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WORLD AFTER TOWER OF BABEL: COMMUNICATION IS THE MATTER

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We believe that we live in a world that becomes more and more interconnected every day, and the world where the speed of communication is constantly increasing. We are all the time interrupted by our mobile phones, our emails, our “apps”, messages we receive through Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, to name just a few. When we meet somebody we usually give the person the business card and walk away after 2-3 minutes of so-called “communication” or “networking”. When we make a promise to somebody, - “I will let you know that...”, “I will connect you with...”, - it is almost expected that we will not do what we promised.

When is the last time you took the time to speak to somebody? To truly try to understand what she or he is going through in life?

Of course, it is a given that everyone is happy. Just look at everybody's pictures on Facebook. No one will put a picture of her or him crying, being angry, disappointed or depressed.

It is an interesting paradox. We have more and more means to communicate with each other, and yet we are feeling more and more lonely and misunderstood.

Building relationships is like gardening.

If you think that you can just throw a seed, - just like throwing your business card, - and be done with it, you are mistaken.

Imagine if you throw a seed in a desert. Will it grow? – No.

You need to choose the soil that will be the most suitable for your seed.

In business that would mean to find the correct circumstances, the correct circle of people that you wish to introduce your business to.

In life that would mean to make sure that you are talking to people that are good to you and are genuinely interested in having a relationship with you (family, friends, partners).

Now imagine that you planted the seed and forgot about it. Will it grow? – No.

You need to nurture your plant creating conditions favourable for its growth, in the long term. And it is not only about watering the plant and cutting the

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branches. It is also learning about the particularities of the plant, and adapting the care that you provide the plant with according to its nature. Tomatoes do not like cucumbers. If you plant them side-by-side, you will have a gardening disaster because both of them will fall sick or die. Cactuses do not need much water. Orchids like a combination of shade and sun. Rose needs a change of seasons, and will not survive on the equator in the eternal summer.

In business that would mean that you and your company need to invest in, to cultivate in the long run company's "relations", i.e. relations with your customers, your shareholders, your investors, your partners, your counterparties, your employees and their families, the community that your business operates in. Basically, you and your company need all of your stakeholders' support to survive in this competitive world. And just like tomatoes, cucumbers, cactuses, orchids and roses, each group of stakeholders have different preferences for building a relationship with you. All you need to do is to listen, and to adapt, customize your approach. And, of course, within each group of stakeholders each orchid is different too!

The focus should be truly long-term. Who would think that one can grow a garden in six months time? It takes years, decades or centuries to create Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

In life it is not much different. Just take care to say some basic words like "Good morning", "Thank you", "How are you", and really mean it. Look people in the eyes. Do not think to get anything in return. Do not care about the statuses of the people, who is above or below you on the social ladder, as we are all equal human beings after all.

And you will be amazed. People will talk to you. They will share their secrets with you. And there you will have built a true relationship that you can carry through life.

Of course, people move, people have new projects, new horizons, and it is only normal that you may "lose sight" some of them. However, I can guarantee you that if you have established a true connection in the first place with a person, if you have really communicated with that person, it does not matter how many years pass, and when you see that person again, you can easily "reconnect" as the foundation of the relationship will still be there.

Communication to a relationship is like foundation is to a house.

One cannot do without. It must be sound, built to last and resistant to shocks and earthquakes.

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Invest your time in building the right relationship with the right person with the right communication, and you will reap off invaluable benefits in the long term.

We have looked at the personal aspect of communication, using gardening and construction as examples. Now let's take a look at the intercultural aspect which adds relief to our discussion.

Everyone is familiar with the story of The Tower of Babel where Babel stands for "Gate of God", which is an interesting etymology we will also examine:

Following the Great Flood, there was a true united people speaking the same language and working together on building a beautiful city for all to live in.

However, they became too proud of themselves, as they wanted to equal God with their Tower of Babel being so tall that the top reaches the Heaven.

God came down to see the construction, and decided to confuse them by making them to speak different languages and by scattering them around the globe.

This is the world today:

The World after Ancient Tower of Babel.

We live in different countries, speaking different languages, practicing different customs, having different cultures, - and this is just a tip of the iceberg! Every person comes with a whole "underwater" part that is everything of the domain of unconscious. These are the norms, the rules, the way of being that have been programmed into us on the genetic level and up to the age of 7 by the socio-family environment in which we grew up. We do not question these. For most people, we are not even aware that our behaviour in such or such case is for the most part based on the underwater part of the iceberg. What we see and think that we can control is just the tip of it.

In my life, I had a chance to experience at a very early stage of my life what it is like to take my iceberg and to fly to another country where people's icebergs are completely different. A true earthquake. It suddenly appeared that the world did not stop at the fence of my "village".

That experience, without me knowing it, set me up on an international path. I moved between continents, countries, learned foreign languages, customs, cultures, adapting the best I could to the constantly changing environments that my life took me to live in. I became increasingly aware of my own hidden part of the iceberg too, and began to be attentive to other people's icebergs – both the tip and the underwater parts.

