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THE SOUTH WIND : TOWARDS NEW COSMOLOGIES

As the title of the paper suggests, we are invited to listen to the wind. More especially to the wind from the South: the South as the third world, as the civilizations of Asia, Africa and Latin America; the South as the voices and wisdoms of women.

The paper first looks at the third world: at its subjugation by a world view that was European, Western; at its subsumation by a world order that destroyed its different rhythms, denied its roots. In the name of "universalism," the West exported its theoretical models, its development and its science, its wars and its weapons to the third world, colonizing its economics, determining its political processes, suffocating its cultures, silencing its civilizations.

Next, the paper turns to look at women, who in the dominant world view are unknowable, invisible; the categories and concepts do not include women; all of history excludes them. The "universal" mode strengthened the existing institutions, developing new ideologies which defined and confined woman to her place in a patriarchal world. Every civilization, every system of knowledge, came to be defined by this paradigm. Concepts of gender have been deeply woven into the fabric of this cosmology.

As world view and world order, therefore, that was Eurocentric vis-a-vis the cultures and civilizations of the South, the third world; and Eurocentric vis-a-vis the South, the women. The paper attempts some connections.

Hopefully, these connections invite us to search outside the dominant discourse of knowledge, of politics, discovering the cosmologies of those who have been on the edges; to find fresh spaces, to generate new imaginations, to invent new political patterns, to create, perhaps, new possibilities of change in our times.

It is from the edges that the women are speaking:

Listen to the women

Listen to the wind

To all those who listen to the Song of the Wind:

In a different place, in a different time, Black Elk heard the Song of the Wind.

'I saw myself on the central mountain of the world, the highest place, and I had a vision because I was seeing in the sacred manner of the world.' he said.

Remember he said, he was seeing in the sacred manner of the world.

And the sacred, central mountain was Hamey Peak in South Dakota.

'But', Black Elk continued to say: 'the central mountain is everywhere.'

From my central mountain, the point where stillness and movement are together, I invite you to listen to the wind.

More specially to the wind from the South: the South as third world, as the civilizations of Asia, Africa, Latin America; the South as the voices and movements of people, wherever these movements exist;

the South as the visions and wisdoms of women:

the South as the discovering of new paradigms, which challenge the existing theoretical concepts and categories, breaking the mind constructs, seeking a new language to describe what it perceives, refusing the one, objective, rational, scientific world view as the only world view: The South as the recovery of other cosmologies, as the discovery of other knowledges that have been hidden, submerged, silenced. The South as an 'insurrection of these subjugated knowledges'

The South as History; the South as Mystery

The South as the finding of new political paradigms, inventing new political patterns, creating alternative political imaginations. The South as the revelation of each civilization in its own idiom.

The South as a new universalism.

And in our searching for a new understanding of the South, it promises to bring to the world new meanings, new moorings. It could be the birthing of new cosmologies.

The South then as a new cosmology.

And from the wind, let me take a poem:
it was written by a poet from Guatemala. I choose it for you, because, in some way, it expresses what I wish to begin my presentation with:

I once saw them bury a dead child
In a cardboard box
This is true and I don't forget it
On the box there was a stamp
General Electric Company
Progress is our best product

Knowledge is power. As experts and policy makers, and in the world of academia, you know this truth too well. The powerful are always less curious than the powerless; and that is because they think they have all the answers. And they do. But not to the questions that the powerless are asking. They have no answers to the millions killed in wars, to the genocide in Sri Lanka, in former Yugoslavia; to the rape of women in war, to the genocide of women; no answer to the millions who live below the poverty line. They have no answers to the victims of technical fixes – of green revolution, depo provera; they have no answers to the hibakusha of Hiroshima, no answers to Three Mile Island, Chernobyl; to the Pacific islanders, to the children of Rongelap; no answer to the forty five million child workers in India; no answer to the children tortured in the jails all over the world, no answer to the hungry children in Ethiopia, no answer to that dead child in the cardboard box.

