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OP-ED GUEST COLUMNIST

Ten for the Next Ten

By BONO

Dublin

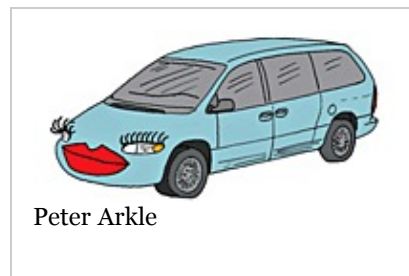
IF we have overindulged in anything these past several days, it is neither holiday ham nor American football; it is Top 10 lists. We have been stuffed full of them. Even in these self-restrained pages, it has been impossible to avoid the end-of-the-decade accountings of the 10 best such-and-suches and the 10 worst fill-in-the-blanks.

And so, in the spirit of rock star excess, I offer yet another.

The main difference, if it matters, is that this list looks forward, not backward. So here, then, are 10 ideas that might make the next 10 years more interesting, healthy or civil. Some are trivial, some fundamental. They have little in common with one another except that I am seized by each, and moved by its potential to change our world.

Return of the Automobile as a Sexual Object

How is it that the country that made us all fall in love with the automobile has failed, with only a few exceptions, to produce a single family sedan with the style and humor and grace of the cars produced in the '40s, '50s and '60s? Put aside the question of whether those models were male (as in longer, lower and wider, Dr. Freud) or female (as in fender skirts, curvy belt lines and, of course, headlights). Either way, they all had sex appeal. (In Ireland in the '70s, it was the E-Type Jag that made sense of puberty.) Today, however, we have the mundanity of our marriage to the minivan and the S.U.V. and long-term relationships with midsize cars that are, forgive me, a little heavy in the rear cargo hold.



Are aerodynamics to blame? Economics? Or that most American of inventions, design by committee? It hurts me to say this about democracy (and I know because my band is one), but rarely does majority rule produce something of beauty.

That's why the Obama administration — while it still holds the keys to the big automakers — ought to put some style fascists into the mix: the genius of Marc Newson ... Steve Jobs and

Jonny Ive from Apple ... Frank Gehry, the architect, and Jeff Koons, the artist. Put the great industrial designers in the front seat, right along with sound financial stewardship ... the greener, the cleaner, the meaner on fossil fuels, the sexier for me. Check out the Tesla or the Fisker Karma car, designed by the same team that gave the world the Aston Martin.

Intellectual Property Developers

Caution! The only thing protecting the movie and TV industries from the fate that has befallen music and indeed the newspaper business is the size of the files. The immutable laws of bandwidth tell us we're just a few years away from being able to download an entire season of "24" in 24 seconds. Many will expect to get it free.



A decade's worth of music file-sharing and swiping has made clear that the people it hurts are the creators — in this case, the young, fledgling songwriters who can't live off ticket and T-shirt sales like the least sympathetic among us — and the people this reverse Robin Hooding benefits are rich service providers, whose swollen profits perfectly mirror the lost receipts of the music business.

We're the post office, they tell us; who knows what's in the brown-paper packages? But we know from America's noble effort to stop child pornography, not to mention China's ignoble effort to suppress online dissent, that it's perfectly possible to track content. Perhaps movie moguls will succeed where musicians and their moguls have failed so far, and rally America to defend the most creative economy in the world, where music, film, TV and video games help to account for nearly 4 percent of gross domestic product. Note to self: Don't get over-rewarded rock stars on this bully pulpit, or famous actors; find the next Cole Porter, if he/she hasn't already left to write jingles.

An Equal Right to Pollute (and the Polluter-Pays Principle)

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in the recent climate talks in Copenhagen, it was no surprise that developing countries objected to taking their feet off the pedal of their own carbon-paced growth; after all, they played little part in building the congested eight-lane highway of a problem that the world faces now.

