

Solving The Problem of Poverty.

(An abstract view based on West-African countries)

It was a poorly lit classroom, sadly the world was too busy to notice this and thus the pupils within this class. The teacher as ever, had his back turned towards the pupils as he screeched his chalk against the hardwood blackboard. Ever and ever, people - the world - hastened through the corridors past the classroom, and from the gaping holes in the walls and the empty louvre-slots, the pupils watched the world rush by, with not even as little as a look returned to them from the outside. The pupils had tried endlessly to make contact with the world but the world never listened. They had even cried for help several times when the screeching against the board had gotten unbearably loud but no one outside paid them any attention.

The pupils; Poverty, Sickness, War and Illiteracy sat by cardinal points. Poverty at the North, Sickness South, War East and Illiteracy West and have never left their seats. Frankly no one knows for sure how they came about, not even they themselves. It is said that they were born in the class by one who wasn't ready to be their mother. She was called Colonialism. This is what is whispered by the historian spiders and wall-geckos as they scurry in-between the cracks that decorate the room. Colonialism it is said, took flight immediately after her children were born and left them in the hands of her younger brother, the teacher Monsieur Independence, the entity who seems to be enchanted by the blackboard.

"You will lead us" The classroom decides one day, while Monsieur Independence noisily scribes at the board.

"Yes Poverty, you are the most striking in appearance of us all. Sickness is too weak, Illiteracy is too stupid and War is far too hot-tempered." They decided.

In facing their plight, the pupils elected Poverty as their "class captain" - their leader. They had figured that they would need someone to communicate their plight to the rest of the world and when Monsieur Independence wasn't looking - he never really left the blackboard - they sent him out into the passageway. He was to draw as many people from the corridors as he could into the classroom, so that they too could see what was going on. He would for the first time stray far, with intention to advertise everything wrong with the class; the leaky roof, the bad lights, the bludgeoned walls, the screeching board, the ever-inattentive teacher, his classmates and even himself. He was approached by Technology and he invited her in. She wasn't "old fashioned" like the rest of the class, but at least she was someone. His classmates would like her - so he thought. Illiteracy hated her because she simply couldn't understand her new classmate. She beckoned for her teacher to give Technology a proper introduction but by habit the teacher remained glued to the blackboard. War on the other hand loved her immediately. It seemed his love was even more than platonic. He began to court her. Sickness who sat in the at the back of the class because it was most comfortable, sat too far from Technology to gain or lose anything from

her. Seeing only four chairs in the class, Technology decided to make one for herself and was persuaded by War to sit by him at the East.

After Technology, ran in Charity and Media. Technology was clever, Charity was optimistic and Media was resourceful, together they would formulate plans to repair the classroom. However, whatever Technology built, War claimed for himself and soon, War engulfed Technology. She didn't die, no these entities do not die. Like the gods engulfed by the Greek Titan Kronos, Technology was trapped within War. War used her to enhance himself and as he grew, he took up more space in the class. Soon he would be able to touch all pioneering-pupils at the same time if he sat in the middle.

Soon War had engulfed Illiteracy and Charity. Poverty was busy in the corridor with Media trying to bring more people into the classroom and could not notice what had been happening. Sickness was soon engulfed by War, but no sooner than sickness was Engulfed was he purged. He was incompatible with War it would seem. Still weak, he returned to his seat at the back of the class. Poverty and Media managed to bring more people into the class but the people were quickly engulfed by War. Media upon seeing this immediately ran away leaving Poverty whose only option now was to block the door from the outside to keep War from getting out.

"Monsieur Independence! Now would be a good time to quit the screeching and do something you old fool!" Poverty screamed.

"You are undeserving of the role of Teacher and you and I both know this role was handed to you prematurely by your coward-sister, my mother!" He bellowed.

Monsieur Independence turned and for the first time since entering the class he saw something other than the blackboard.

"I have been blind-" He said in resolution but his moment was cut short by the snapping of War's jaws. *Gulp*. He too had been engulfed.

Now War was in control of the classroom. In fact, one could say War "became" the classroom. War nudged at the door of the class but it would not budge. It seems the world had finally begun to pay attention to the classroom. They along with Poverty pushed back at the door.

"How do we solve my problem?" Poverty screamed at the world.

"Who will solve the problem of Poverty?" The world screamed at themselves as they pushed and pushed at the door. They knew that if War got out, they too would be engulfed.

"I suggest we send Aid" said a nasal voice.

"Yes! Yes! Yes!" the world screamed. "Aid should work!"

"But I do not want to go for I fear I too shall be engulfed" replied a meek voice.

"And Religion, Education and Health?" Asked the world.

"We too shall be engulfed. We dare not make attempt."

"Then send Death!" A more confident bass suggested.

"Yes! Yes! Yes!" The world screamed. "Death should work!"

