Peace in the Market Place Edward Dommen

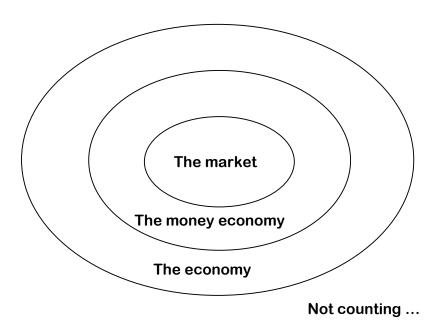
May we look upon our treasures and the furniture of our houses and the garments in which we array ourselves and try whether the seeds of war have any nourishment in these our possessions or not.

- John Woolman, A Plea for the Poor, chap. 10 (1763)¹

1 Setting the stage

1.1 The place of the market

Figure 1: The location of the market



If we are to look for the seeds of peace, or war, in the market place, we must first locate the market place. Figure 1 provides the map we need.

Not counting...

At the base is the boundless and gratuitous bounty of God: the living God... giveth us richly all things to enjoy (1 Tim 6. 17). God gives without counting. It is the job of humanity to ensure that this bounty is distributed, according to God's intention, among everyone.

¹ John Woolman (1720-1772) was a North American Quaker, a campaigner for the abolition of slavery and other social causes. His *Journal* is considered a classic of North American literature.

The economy organises the production and distribution of the goods and services which spring from God's bounty.

• The economy

There are many forms of economy in the world, and yet others can be imagined. Each has its particular advantages and limitations. Several developed historically to meet the peculiarities of the natural environment of a particular place. That is an evident aspect of being scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth: speaking different languages is a way of recognising the peculiarities of one's surroundings and the way one perceives and manages them. It is an antidote to globalisation (Genesis 11: cf. 4).

• The money economy

Economies which use money are a sub-set of economies in general. The non-monetary economy can play an essential role in meeting the needs of society. A large part of food and fuel in the world – not to mention water - is produced and distributed without recourse to money. These goods may be produced and distributed within the family or the local community; they may be bartered. They may be offered as tribute to an authority, who is obligated to redistribute them in turn to those under their authority.

Society is to a significant degree structured and held together by means outside the money economy: think of the unpaid services of government and justice which function effectively in many non-Western societies, not to mention the educational impact of each person's behaviour.

In many circumstances money has advantages over barter or status in arranging the exchange of goods and services. Prices however can be fixed outside the market by administrative decision. That was the normal method in the socialist economies, but it is found in other types of economy as well. Prices may simply be set by tradition.

In Vanuatu, pawpaws continued to be offered to passing travellers at two shillings long after the currency was decimalised and the shilling had gone out of circulation (local inhabitants did not buy pawpaws at all since they were available within the household economy).

• The market

The market is a particular form of money economy. In the market, prices are by and large fixed in a decentralised manner between buyers and sellers among themselves.

This paper sets out to explore the techniques and the consequences which the market in particular shares with war, and thus to determine where in the market place the seeds of peace most need to be planted to make it a pleasure not only for everyone who passes through it, but also for those who enjoy it from afar; and also to see how best to deal with the weeds of war which can smother the seeds of peace.

1.2 Consequences of war

War has a number of well-known consequences. This section indicates a few of them and points out how the market economy can also generate them. Not all of them are confined to the market; they can arise in other forms of economy too.

1.2.1 Death

Death is the archetypal consequence of war. Killing people is one of its principal activities. The victims are not only those who are struck by weapons; they also include – usually in even greater numbers – those who die of hunger, disease or other side-effects of the conflict.

The market also causes death, usually in the same kind of indirect way. Death often comes prematurely to those who are excluded from the market: for instance those who cannot find employment. Then there are those who cannot get their produce to market except through the

services of rapacious intermediaries who guard the market gates. Or those who have no choice but to drink dirty water because the clean water is reserved for those who can pay for it. And of course those who are excluded from medical treatment when it is treated as a market service.