One smart suggestion I've heard, sort of a riff on cap-and-trade, is that each person has an equal right to pollute and that there might somehow be a way to monetize this. By this accounting, your average Ethiopian can sell her underpolluting ways (people in Ethiopia emit about 0.1 ton of carbon a year) to the average American (about 20 tons a year) and use the proceeds to deal with the effects of climate change (like drought), educate her kids and send them to university. (Trust in capitalism — we'll find a way.) As a mild green, I like the idea, though it's controversial in militant, khaki-green quarters. And yes, real economists would prefer to tax carbon at the source, but so far the political will is not there. If it were me, I'd close the deal before the rising nations want it backdated.

A Person (Dr. William Li) and a Word (Angiogenesis)

Angiogenesis is the process by which new blood vessels grow. This is good — except when it's very bad, as in the case of cancerous tumors. Blood vessels are their supply lines. Dr. William Li of the Angiogenesis Foundation has called research in this realm the “first medical revolution of the 21st century,” and he should know. (I shouldn't, given my lack of a medical pedigree, but I learned about it from my bandmate the Edge, who supports Dr. Li's foundation.) Work on angiogenesis inhibitors is at the vanguard. In a world worrying about whether it can afford health care, advances in prevention are at a premium.

Factoid: Cancers start as tiny nests of malignant cells that do not enlarge until they recruit new vessels to deliver oxygen and nutrients; then a cancer can expand 16,000 times in only two weeks.

Matter Doesn't Matter

God, it appears, is a Trekkie. (God help us.)

Dr. Anton Zeilinger, an Austrian physicist, is becoming a rock star of science for his work in quantum teleportation, which I



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1. CATNESS
2. FAT
3. ORANGE FUR

know very little about but which I think I may have achieved backstage one night in Berlin in the early 1990s. At any rate, it seems to have something to do with teleporting properties or bits of information, not physical objects; even though Dr. Zeilinger plays down the possibility of a “Star Trek” moment, his breakthroughs are catching the attention of the nonscientific world for their metaphysical implications. His own version of $E=mc^2$ ends in a cosmic punch line: that when it comes to the origin of the universe, information matters more than matter.

Could it be that God is a nerd?

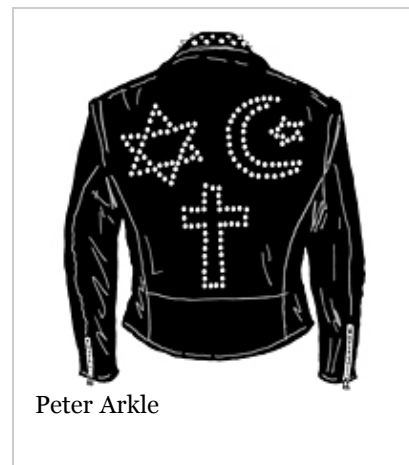
Festival of Abraham

Here’s something that could never have happened in the Naughts but will maybe be possible in the Tweens or Teens — if there’s a breakthrough in the Mideast peace process. The idea is an arts festival that celebrates the origin of the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Every year it could be held in a different location; Jerusalem would obviously be the best place to start.

In Ireland, at the height of the “Troubles,” it was said that the only solution for rabid sectarianism was to let 1,000 punk-rock bands bloom: music helped create a free space for dialogue (of a high-volume variety). So no politicians allowed. Artists only.

People Power and the Upside-Down Pyramid

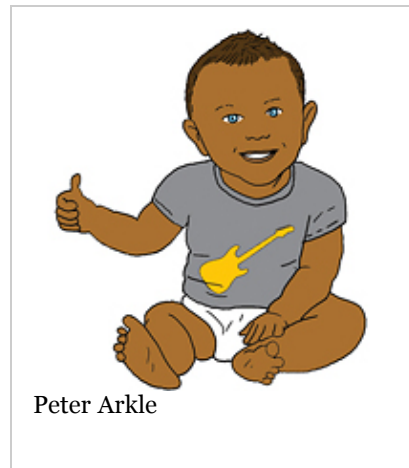
A lot of us have seen or lived the organizational chart of the last century, in which power and influence (whether possessed by church, state or corporation) are concentrated in the uppermost point of the pyramid and pressure is exerted downward. But in this new century, and especially in some parts of the developing world, the pyramid is being inverted. Much has been written about the profits to be made at the bottom of the pyramid; less has been said about the political power there. Increasingly, the masses are sitting at the top, and their weight, via cellphones, the Web and the civil society and democracy these technologies can promote, is being felt by those who have traditionally held power. Today, the weight bears down harder when the few are corrupt or fail to deliver on the promises that earned them authority in the first place.