And it is to these questions of the powerless that we must turn to: Much will depend on how we continue even to ask the questions. In asking the old questions, using the old categories, relying on the old frameworks, enveloping ourselves in grand theories, we will only be underlining the answers we think we know, preventing the possibility of discerning fresh insights, of breaking new ground. Perhaps, we must no longer be afraid to ask the non-questions, to analyse what is considered the non-data, the non-rational, the non-scientific. Perhaps,

we must begin to search outside the 'dominant discourse,' beneath the required level of scientificity and beyond the established parameters of knowledge, discovering the disqualified knowledges and world views of those who have been on the periphery: the knowledges of cultures and civilizations that are non-western, the social knowledges of those who are on the edges, tribes, indigenous peoples, daliths, women, and to discern in their mythologies, in their metaphor, in their motif, other world views. We must move away from traditions of the dominant discourse and find ourselves in that terrain which has been denigrated by that discourse – the eastern, the black, the indigenous, the woman. To discover the hidden knowledges of the South in the South; of the South in the North. To listen to the wisdoms of these vernacular, local, knowledges against all that is dominant and hegemonistic. Perhaps we may then move to creating new political visions that are more holistic, more holographic, responding to the complexities of reality, more critically, more creatively. For political paradigms of the right or the left have not given us the answers: both were bound to a scientific and mechanistic world view, both to the industrial mode, the global market and its consumeristic ethic, both to national security state forms, to wars, to violence, and to the weapons culture. The modern idiom of politics is the euro-centric world of nation states. Centralized. Bureaucratized, Militarized, Nuclearized. The nation state in its homogenization of the polity has subsumed all cultural diversities, all civilizational differences, into one uniform political entity.

The Universal Mode

The "South" has, for too long, accepted a world view, that has hegemonised its cultures, decided its development model, defined its aesthetic categories, outlined its military face, determined its science and technology, its nuclear options. A cosmology constructed of what has come to be known as 'universal' values; a cosmology whose philosophical, ideological and political roots were embedded in the specific historical context of the culture of the west. What qualified it then to be termed 'universal'? The vision of the world in which the centre of the world was Europe and later North America (the West) encapsulated all civilizations into its own western frames: it reduced their cultural diversities into a schemata called "civilization"; it made universal the specific historical experiences of the west. It announced that what was relevant to the west had to be a model for the rest of

the world; what was good for the centre had to be meaningful for the periphery. All that was western then simply became universal. Every other civilization, every other system of knowledge, came to be defined and compared vis-a-vis this paradigm submitting to 'its insights as imposition, its blindness as values, its tastes as canons, in a word to its eurocentricities'.¹ The 'other' in this cosmology was the civilizations of Asia, Africa, Latin America. 'Scarcely twenty years were enough to make two billion people define themselves as under-developed,² vis-a-vis the postwar growth model, the market economy and the international economic order conceived of at Bretton Woods. It minusculed all social totalities into the one single model, all systems of science to one mega science, all indigenous medicine to one imperial medicine, all knowledge to the one established regime of thought, all development to gross national product, to patterns of consumption, industrialization to 'the western self-image of homo economicus with all needs commodity defined and 'homo economicus has never been sexually neutral'.³ This cosmos of values has determined the thought patterns of the world, as also the world's ecological patterns: indicating the scientific signs, giving it the development symbols, generating the military psyche, defining knowledge, truth: universal truths which have been blind to cultures, race, class gender. Universal patriarchal truths, whatever the cultural ethos, whatever the civilizational idiom.

A universal world view therefore which has subsumed the civilizations of the world in its eurocentric mode; a universal world order that has subjugated the women in its androcentric matrix a universal cosmology which in its dominant motif has been, patriarchal.

The Scientific Worldview : The Genderization of Science

There exists in this universal mode a deep commitment to a cosmology that is scientific. Underlying its fundamental categories is a construction of knowledge that is rational, objective, neutral, linear and also patriarchal. Cosmologies that did not fit into the framework, whose basis

1. Clyde Taylor, "Eurocentric vs. New Thought at Edinburgh," Mimeograph, October 1986.
2. Ivan Illich, *Shadow Work : Vernacular Values Examined*, London, 1981.
3. *Ibid.*

was the certainty of scientific knowledge were dismissed and ridiculed; the cosmologies of 'other' civilizations were submerged; the knowledges of 'other' peoples, of 'women', destroyed. There emerged only the one, monolithic scientific paradigm in all its rationality and objectivity that dominated all civilizations, in all its patriarchy that denied all women,

