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him")....The freedom, yes. And the character: robots can function under the dominion of an ideology; but when ideology fails (by atrophy? by a spiritual parallel to the second law of thermodynamics? to regenerate homeostasis? as divine punishment intending human repentance-restitution-restoration-reformation? as the inevitable denouement of a spiritual, moral, or intellectual flaw & thus fate?), we find ourselves called to awe, humility, fellow-feeling, solidarity in intelligent & imaginative action--in short, we find ourselves called to be fully, truly human....This Thinksheet remarks some current evidence for this bit of philosophy of history.

1. Every way of seeing & living in the world, ie every religion, will see all rivals as (vis-a-vis the holy) idolatrous & (vis-a-vis their structures & processes of power) ideological. Thus to a Marxist, all nonmarxian systems are ideological (but Marxism is not) &, as devoted to false objectives through false consciousness, idolatrous (but Marxism does not violate "history"). When Marxism hardens into Leninism & then degenerates into Stalinism, the whole tradition's illusions of sinlessness (ie nonidolatry) & "scientific materialism" as history's meaning & goal (ie nonideology) are exposed: termites' bodies can stand neither light nor air.

2. Simultaneously with the current worldwide breakdown of communism, the limits, errors, flaws of capitalism are surfacing for all the world to see --in spite of some communist nations' adoption of some capitalist practices & processes. As I write, all the world's (capitalist) stockmarkets are depressed--as though the tide had gone out (indeed, $1 trillion tide in the USA), & the ugly pilings ("internal contraditions," some of them pre-seen by Marx) were exposed. Eg, if the people's greed cannot be regenerated (so they spend-spend-spend), the economy will slump: but if greed gets fired up to the pitch of purchasing, the biosphere will go deeper into slump (as it will also if the "developing" world succeeds in developing). How can the Fed, or anybody else, juggle inflation, stagnation, stagflation, higher/lower interest rates, un/employment, the deficit, the foreign debt, and however many other balls are now in the fiscal air?

3. Not all good news makes one happy, & I'm not happy about human suffering (including the pain of illusional balloons bursting in one's heart & mind). I'm no Schopenhauerian misanthropist (though I am a Cassandra pessimist about the God-unaided human prospect, about sacred secularity). But I must greet it as good news when one human being, or a movement, or a nation bumps into the reality of being on a wrong track. (It happened to me twice today on my some-5-mile walk: I was reading, not closely enough noticing where I was going. And it was good news twice that I became aware I was wrong, else I'd still be walking.)....A few perceptive phrases from (Scots-Presbyterian-moralist-"Scotty") James Reston's column today: "When the party's over, the bills come in." "Artificial prosperity" has led to "psychological recession." Wall St.'s "nervous breakdown" reflects Washington's "mindless excesses," a spend-and-borrow policy of living beyond its means & thus modeling corruption for business & the citizenry. "The ideologies of right and left have failed," and Washington is "leaderless." Reaganomics (I add) hoped the people would invest untaxed dollars, but instead the excess wealth has gone into high consumption & profiteering (as Robt. Lekachman, GREED, 1982). over

4. What ID (a takeoff on OZ: the latter deals with airy fantasies; the former, with earthy urges) spoofs here is no-holds-barred greed. Ivan Boesky is upstaged: unlike ID, he didn't manipulate eschatology in committing insider-trading. (Reverse the transposition: Some preaching, religion promo, uses eschatology unethically, including the jerrybuilt prophecy that God will step in to cover for the religion's failures--as some speculators, at the end of Black Monday, were crying out for the Federal government to save them. It's tough enough being honest to history without having to be honest to eschatology! Honest to God!)

5. The law of parsimony (minimum hypothesis) is the strongest logical argument against theism: who needs God if we--individually, societally, as a species in the biosphere--can manage on our own? God has created in us the contratendencies of communion & independence: Gn.3 is, in all human literature, the locus classicus of this tension, here dramatized as an ambivalence resolved in favor of independence. In Ps.2, the stage of the drama is international: under the Davidic empire, the subject kings-peoples-nations (a.k.a., today, as "oppressed peoples") want to break out (a.k.a., today, as "the principle of national sovereignty"). Against their pressure the Psalmist uses the sanction of "the divine right of kings," specifically the right of the Davidic king to maintain his empire: God "laughs" at the rebels and threatens, if they don't stop their rebellion, to destroy them in his "rage." (The Bible, unlike the Greek philosophers, is unabashedly anthropopathic: how else picture God as caring about the human scene? At a cocktail party I saw a zombie who didn't laugh or get mad at anything: he wasn't really "there"--a condition nobody could accuse the biblical God of. As for God being partisan, why not? After all he's only human, isn't he? I mean, how could he be God if he weren't human enough to be partisan, to (to use a liberation-theology phrase vis-a-vis the poor) "have an option for" some over others? (NB: God's "option for the poor" should not be read as more than the rhetoric of reversal of fortunes or at least of return to homeostasis. Objectively, it's nonsense--as though "history" has an option, everywhere & always, for the rich; and "God," for the poor--which one would you bet on?)....So there you have what this Thinksheet is calling good news. When human designs & schemes for human life "work," are effective in satisfying human needs, wants, goals, God becomes optional, then epiphenomenal, then void. Such success of independence over against communion with God so worries God that he (1) drives us out of Eden (again, Gn.3), (2) wrecks our megaplans (chap.11, Babel), & (3) comes & dies to get our attention & restore us to relationship with himself ("reconciliation," "redemption"). Call God here not "the God of the gaps" (to cover our failures) but the God of the breakdowns (to reveal our betrayal of the communion-independence homeostatis, of which a good marriage is a model)--who is also the God of the unshakeables (Heb.12.26f): "Freedom is what we have" (Gal.5.1), & "Take my yoke upon you" (Matt.11.29).