

Stupidities!

The fog of excuses suppresses any criticism, despite the fact that this would reveal naked truths. The fog camouflages, as it also distorts.

We know more than what we were taught. And we presume to know an awful lot. This presumption, which is almost endless, stands in contrast to the scarce knowledge that we actually evince in our daily behavior. To complain—this we know and practice; it is one of the generous contributions that any citizen can make. Nevertheless, although we try to pass unnoticed, we often remain open to discovery as we expose one woe after another.

Professor Mihai Nadin (University of Texas) first attracted our attention some years ago with his reflections on human experiences as they developed in various societies. In his recent book, *Are You Stupid?* (Synchron Publishers), the author puts his finger on the wound that we do not want to see or hear about—and even less speak about or attend to, due to the revelation of our own incoherence that it exposes. The book exposes our deep inconsistencies

What a question, damn it! How would the people of the USA respond to it? The crux of the question extends to Venezuela, to Spain, and, I would say, to the entire world. This question goes to the heart of the citizens' dignity. The same question requires that we think. Coherence, respect, dignity are among the singular attributes of civilized societies. But what do these mean to the modern individual? Trying to answer the question posed by the book is a good exercise in trying to understand the modern man and woman.

What a Country!

This exclamation is probably most used in a negative sense by those who feel disoriented, alienated by the USA. But it could as well be a declaration of admiration. Professor Nadin places this dilemma before us, a dilemma that applies also to other countries. We live and function in an environment of cultural, technical, and social progress. But the same cabal of persons taking charge of the new phenomena in culture, technology, and society provoke a shift that entails serious repercussions. The sense of drifting, complacency, and servitude engendered by progress contribute to the effective stupor of each individual's consciousness. Without actively engaged citizens as the fundamental entity, what kind of country do we present to the world?

Maintaining the attitude of victim will not right any wrongs. Peculiar external factors determine the people's progressive alienation. But let's not cover up the decadent characteristics that each sector of society clearly displays. At this stage, ignoring the obvious or claiming ignorance is not a good strategy. "To be or not to be, that is the question!"

A Decadent Conspiracy

We took a ride on a toboggan that ditched us in stupidity.

Through never-ending splatter, all sectors of society have left us stained. To what extent are we all accomplices to this scheme—that is the most important question.

Surrendering in a little bit here, a little bit there to ambition and greed, we have raised business to the cold heights where no humanity can exist. Multimedia encourage indiscriminate expression, not at all predisposed to critique or sound judgment. The courts of law only toe the line of the powers that be.

Even the trusted bastion of "Education"—schools and universities—was breached by adoption of the industrial model of mass production. And the consequent acceptance of mediocrity. Through such designs, the conspiracy progressively expands, with the goal of creating a reign of stupidity, of establishing idiocracy.

The Stupidity Spiral

All fleas seem to jump in the same direction. This not only keeps things bad, but makes them worse. Each "flea" is hard at work in promoting stupidity. And they don't act in turn, but in overpowering simultaneity. The results of their flagrant efforts are plainly visible—for those who want to see them. Those who don't care to see them cannot claim lack of evidence.

Considering the human fiber, the vacuous content of the different social media providers becomes a crucial matter. Even though there have been some concepts with value to them, these are rendered meaningless in the hodge-podge of messages. Each non-entity, who rejects any substantive thought, who uses the same clichés, in combination with the speed of message delivery, contributes to this state of affairs. Responses are spasmodic, mere retorts, not at all conducive to any substantive undertaking.

Glaring exhibitionism and self-glorification destroy any coherence in the messages; the flash of the moment takes precedence. The most detestable postings are jumbled together with the next

great revelation in a dizzying array—all without any sense of value. In any case, in view of the spectacle on the computer monitor, this would be considered presumption.

Blaming the system as the chief culprit seems to me to be yet another snap judgment, a simplistic alibi. The people resorting to this tactic do not have much influence in the grander scheme of life. A variety of socialisms and theocracies perhaps overcame some evils and the populace carry on as always. Notwithstanding, since the human beings first appeared, some have aspired to change human nature, and it will come as no surprise if this goes on until Utopia is attained.

By the People, for the People

What does this mean? Who is “the People”? Does anyone even think about “the People”? The People is neither a set of rights—with no responsibilities—nor the distribution of enormous abundance. Who does the distributing? No one of its parts is equal to another. Can diversity be mandated? How would it be administered? In short: What are we talking about when we bring up the long-suffering People?

Professor Nadin’s book arouses us to the need for a new convention of citizens that will approach the central issues of living together. Even though they seem to be a subject for cut-and-dried socio-anthropological research, these issues go to the very core of our physical and emotional well-being. Yet we never reach the point of radically approaching these pressing issues.

There is the possibility—remote, of course—that we shall be more intelligent in the future. Even though the known precedents, the mental distractibility characteristic of human beings, and difficulties yet to come will not lessen by one iota the current state of unrest.

Intelligence—Drop by Drop

A few drops of intelligence will not hurt. We experience this directly in our daily existence—but without any meaningful benefit. We can barely pay any attention to them in view of the devastating morass of voracious corruption, widespread worthless frivolity, rampant mediocrity, increasing aggressiveness, and general passivity when the time for thinking about correcting the course arrives.

If the concept of intelligence properly includes attentiveness, together with the adequate preparation and effort required for each task, good taste, tenacity, coherence, and solidarity, we will understand why there is such a lack of intelligence, and why it comes down in a trickle, too slow to be effective.

We'll find out whether we have to face up to the finality towards which stupidity leads, in the hope that by some coincidence an overwhelming revulsion will arise. If this causes an increase in the number of people believing in miracles, then any obstacle can be overcome. Even in view of all the hazards in today's world, let's risk a wager on which side, stupidity or intelligence, will win out.

To overcome stupidity through intelligence is the challenge of our time—a challenge that reverberates freedom for all—that can be taken up, shrugged off, or, as is too often the case, despised. The challenge will not come from just any one person (no matter how important), but only when it takes hold in the minds of all people.

I shall end with a poem calling attention to the traits of stupidity. Maybe there is time to at least slow down the process. Although, as time goes by, wisdom is also becoming scarce. It could just as well happen that anything meaningful will just pass over needy human souls. In an infuriating equation in which the human condition is included, stupidity will keep us on the minus side. Let's accept the suggestions made in Nadin's book in order to take a good look at ourselves.

Could I be stupid? But if ...
 I shut my eyes to upsetting events
 I keep silent during relevant discussions
 My ears choose which sounds to hear,
 I extend my hand only to receive a gift
 I fake my own inclinations

Could I be stupid? But if ...
 In casting my ballot
 I applaud every new wonder

I believed that we are all equal
I trusted every form of empty progress
I read every vain-glorifying tale

Even though...

My bones ache with the passing of time
All kinds of hardship have hit me
I was assailed by question after question
Without finding any simple answers
And before the inevitable abyss
Wondering, I remain as ignorant as ever.