The Founding Fathers of modern science (the seventeenth century onwards) described the universe as a well organized machine; their paradigm precisioned the world in mathematical terms. To Galileo, nature spoke in quantifiables; Newton could explain all in fundamental measurable; Descartes' philosophy was mathematical in its essential nature. The laws of the physical sciences were extended to developing the laws of society and only that which could be quantified, measured and empirically determined was of any value and consequence. 'This tendency to model scientific concepts and theories after those of Newtonian physics has become a severe handicap in many fields, but more than any where else, perhaps, in the social sciences.⁴ By adopting this Cartesian framework, the social sciences reduced complex phenomena into collectable, manageable, and more important, controllable data, developing a 'whole vocabulary of power, purposes, values and identity . . .' which could be 'rammed into measurable forms.'⁵ What happened then to facts that would not adjust into the existing scientific frames? What became of phenomena that could not be measured by the different scientific methods? What happened to work that could not be tied to wage and a market economy? All that is scientific, we are told, 'is certain, evident knowledge; all else, must be rejected and 'only those things should be believed which are perfectly known and about which there can be no doubts' (Garber on 'Science and Certainty in Descartes,' 1978). By separating and then eliminating all the qualities of life from the quantities of which they are a part, the architects of the machine world view were left with a cold, inert universe made up entirely of dead matter. This cosmology laid the basis for a thorough 'desacralization of all forms of life during the ensuing industrial age'.⁶ Nature became an object; a mere mechanism; Nature was nothing but insensate matter organized in accordance with mechanical laws; all

4. Frithjof Capra, *The Turning Point*. New York, 1982.

5. Mike Hales, *Science or Society: The Politics of the Work of Scientists*. Boston, 1982.

6. Jeremy Rifkin, *Algeny*, London, 1984.

living creatures were considered 'soulless automata' (Descartes), ushering in an epoch of unbridled economic, environmental and human exploitation. Darwin extended the idea of a mechanical universe to a mechanical theory of the origin of the species. 'Darwinism and its theory of natural selection, provided the best cosmological defense of industrialism.... Social Darwinism served as the main piece for the politics of the Industrial Age⁷'. The power and privileges of the powerful, the elimination of the weak and powerless could be rationalized by appealing to the universal laws of nature. Marx and Engels then extended Darwin's law of evolution to the law of evolution of society and of human history. Darwin, Marx and Engels and all the other 'Fathers' shared the same cosmology; Man was the centre of the cosmos; they acknowledged the same theory of nature as the basic premise of the industrial mode. Nature was to be used. Utilitarianism was its idiom; they were convinced that the universe worked according to definite laws; and so too society. A cosmology that exalted competition, power and violence over convention, ethics and religion. A scientific world view that has become the universal.

A scientific world view that also heralded the 'masculine birth of time'. Modern science evolved in a particular historical conjuncture – the rise of industrial capital and the market economy, the philosophy of possessive individualism and utilitarianism, the polity and politics of the nation state. But if 'modern science evolved in and helped to shape a particular social and political context, by the same token it evolved in conjunction with and helped to shape a particular ideology of gender....gender ideology was a crucial mediator between the birth of modern science and the economic and political changes of the time'.⁸ Bacon often used metaphors of gender to describe the new science as power, 'a force virile enough to penetrate and subdue nature,' to bind nature to man's service and make her his slave' and thus achieve 'the dominion of man over the universe.' Bacon's purpose was not to know nature but to control her, to gain power over her. Nature is mysterious, passive, inert, female, and the talk of the new scientists was to dominate her, to manipulate her, to transform her. Earlier world views, according to the modern scientists could only catch and grasp at Nature never 'seize or detain her'. The new world view abounded in sexual metaphor

7. *Ibid.*

8. Evelyn Fox Keller, *Gender and Science*. New Haven, 1985.

and patriarchal imagery. Bacon sought a 'chaste and lawful marriage between Mind (masculine) and Nature (feminine): a marriage that was not a union of mind and matter but one that established the 'empire of man over nature'. 'Masculine philosophers either conceived of nature as an alluring female, virgin, mysterious and challenging' or in their minds killed off nature entirely, writing of it as 'mere matter, lifeless, barren, unmysterious, above all unthreatening, but still female'.⁹ The maleness of Mind and the femaleness of Matter has been significant in the construction of gender in relation to the dominant ideals of knowledge.