The market can crush some of those who participate in it, like the working poor or those who live in the shadow of- say - a chemical works with its pollution and risks of accident, because they cannot afford the market rent in a healthier area further away or the price of transport to work in or around that very factory.

The death toll can be estimated statistically, e.g. by comparing the life expectancy of the people concerned to that of others more fortunate. The extent by which it is shorter is an indicator of the **structural violence** in the system.

Structural violence denotes a form of violence which corresponds with the systematic ways in which a given social structure or social institution kills people slowly by preventing them from meeting their basic needs. Life spans are reduced when people are socially dominated, politically oppressed, or economically exploited. The term was first used in the 1970s; its invention is commonly ascribed to Johan Galtung (viz. Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969), pp. 167-191)².

1.2.2 Destruction

A cynic is a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Oscar Wilde, Lady Windermere's Fan, Act 3

War routinely destroys forests, crops, bridges, buildings and other works which are the fruit of human endeavour, in an effort to achieve some immediate objective which is normally tactical and therefore ephemeral. Just as war does not respect life, it does not respect the heritage which humankind has laboriously built up. The Bible has tried to set limits to this kind of short-sightedness, albeit with little success – consider the fate of the olive groves of today's Palestine:

When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege. Only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down

Deut. 20. 19-20).

The market can be just as philistine³. Works of genius, great and small, are destroyed without compunction if there is an immediate profit to be made. The community removes monuments from the grip of the market if it is anxious to preserve them. Commenting on the above passage, Calvin had this to say:

There, I say, is what must firmly restrain us when we are driven by some mischief and poisoned so far as to damage trees and houses and similar things. Let us be restrained, realizing whom we are actually waging war against. It is not against the creatures but against the One who shows us here a reflection of His goodness, not only towards only one individual, but towards all, and we are included in that number.

- Calvin, Sermon 119 on Deut. 20. 16-20

² Wikipedia, article 'structural violence' consulted on 3 August 2008.

³ "The popular reputation of the Philistines for cultural insensitivity is not borne out by archaeological discoveries of their artefacts from many centuries." – *Oxford Dictionary of the Bible*, Oxford University Press 1996.

1.2.3 Pillage

Thou shalt not steal

- Ex. 20. 15

Pillage has always been an element of war. Many crusaders and their victims can confirm that it is one way of paying the soldiers. Others also, including traders, take advantage of the opportunities war offers to acquire goods, as a look at the bareness of today's national museum of Iraq will show. Theft itself in its narrow sense is of course a non-market transaction, but defrauding someone of something can be a market transaction.

At root, 'steal' implies alienating someone's freedom; it consequently includes appropriating the means which support that freedom⁴. Unfair trades tend to that end.

1.2.3.1 Externalities

Much of the alienation of people's means of freedom is achieved through externalities: the buyer and seller between them appropriate the means of third parties: cf. **Error! Reference source not found.** below. The market manifests itself as transactions between buyers and sellers alone. The effects on others fall by definition outside the market place. Policies to deal with externalities therefore involve arranging the location of the boundaries of the market.

1.2.4 Emotional aftermath

Wars leave grudges, hatred, distrust and other sorts of ill-feeling in their wake. Dealing with them is one of the trickiest tasks involved in reconstruction after the conflict. Belligerents tend to neglect the importance of protecting, during the conflict, the capacity to live together. Cheating and otherwise exploiting an unfair position of strength can be particularly profitable behaviour in the market when the transaction is isolated from continuing relationships. There is less compunction about cheating a customer or seller if they are unlikely to meet again. On the other hand, distrust undermines the market as a network of continuing relationships.

2 War & trade

2.1 Statistics & impressions⁵

Many studies find that in strictly defined circumstances, the more trade there is between pairs of countries, the less the probability of war between them, but other studies find the opposite. Looking beyond pairs of countries, Mathias Thoenig finds that countries more open to global trade have a higher probability of war because multilateral trade reduces the cost of a bilateral conflict.