"But Death lies trapped in the citadels of the world-space surely if he is released he will engulf not only War but us as well!" Poverty shot back.

"Alright, alright I will go." One voice muttered. There were gasps; *oohs, ahhs* and everyone wondered where the voice was coming from. The voice made its way through the crowd and reached the door then there was silence.

"I will go, but only if you all cooperate with me." It was a child.

"And be engulfed?" Guffawed one voice. "Then we might as well release Death from the citadels you foolish child!" spat another.

"No you insufferable herd of sheep. For too long we have walked past this classroom without giving it as little as a glance. Where you see trouble, I see myself. I see Opportunity."

"And what would you have us do, Opportunity?"

"We must maintain strong hold at the door to contain War but a tunnel is needed - one that can be used to drain the classroom of War. I will offer myself to be engulfed by War so that while the tunnel is being built, the presence of opportunity will be felt by those of us that are currently within it."

"This is foolish" shot one voice. "Surely it would save us time, and strength if we just asked for the return of Mother Colonialism. It seems reasonable that War would listen to his own mother, does it not?"

"My mother" replied Poverty? "To return?"

"While it seems reasonable, noble Diplomacy. We simply cannot ask for her return."

"And why is that?" asked Diplomacy

“Because it is known that Mother Colonialism has ceased to exist. She-”

“That is preposterous!” Shot Diplomacy. “We very well know that we entities and concepts do not die. There is no ceasing to our existence. To suggest otherwise is simply absurd.”

“Mother Colonialism ran off with the Zeitgeist of the last siècle. She no longer exists in our siècle. That is not to say she does not exist absolutely, but like our last ruler, the Prime Concept and Zeitgeist of the last siècle, she no longer resides among us. To decide to search for her would be to embark on a fruitless odyssey. An odyssey of no return. Let us listen to Opportunity... carry on child.”

“I propose that the issue is conveyed to the ears of the present Zeitgeist. For ultimately it is he who can best solve the problem of Poverty” suggested the child.

“Is there nothing any one entity among us can do?” beckoned the anxious group.

“Fraid not” began the child. “It is known that only the Zeitgeist can rid us of this problem. Since the Zeitgeist cannot come to the problem, we must carry the problem to the Zeitgeist.”

“The tunnel must be built from the outside to enable my entrance into War whence I will tell those already engulfed of the plan at hand. The tunnel shall be managed by Economics for none is more frugal and prudent than my own twin. For too long the classroom has been secluded from the world - we must change that. We cannot open the door, for sake of hindering the outburst of War. However the tunnel when created, will reach as far as the office of the Zeitgeist. It will then be up to the Zeitgeist to expunge War.”

The tunnel was built; through one end it led Opportunity into the belly of the classroom that had become War and the other end was to be extended under the guidance of Economics to the present Zeitgeist. The Zeitgeist who unaware of the plans of the other concepts was undoubtedly surprised when a gaping hole emerged in the centre of his office.

To solve the problem of Poverty, Economics proposed the following plan to the Zeitgeist:

“The classroom can only be helped as far as it is convenient for the rest of the world. It is at the point of the final degree of convenience that our resources start to become constrained. Up to this point, we may flood the tunnel with resources, that will enable Opportunity and the others within War, conquer it from within. However, from this point, the problem of Poverty must be solved by the members of the classroom themselves lest the problem of Poverty manifest itself elsewhere and the rest of the world be drawn into another peril. You must intervene in the conquering of War for it is only the reigning concept of the world that can conquer it. However, the problem of poverty is much more complex than War. Once War has been drained from the classroom, those of us outside will not be able to intervene much because it will serve a greater strain on our resources.

Because War is a pioneering concept in the classroom, its position is by nature defined by the position of the other pioneering-concepts; its siblings. Thus, if we aim to rid the room of War, we must rid the room of Illiteracy, Sickness and also Poverty for wherever two or more of the pioneering-concepts coexist, War will always manifest itself. It is important that we replace the concepts with Education, Health, Charity and Aid and that we ensure more doors are created for the classroom. The latter will ensure that the classroom is no longer excluded from the ongoings of the world. Even more important is that Opportunity remains in the classroom however, along with me. This is because while Opportunity has the advantage of being limitless in creativity, reality and our limited resources require frugality and management thus, the need for my presence. I cannot function without Opportunity, and it is not feasible for Opportunity to function without me. We are the Conceptual Gemini.

Media will enable the world to forever understand the situation in the classroom, and he will also ensure that Health and Education grow as a result of more information. From the growth, we can expect that Technology will find the classroom more hospitable and she will be able to flourish. By doing so, the classroom and the other concepts within it will grow - that is the power Technology has. The solution to the problem of Poverty simply lies in making the classroom a better place for Technology to grow and this will be limited by the resources that we have at hand my Zeitgeist."