This Construction of Knowledge Brought New Meanings to the World

Science and its world view may, through its laws explain the appearance, even the structure of phenomena, using its tools of quantification and objectification, but does not, and cannot, capture their essence. It reduces the history of whole peoples, into frames of progress, into lines of poverty, into models of development; it writes the history of whole epochs, leaving out the women who are half of human experience, and in so doing can never reach the depths of the different rhythms of cultures, never grasp the meaning of the different spheres of civilizations, never understand the different cosmologies of the women, the daliths, the indigenous, the marginalized, the silenced.

It Refuses History ; It Refuses Mystery

The modern scientific world view is linear and in its linearity it characterizes whole cultures as uncivilized, undeveloped, unprogressive. Progress is the universal measuring stick of modernity, underlying which is a substratum of intolerance and violence. It reduces the cultures of the third world to a single monoculture, a uniformity. The concept of progress in its linear movement is intrinsic to the typology of the evolutionary scientists who describe society in stages: a hunting culture is more primitive and therefore less civilized than an agrarian one, and that in turn more primitive than one committed to the industrial mode. The industrialized society is the peak of progress,

9. Brian Easlea, *Fathering the Unthinkable: Masculinity, Science and the Nuclear Arms Race*. San Francisco, 1983.

the 'other' civilizations must aspire to. The dominant mode must become the universal.

This linear mode of thought determines not only civilizations but also consciousness; it becomes the norm by which 'other' consciousness is measured. Other, meaning third world; other, meaning women. Consciousness in this paradigm is stratified into higher and lower states, where higher is the rational, objective, scientific, the masculine; and the lower strata of 'false consciousness' is populated by the women, the daliths, the indigenous and other oppressed people. And it is this 'false consciousness' of the masses that must be inculcated with a 'scientific temper,' so that the ultimate goal is attained - 'people becoming rational and objective...favouring a universalist outlook' (from a Statement on Scientific Temper, October 25, 1980 signed by a group of scientists and social scientists in India). This 'scientific establishment' goes on to describe the 'scientific temper' that must permeate our society as 'neither a collection of knowledge or facts, although it promotes such knowledge; nor is it rationalism although it promotes rational thinking. It is something more. It is an attitude of mind which calls for a particular outlook and pattern of behaviour. It is of 'universal' applicability and has to permeate through our society as the dominant value system, powerfully influencing the way we think', Ashis Nandy in the M.N. Roy Memorial address, titled 'Science, Authoritarianism, Culture' analyses how modern science is deeply structured isolation: 'Our future, as we all know in this society, is being conceptualized and shaped by the modern witchcraft called the science of economics. If we do not love such a future scientific child rearing and scientific psychology are waiting to cure us of such false values and the various schools of psychotherapy are ready to certify us as dangerous neurotics. Another set of modern witch doctors have taken over the responsibility of making even the revolutionaries among us scientific'.

And all this can be justified in the pursuit for scientific knowledge, in the development of a scientific temper, in the inculcation of the scientific world view - the one, monolithic cosmology that must subsume all; legitimizing itself in the name of 'universalism'.

But what if this world view which has depended on a logic of time lines, is erroneous? What if the most fundamental error is the

search for mono-causation? 'What if the world is really a field of inter-connecting events arranged in patterns of multiple meaning?'¹⁰ What if the scientific world view is only one of the world views? What would happen to science and social science which have become mega-industries? Scientists and social scientists who need their power and privileges are part of an ideological status quo which in turn needs the universality of the social sciences, in all their value-neutrality, their rationality and their objectivity, to legitimize and reproduce a violent social order, nationally and internationally. Science explains the world by drawing a clear line between who is subject and what is object; the object could be third world, machines, drugs, weapons, women-objects that can be measured, managed, manipulated. It then proceeds to collect and collate data, to fragment, to arrange, to analyse, to fit the object into categories and concepts and explain it in a language so confusing that it has nothing to do with reality. It separates the subject from the object distancing the observer from the observed. And it does more. It fractures the human being separating the human self from human knowledge, the professional from the personal. The personal from the political. It not only rends the 'subjective social world from the objective one, idealism from materialism,' but also 'involvement and emotion from reason and analysis'.¹¹