Similarly he finds that international trade can act as a factor mitigating the economic damage of an internal conflict. Trade openness may deter severe civil war which can impede international trade, but it may increase the risk of armed conflict of lower-intensity.

2.1.1 "The curse of resources"

Nowadays people often talk of "the curse of resources", according to which countries endowed with valuable natural resources become the object of bloody conflict for that very reason. The source of the conflict may be either greed for the resources themselves or greed for the wealth they represent and which can be used to achieve power through armed violence. One cites the oil of Southern Sudan or Iraq, or blood diamonds. The diamond

⁴ Cf. the footnote to Ex. 20. 15 in the *Traduction & acuménique de la Bible*.

⁵ I am indebted to unpublished work by Prof. Mathias Thoenig of the University of Geneva for much of the information in this section.

industry itself has indeed established a certification scheme known as the Kimberley Process to thwart the trade in such diamonds⁶

On the other hand, Botswana, one of the world's major diamond producers, is a peaceful country; as is Norway, one of the world's major oil producers. Proper statistics are needed to establish to what degree the curse of resources is real or imagined.

2.2 Where is my neighbour?

The parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10. 29-37) stresses that one's neighbour may well be a stranger in both senses of the word: firstly a person one does not know and secondly a foreigner. For the Jews of Jesus' time, Samaritans were not only foreigners, but hated and despised.

It could be argued that, whatever the relationship between trade and war, if there is no contact at all there can be no war. That is an excessively literal and narrow view. One's actions in one place can provoke war in another. The well-off can bask in complacency in so far as the violence provoked by their activities bursts out somewhere else. The poor express their frustration by attacking those who are within their reach, and they are likely to be poor as well.

One's neighbour can be anyone, anywhere. Indeed, with global warming, he or she is everyone everywhere. No-one anywhere remains unaffected by what we do.

Yet, leaving people free to do their own thing can be an important expression of fellowship. Our world is for us to celebrate our diversity, our diverse languages, our diverse cultures and ensure everyone in our societies has their basic needs met.

Vandana Shiva, Globalisation, food security and war, Port Louis, Ledikasyon pu travayer, 2002

She insists We basically across the world are saying "Our world is not for sale". Reducing the world to a single globalised market undermines the capacity of different cultures to meet in their own various ways the needs they have determined for themselves. One must beware of allowing the relationships imposed by the market to stand in contradiction to the great commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself (Matt. 22. 36-39).

3 The win-win ideal

⁶ Wikipedia article 'blood diamond', consulted on 13 July 2008.

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In Divonne Market

Photo Ed. Dommen

The photograph above illustrates the market ideal. The buyer is happy to have more carrots and fewer Euros; the seller is happy to have more Euros and fewer carrots. The community is happy because the transaction has generated revenues for the public benefit: rent to the municipality for the market stall, value-added tax to the State.

Everyone has grounds to be happy, provided the gains are fairly shared among all the parties. For that to happen, the relations between the parties must meet all of the following long and demanding list of conditions.

3.1 Correctly informed

Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich of the city are full of violence.

Micah 6. 11-12

At WTO, USA argues that to require that customers be informed about what they are buying is an obstacle to trade.

3.1.1 Secrecy

Intellectual property is gaining considerable importance in today's market economy, as a commodity in its own right. Knowledge becomes private property to be bought and sold. If that is to be achieved, free access must be denied. Secrecy, a normal constituent of the military mentality, is becoming a standard feature of the market economy.

As stated in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific advancement and the right to the protection of the interests resulting from one's own scientific production have to be balanced. This equilibrium is not easy to attain...

[There arte those who argue] that research results coming from publicly financed research must remain public. This perspective would be sustainable in a perfect world. However, confronted with current [intellectual property] legislation and the importance of knowledge-

based economies, if a publicly funded research centre does not claim its own research results, the work and investment of many years could be exploited by others.