The world is taking notice of this change. On her most recent trip to Africa, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton bypassed officials and met instead with representatives of independent, nongovernmental groups, which are quickly becoming more organized and more interconnected. For example, Twaweza, a citizen's organization, is spreading across East Africa, helping people hold local officials accountable for managing budgets and delivering services. (Twaweza is Swahili for "we can make it happen.")

Taking the Fight to Rotavirus

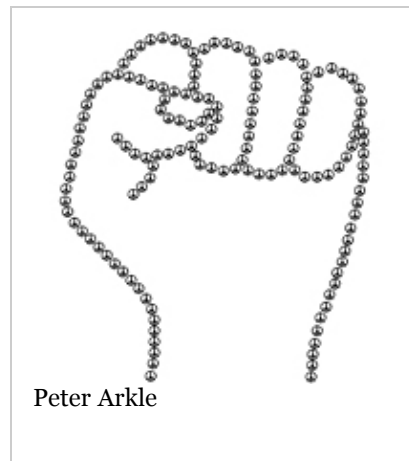
The thing is, they exist, these vaccines. They're not a mere hope, like an AIDS vaccine. And one of the brightest bits of news in 2009 is that rotavirus vaccines have been shown to work not only in nations with low child mortality, but in the poorest countries, where diarrhea (not a killer in our house) caused by rotavirus infections takes the lives of 500,000 children a year. The World Health Organization just this summer issued a strong recommendation that rotavirus vaccinations be part of every nation's immunization program. From this vantage point, I like the look of the next decade.



Viva la (Nonviolent) Revolución

"As someone who stands here as a direct consequence of Dr. King's life work," President Obama said in his Nobel acceptance speech, "I am living testimony to the moral force of nonviolence."

So, he might have added, are the Germans and Eastern Europeans who came out a couple of months ago to celebrate the anniversary of the fall of the Wall. And so are the brave Iranians who continue to take to the streets despite the certainty of brutal repression. Like Neda Agha Soltan, they are living (and bleeding and dying) testimony.



The start of the decade ought to be a time for a little bit of hope — not the wispy stuff, but battle-hardened hope, forged in the grim, purposeful spirit of the times. So I'll place my hopes on the possibility — however remote at the moment — that the regimes in North Korea, Myanmar and elsewhere are taking note of the trouble an aroused citizenry can give to tyrants, and that people in places filled with rage and despair, places like the Palestinian territories, will in the days ahead find among them their Gandhi, their King, their Aung San Suu Kyi.

The World Cup Kicks Off the African Decade

It's getting easier to describe to Americans the impact of the World Cup — especially the impact it will have in Africa, where the tournament is to be held this summer. A few years ago, Ivory Coast was splitting apart and in the midst of civil war when its national team qualified for the 2006 jamboree. The response was so ecstatic that the war was largely put on hold as something more important than deathly combat took place, i.e. a soccer match. The team became a symbol of how the different tribes could — and did — get on after the tournament was over.



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This time round, for the 2010 World Cup, naysayers thought South Africa could not build the stadiums in time. Those critics should be red-faced now. South Africa's impressive preparations underline the changes on the continent, where over the last few years, 5 percent economic growth was the average. Signs point to a further decade of growth to come. Canny investors will put more capital there. This in turn has the potential to shore up fragile young democracies across the continent.

It would be fitting if Nelson Mandela, who has done more than anyone for Africa's rising, would kick off the opening ceremonies. If he shows up, the world will weep with joy.

Bono, the lead singer of the band U2 and a founder of the advocacy group ONE and (Product)RED, is a contributing columnist for The Times.

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