As in the eurocentric knowledge construct the west came to be the norm and the 'universal,' excluding other civilizations, other cultures, in its androcentric dimension, the male became the norm, and in its masculine mind set excluded the feminine. This knowledge generated a patriarchal scholarship in which the lives and experiences of women were invisible; 'the codification of knowledge is a cumulative process with silence built on silence....for generations women have been silenced in patriarchal discourse unable to have their meanings encoded and accepted in the social repositories of knowledges.'¹² Their meanings of power for instance: What is enshrined in the different disciplines and social order is a concept of power that the male uses - the power to control, the power to manipulate, the power of the winner. This

10. Joan Robert (ed.), *Beyond Intellectual Sexism*. New York, n. d.

11. Lis Stanley and Sue Wise, "Back into the Personal, Or Our Attempt to Construct Feminist Research," *Theories of Women's Studies*, Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli Klein (eds.). London, 1983.

12. Dale Spender, *Man Made Language*. London, 1980.

concept of patriarchal power pervades all cultures. In cultures where concepts of woman power (Stree Shakti) exist, it has been pushed to the periphery: woman's power remains on the margins of knowledge, of life. Moving out of the patriarchal mind set would mean refusing the monodimensional definition of power, seeking to re-define power, to re-locate power, to discover an alternate concept of power, to find new patterns of power: power to name the world differently from world views that are non-modern. Because the modern world view fractionates; it isolates. It divides ideas from feelings developing the capacity to take ideas to their objective, rational conclusion without being burdened by feelings. Real science requires the suppression of emotions. It must: for there are no categories that can contain personal experience, no mathematical formulae to measure emotions, no place in the traditional sciences obsessed with objectivity to explain the subjective.

Modern Science and its World View Brought New Meanings of Violence to the World

In the dominant paradigm, there is no concept of sacredness. There is no place for a Black Elk who sees 'in the sacred manner of the world.' Nature, the Earth is 'resource', forests are resources, diverse species are resources. All the answers to the world's problems will come we are told, from science, technology, development, which are all part of a global terrorism that has not only destroyed cultures and civilizations, but has denigrated the women, desacralized nature.

The unitariness of the mode and the dominance of the world view is frightening. Environment has become the new universalism. Much of the deliberations and visions of UNCED was based on the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development titled 'Our Common Future'. The Report spelt out what it considered were the 'global commons'—the oceans, space, Antarctica. Suddenly it seemed there was a unanimous report drawn on a common analysis and perspective for the world community; identifying common goals, agreeing on common action towards a vision of a common future. What it never spelt out was that all this would be through a common market place. A common future: many, many years ago, Chief Seattle's words of wisdom spoke of the commons 'How can you buy or sell they sky? We do not own the air or the water. How do you buy them from us? How do you now want to control the commons? It never saw the future

of the commons. In this vision for a common future, there is no place for a multiplicity of futures; no place for differences; no place for a plurality of cultures.

The South Wind

*'I can tell the wind is rising
Leaves trembling in the trees'*

It is not difficult to see that we are at the end of an epoch, 'when every old category begins to have a hollow sound, and when we are groping to discover the new'.¹³ Can we find new word, search new ways, create out of the material of the human spirit possibilities to transform the existing exploitative social order, to discern a greater human potential? What we need in the world today, is a new universalism; not a universalism that denies the many and affirms the one, not a universalism born of eurocentricities or patriarchalities; but a universalism that recognizes the universal in the specific civilizational idioms in the world. A universalism that will not deny the accumulated experience and knowledge of all the past generations but that which will not accept the imposition of any monolithic, hegemonic structures under which it is presumed, all other peoples must be subsumed. A new universalism that will challenge the universal mode – the logic of our development, science, technology, patriarchy, militarization, nuclearism. A new universalism that will respect the plurality of the different societies – of their philosophy, of their ideology, their traditions and cultures, one that will be rooted in the particular, in the vernacular, one which will find a resonance in the different civilizations, birthing a new cosmology.