- María Soledad Iglesias-Vega in *Les liaisons fructueuses*, ed. Randall Harbour & Edouard Dommen, Geneva International Academic Network, Geneva 2008, 'p. 211⁷

3.1.2 Psychological warfare

Withholding information, providing misleading information and otherwise manipulating the one's interlocutor's state of mind are the stock-in-trade of psychological warfare. As any specialist in advertising or public relations will confirm, they are equally normal tools of marketing. Four and a half centuries ago, Calvin was already able to describe them accurately:

We are forbidden to attempt to draw to ourselves the possessions of others, and consequently are commanded to strive faithfully to help everyone to keep what belongs to them. We ... cannot defraud anyone of his possessions without violating God's dispensation. Now there are many kinds of theft.

- One consists in violence ...
- A second kind consists in malicious deceit, when by ruse one impoverishes one's neighbour by fooling and deceiving him.
- Another lies in an even more concealed craftiness, when a person is deprived of his goods under cover of the law.
- Still another lies in flattery, when by alluring words one attracts to oneself ... goods which ought to belong to another ...

All those are arts to which we resort to enrich ourselves at the expense of others.

Calvin, Institution (1560) 2.8.45⁸

At least one other form of manipulation needs to be added to the list, and it is a crucial one: to flaunt mendacious models of reality to convince one's opposite number to hand over what is rightfully his. The neo-liberal economic model is a case in point. It describes the economy as a system in stable equilibrium which will spontaneously return to its original position if it is disturbed. If that were the way the economy worked, there would be no point in attempting to correct the hardships it inflicts on the poor and the defenceless; any such effort would be futile. The weak must resign themselves to bearing the weight that the market presses on them. There is nothing to be said for or against those who amass wealth and power, that is just the way things are. As the former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, a champion of neo-liberalism, put it, "There is no alternative". Isaiah must have had it all wrong when he cried out *Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place left, that they may dwell alone in the midst of the earth!* (Isa. 5. 8).

But there is at least one alternative. The Bible sums up the dynamic of the unstable equilibrium which governs not only the market economy but many other forms of economy as well: For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance beyond what he needs: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath (Matt. 13. 12)⁹. It trumpets¹⁰ the need to counter this process of concentration of wealth and power at the expense of the weak. The model of the jubilee which is so essential to the whole of the Bible stands in opposition to the neo-liberal model¹¹.

⁷ The order of the two paragraphs has been inverted.

⁸ The layout of the passage has been arranged here to bring out the elements of the argument more clearly.

⁹ The sentence is actually a popular saying current at the time. It appears in several places in the New Testament.

¹⁰ Literally: thou shalt cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound (Lev. 25. 8)

¹¹ For a succinct description, see Dommen, Edward, *How Just is the Market Economy?*, Geneva, World Council of Churches Publications, 2003, pp. 18-29. For the central role of the jubilee in the Bible, see André Trocmé, *Jésus-Christ et la revolution non-violente*, Geneva, Labor et Fides, 1961.

The neo-liberal model is a subterfuge which the rich use to fool the poor.

3.2 Free

We have already pointed out that the commandment *Thou shalt not steal* is essentially refers to any alienation of someone else's freedom (1.2.3 above).

Each party needs to be free to accept or reject any offer made by the other. As the saying goes, transactions must be "at arm's length". The object of war is to reduce one's enemy to a state of dependency, to deprive it of the capacity to act freely. Similarly, buyer and seller in the market strive to reduce the capacity of the other party to act freely. Fostering brand loyalty is one means among many, eliminating competitors is another. If one party is in debt to the other, it is thereby in the other's grip.

3.2.1 Externalities

While buyer and seller are struggling to ensnare each other, they share a common interest in reducing the freedom of the rest of society in relation to their trades. In so far as they can impose costs on the rest of society, they both gain, or at least they can limit their fight to how they share between them the gain they have appropriated from the rest of the community. Thus consumers and sellers of petrol, not to mention the manufacturers and buyers of motor vehicles, benefit by unloading the environmental costs of air pollution or global warming onto others. Since buyers and sellers are likely to be fewer in number and better organised than the public at large, they are generally in a strong position to press home their advantage. That is why the retail price of petrol nowhere covers the actual costs incurred by its use. Organised collective action outside the market is therefore required to protect them.