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Soon I was asked to interpret. I concentrated on interpreting the language, so that people could understand each other, and do their business or implement their personal projects.

However, as the time went by, and I was getting more and more experience, I realized that it is not sufficient to translate the language, the verbal message. There are infinite details that are being "Lost in Translation". These are all the cultural aspects, i.e. both tip and bottom of the iceberg.

Through my work I have been involved in numerous negotiations in business and have witnessed to my biggest regret how some of these negotiations fail spectacularly. Why? It happens when people on both sides of the negotiation table fail to take into account the cultural differences, - even if they speak the same language or if they use an interpreter. Your verbal message does not really matter if you fail to understand, which ground your counterparty is coming from.

For a negotiation to be effective, you need to have a deep understanding of all the cultural background of your potential business partners.

A side remark: if you consider your negotiation partners as adversaries rather than potential business partners, please do not wonder whether it is going to be a successful negotiation. It will not be one!

On the other side, you need to think that you want these people to work with you, and you want to work with them, for the long term.

So trying to pull the entire blanket on your side is not the best strategy!

Once you have established that the common goal is to work together on a project, once you have done your due diligence not only on the project itself but also on the people that you would be working with, including all the cultural aspects, and once you have established a true line of communication, then and only then you can reach agreement and have a successful start to your project with everyone on-board being equally motivated to reach common objectives!

When we all understand this, then and only then we can build a new Tower of Babel, a truly United World.

With one small correction to the Old Testament: we need to replace hubris with humility & humour. We cannot equal God nor can we build Heaven on Earth. Understanding this is the humility required. With regard to humour, it is

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even easier to interpret. Humour always breaks the ice and makes things more fun.

We need to enjoy the process of building!

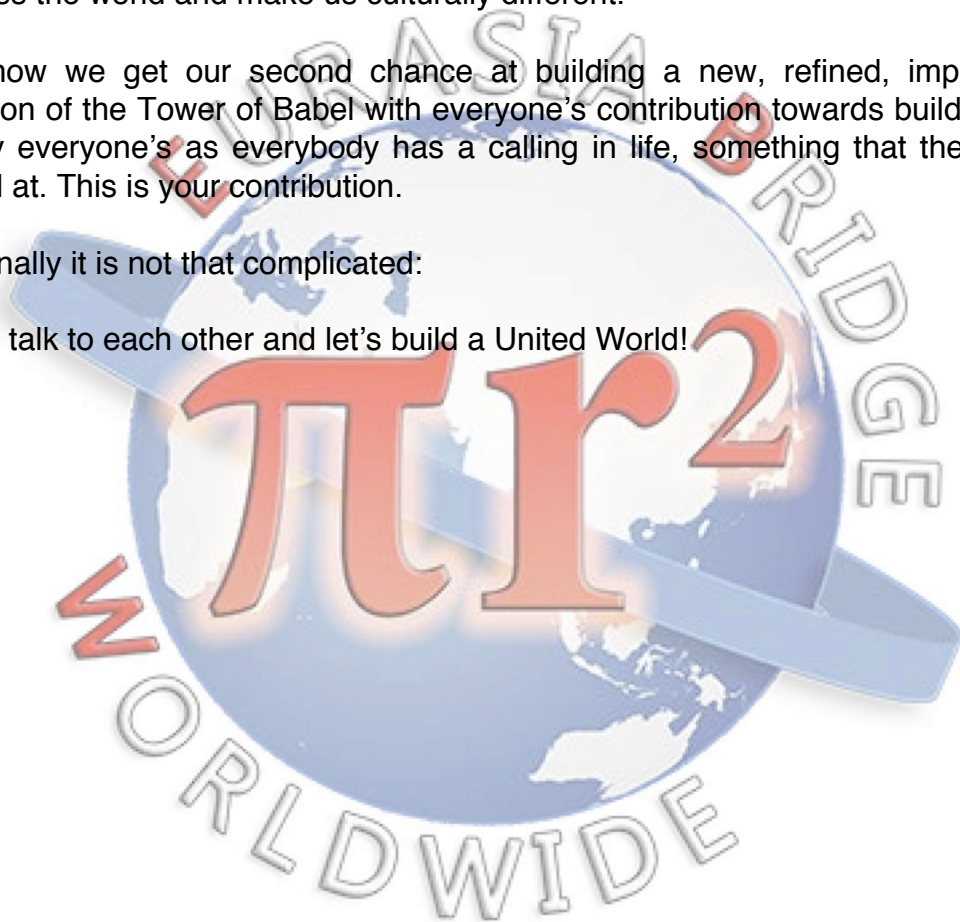
Our multiculturalism, i.e. our cultural diversity, is also our strength we need to build upon.

Just imagine: same culture, same language, everything same... that would be so boring! That is exactly why God had decided in the first place to spread us across the world and make us culturally different.

So now we get our second chance at building a new, refined, improved version of the Tower of Babel with everyone's contribution towards building it. I say everyone's as everybody has a calling in life, something that they are good at. This is your contribution.

So finally it is not that complicated:

Let's talk to each other and let's build a United World!



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