This could be the wind from the South; 'rising in all its grandeur' bringing much to this cosmology. The South Wind then, as the movements for change in the third world; the South as the voices and movements of the people, wherever these movements unfold; the South as the visions of women; the South as the development of new frameworks, seeking a new language to describe what it perceives, rupturing the existing theoretical categories, breaking the mind constructs, challenging the one, objective reality; the South Wind as

13. E. P. Thompson, *Exterminism and the Cold War*. London, 1982.

the seeking of new knowledge, refusing the one, mechanistic scientific world view as the only legitimate world view; the South as the discovery of other knowledge that have been submerged, as the recovery of other cosmologies that have been silenced. The South as the finding of a new definitions of knowledge, of politics; creating a new paradigm for politics; a new paradigm for knowledge. The South Wind must reclaim both the subjective and the objective modes of knowing, creating richer and deeper structures of knowledge in which the observer is not distanced from the observed, the researcher from the researched, the dancer from the dance. This new cosmology will move away from eurocentric and androcentric methodologies which only observe and describe, methodologies which quantify, percentify, classify, completely indifferent to phenomena which cannot be contained or explained through its frames. The South Wind invites us to create a new spectrum of methods which depart from the linear mode of thought and perception to one that is more holistic, holographic. It urges us to search more qualitative methodologies in oral history, experiential analysis, action - research, poetry, in myth, in metaphor, in magic. The South Wind invites us to a way of knowing that refuses to control and exploit Nature, to use and abuse Nature but one that finds our connectedness to Nature; to place together these fragments, to discern the essence, to move into another space, another time, recapturing hidden knowledge, regenerating forgotten spaces; refinding other cosmologies, reweaving the future.

The movements for change are the new spaces: Amilcar Cabral calls it 'the return to history of a people'. These movements for an alternative social order, are as yet, only beginning within the different social formations, with no definite patterns but firmly rooted in the struggles and ethos of the people. They express not only rejection of the present society, but the need to envision new political alternatives. These movements seek a profound social change; a qualitatively more human social order, a new consciousness. Movements for peace, for human rights, movements of the indigenous people, the daliths. The women's movements. The ecological and green movements. These autonomous, self determining movements have a significance in themselves and in relation to one another; they signify a new time beginning. It is in the recognition of the relatedness of these movements which confront the structures of social control that the movements in the

South will produce a form of politics and a new political culture that would depart from the existing dominant political and patriarchal modes and bring on to the historical stage the plurality of the struggles of the people and the pluralism of civilizations. What we need now is 'the maturity to value freedom and tradition, the individual and community, science and nature, men and women'.

For the rest, it is not difficult to see that our epoch is a birth time and a period of transition: *the chime of a new moment*; it is a time for new ventures, new visions. And this is possible if we are willing to unearth the truth in all our 'universals' – war, science, technology, development, patriarchy; to reveal the basic premises which have remained unquestioned – notions of productivity, profits, progress. Will we find a new understanding if instead of assessing what constitutes progress, we look at the victims of progress? History is full of them: Do we need new concepts to define work, the hierarchy of work, the monopoly of wage work over all kinds of work? Perhaps too a re-definition of needs; a re-definition of skills; a re-conceptualizing of wealth in an ecological framework, of security in a peace paradigm, of development in a human rights perspective. Do we need to develop a new construction of knowledge, searching for 'knowledge' that are non-scientific? Perhaps, it will only be in the 'insurrection of the subjugated knowledge' that will birth a new cosmology; a cosmology that knows that the domination of nature and cultures is intrinsically connected to the domination of women and that there are other ways of knowing the world that are not based on objectification and subjugation. In all this, what is essential is not to develop new doctrines or dogmas, or 'to define a new, coherent political schema' but, to suggest 'a new, imaginative attitude, one that can be radical and subversive, by which alone we will be able to change the logic of our development'.¹⁴ Perhaps, as the poet says 'we should now break the routine, do an extravagant action that would change the course of history.' What is essential is to go beyond the politics of violence and terror of today's world and to find new political imaginations, to sing our root song, to touch the dream.

And to begin to touch the dream is to move outside the universal, eurocentric, patriarchal patterns, to search for new concepts that would

14. Andre Gorz, *Ecology as Politics*. Boston, n. d.

explain our lives and experiences, to search new meanings, to discover fresh spaces, to witness a new surge of life; listening to the earth; listening to woman as she infuses magical colours into the razai into which she weaves worlds of wisdoms, creating new meanings, new metaphors, keeping children warm.

Listening to the song of the wind.