Calvin's remark to a Geneva banker is of relevant here:

... let us not consider only what is of advantage only to the individual with whom we have to deal, but consider also what is expedient for the public. ... One must properly determine that the contract is of service to the community, rather than harmful.

Calvin, Letter to Claude de Sachin

3.3 Not in a hurry

Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped your fields, which is kept back by you, crieth, and the cries ... are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth¹².

- James 5. 4

James is not complaining that the worker is not being paid, but that his employer is slow to pay him. The worker needs his wage without delay so that his family can buy what it needs for supper that very evening.

The market seller needs to sell her carrots before they go bad. The free buyer has the choice of other sellers.

The rich by definition have reserves. Those who have reserves can wait to pounce for the moment most favourable to themselves.

The rich man's wealth is his fortified city: the ruin of the poor is their poverty

Prov. 10. 15

The rich can shelter out of reach behind their wealth, and at a moment of their own choosing sally forth to lay waste the surrounding countryside. "The ruin of the poor" ingeniously carries two meanings. One the one hand, their poverty leads to their ruin, which is even worse

¹² The Lord of sabaoth is the Lord of hosts, i.e. of the armies. The image is a military one. Cf. Ps. 89. 8,10: *O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee?* ... thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm. James is using a strong word to underline the gravity of the offence.

poverty; on the other the poor have only a ruin for shelter and it is of course no match for the power of the rich.

3.4 Equal in power

Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away.

Micah 2. 1-2¹³

We have already seen that all parties involved in the market must be free from each other and able to choose freely whether or not to enter into a transaction. But freedom alone does not guarantee a fair deal. For that, either the parties must be equally balanced in power or arrangements must be made to protect the weaker party from the overbearing power of the stronger.

Between the strong and the weak, it is freedom which oppresses and it is the law which liberates.

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1762)

All too often however, authority, rather than protecting the weak, brings its strength to the support of the strong ¹⁴. Since the world is made up of stronger and weaker parties, rules - and honest authorities to enforce them - are essential. An entirely free market only works fairly for angels.

3.4.1 Military intervention in the labour market.

3.4.1.1 Domestic repression

Domestic repression of the poor by the military is an age-old story. It is described in Exodus already:

And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.

- Ex. 1. 13-14

And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.

Ex. 3. 19

Instances occur all over the world throughout history. Each of you can think of cases in your own country.

3.4.1.2 The military & international migration

Exodus is a story of people driven from their country by oppression imposed by the military. Still today people all over the world are being driven by military exactions to flee their country.

3.4.2 Almost a conclusion

Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by

¹³ Note the stress on violence in both quotes from Micah (here and in 3.1): he is keen to alert his listeners to the violence which lurks in market practices.

¹⁴ Cf. 3.4.2.1 below.

deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?

Amos 8. 4-6

3.4.2.1 *Corruption*

This passage recapitulates all the points made above, and it adds a further one: corruption. The courts are bribed with silver to decide in favour of the rich and powerful. The passage implicitly recognises that the law is supposed to protect the weak, but through corruption it is put at the service of the rich. Corruption is indeed a market activity: decisions are bought and sold. The prophets disapprove; does the market?

3.5 Each transaction is the result of a process

Kidnapping for ransom is a normal sort of economic transaction. The buyer pays the kidnapper, who in return liberates the person kidnapped. The buyer considers the price worth paying and the seller considers it sufficient to justify the service. The kidnapper has however previously reduced the object of the transaction to captivity.

Few transactions are completely isolated: they normally fit into a process. Each transaction influences the conditions of the following one. Once one party has gained an advantage, it can press it home in the next transactions, steadily weakening the other party. The process can be compared to the work of the *banderillero* in a bull fight. Each stab with a *banderilla* weakens the bull's neck, forcing the animal to lower its head so that the *matador* can more easily make the killing strike.

4 The imperialism of the globalised market

The players in the market want its domain to expand until it extends over the whole of the globe. To achieve this objective, it must defeat and do away with the other ways of organising the supply of goods and services. It must uproot the languages, cultures and forms of social organisation which stand in its way. The very desire contains violence, and the methods used are often war-like.

And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Exodus 11.4-9

As it happens, the story of the tower of Babel paints a pithy picture which corresponds to globalisation. It insists on the overweening pride at its source, but it also points hopefully in the direction of its nemesis. Language plays a key role in the account. It is through one's language that people not only communicate with each other, but apprehend the reality which

surrounds them. To impose one language is to impose a dominant culture. It includes the rules, regulations, norms and measures which govern the market among other social activities. By generating a multiplicity of languages God made it possible for people to work out how to live in all the variety of habitats which the earth offers.

One language has thirty names for kinds of cow. How otherwise could one kind be knowledgeably traded for another? On the other hand there are no cows on the atolls of Kiribati; why then should the Kiribati language have names for them?

5 In the market economy one thing leads to another.

- 1. The people on the frontiers ... are often poor;
- 2. and ... they venture to the outside of a colony in order to live more independently of the wealthy, who often set high rents on their land ...
- 3. If all our inhabitants lived according to sound wisdom, labouring to promote universal love and righteousness, and ceased from every inordinate desire after wealth, and from all customs which are tinctured with luxury, the way would be easy for our inhabitants ... to live comfortably on honest employments,
- 4. without the temptation they are so often under of being drawn into schemes to make settlements on lands which have not been purchased of the Indians.

- John Woolman, *Journal*, Chap. 8 (1761, 1762)¹⁵

Another quotation from John Woolman set the tone at the outset of this paper. In the above passage he presents a description of how causes lead to effects within the market economy until they spill over beyond its bounds. The analysis is remarkably sophisticated for the 1760s, when economics had hardly been invented. Violence lurks in every sentence.

He is describing the situation in the British colonies on the North American continent. The frontier is the limit of Anglo-Saxon settlement. Why is it the poor who moved to the edge of the settled area (1)? Because market forces inside the colony set the rent for land, or simply for housing. Those who can afford the highest rent occupy the space, leaving no room for others (Recall Isaiah 5. 8 which we have already quoted: *Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place*). Market-oriented landlords are not interested in sharing, but in drawing as much rent as possible (2). The poor are driven to the outside of the colony in order to escape oppression by the landlords, or as Woolman politely puts it, "to live more independently of the wealthy" 16. Unfortunately, the land outside the colony was not vacant. Nor had the market system developed among the Indians who were already occupying it. So the poor settled on land which, as Woolman again put it euphemistically, they did not purchase from its owners (4). The violence of the market within the colony drove the poor to violence against hapless people outside the market.

(3) describes the motor that set the whole chain in motion: greed. It is one of the usual driving forces of the market economy, but it is not confined to it: it can also prosper in other types of economy. There are however types of economy, including some forms of village market economy, which confine it and prevent it from taking deep root.

¹⁵ The sentences have been divided into numbered paragraphs for the convenience of this commentary.

¹⁶ For a striking counter-example, see Dommen, E., "Social Justice & Economic Development in Tonga", *Rural Life*, 1972., which describes how differently the King of Tonga dealt with this very problem when he returned home after visiting Australia in 1853 at the invitation of Methodist missionaries. His solution consciously turned its back on the market system.

6 It is the spirit that counts

The entrance to the World Trade Organisation's headquarters in Geneva is flanked by two figures, peace and justice. They have never been inside.

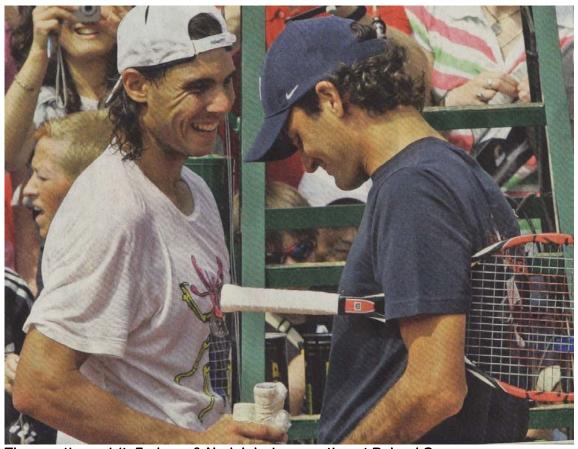


Depictions of "Peace" (left) and "Justice" (right) flank the main entrance to WTO (Luc Jaggi, 1925) 17

It is not so much institutional structures which determine whether any form of economic organisation serves the common good or on the contrary seeks to exploit the poor and the defenceless to the benefit of the rich and powerful. It is essentially a matter of the spirit in which the system is run.

The market is a game, so it should be played like a game rather than fought like a war. For a start, the market is not designed to meet people's essential needs, for the simple reason that market power is proportional to the amount of money which can be brought into play. Those who have no money are simply not in the game. Yet everyone, regardless of their access to money, has needs material and immaterial which it is the job of the economy to meet. Since the market works best for producing and distributing goods and services which are not essential, the sporting spirit of games is especially appropriate.

¹⁷ http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/wto_building08_e.pdf, consulted 23/05/08



The sporting spirit: Federer & Nadal during practice at Roland Garros

Tribune de Genève, 27 May 2008

An important element of the sporting spirit is to play within the rules of the game, which in turn requires that such rules exist. The current fashion for deregulation is precisely doing away with the rules which not only mark out the limits of acceptable behaviour, but which also serve to show that a formal kind of activity - a game – is taking place.

In the market the losers are not only the players, participants in the game, who do not win. They also include those who are denied access to the playing field. They suffer consequences which are all too real: humiliation or death. To treat the market as a game also involves leaving the bystanders alone. For the players to attack the spectators is never considered fair behaviour in a game.

My Chinese dictionary dates from 1999, when the Chinese economy was already well ensconced in the market mode ¹⁸. It none the less illustrates the word 'red' with the following astonishingly pertinent phrase: 朱门酒肉臭,路有冻死骨 "The stink of wine and meat at the doors of the rich (= red doors), frozen corpses by the roadside...". Red wine & red meat are typical market goods. The corpses frozen outside the door were presumably denied access to them. Red, the colour of meat, is the colour of blood: it is an aggressive colour, the colour of war.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies.

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¹⁸ Weng Zhongfu, *Petit dictionnaire chinois-français*, éditions de la Connaissance

Competition is fine as long as it remains within the bounds of a game. Tennis among friends is a happy occasion provided the players not only play fair among themselves but make sure that everyone has fun, including the non-players. In short, the aim must be to strive for the **common good**.

6.1 The spirit in a word, or two

... the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth.

And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

Isaiah 23. 17-18

The unsavoury trade is justified by its purpose. The merchandise is destined for the good of everyone. The trade is intended to make it possible for everyone – all those who dwell before the Lord - to be able to eat sufficiently and to be clothed in durable clothing.

Note the two words 'sufficiently' and 'durable'. Both bring to today's mind the ideals of a simple life-style and sustainable development. John Woolman was thinking of biblical injunctions like this one in the argument we numbered '3' in the quotation in section 5 above.

The sporting spirit is not an invitation to class warfare, a call to react in kind to the war of the rich on the poor. On the contrary.

Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

- James 5, 6

In this context, the word 'resist' means to hit back. The peaceable spirit seeks ways of righting injustices which at the same time maintain, or better still strengthen, the fellowship of the human community.

The life of the godly is aptly compared to a supply of merchandise, since they must as it were deal and swap among themselves to maintain fellowship. Furthermore the industry with which each person prosecutes the task laid on him, and his very vocation, the ability to act aright, and the rest of the gifts, are like merchandise, since their purpose and use is mutual communication among people.

- Calvin, Comm. NT Mt. 25.24