

**Love, Dignity, and Practical Utopia:  
The Ethical-Eschatological Foundations  
for System Transformation**

**Prof. Glen T Martin**



**World Constitution and Parliament Association  
India Chapter**

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**2019**

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**World Constitution and Parliament Association  
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Global Communication Center  
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# **Love, Dignity, and Practical Utopia:** The Ethical-Eschatological Foundations for System Transformation

In actual fact, what is revolutionary in a really profound sense, is not optimism, which is in the last resort conservative, but rather the pessimism which cannot come to terms with the world. But this pessimism is not absolute, it is relative, and the messianic hope remains in it.

~Nicolas Berdyaev (1952: 249)

## **The System**

The first principle of any coherent philosophy of human liberation includes the insight that the closed totality of the present world-system is a disaster for humankind and our planet. The global capitalist system linked to the global system of militarized sovereign nation-states (the two together forming an integrated system of military-economic domination and exploitation) forms a totality that conditions the thought and feelings of people around the global into unquestioningly accepting its premises.

These premises include acceptance of the principle of exploitation of workers by owners as the legitimate basis of an economic system and the acceptance of incommensurable absolute

territorial boundaries as a coherent way of politically organizing our planet. This system is inevitably structured around an “imperial center” in competition with a “semi-periphery” of allied and revival nations, and dominating a “periphery” of exploited, poverty ridden, dehumanized nations. Even the religions of the world, all of them focused on a transcendent dimension or a Real that transcends the finite, have in effect settled down into accepting the basic premises of the closed totality. In this respect all these religions are, in practice, various ideologies of atheism.

The consequences of the nation-state-capitalist system is global imperialism: the drive to global domination. “Imperialism,” Nicolas Berdyaev writes, “is the technical product of civilization. It is not culture. It is the bare will to universal domination and organization. It forms part of the capitalist system and is by its nature technical” (1936: 220). Martin Heidegger describes this system as “the autonomous will and its desires” facing the world as “standing reserve” (1977). Nothing is sacred, nothing is forbidden, everything is reserve material for its mastery, domination, and exploitation. The sovereignnation-state becomes a god on Earth, and its religion is capitalism, the “free market” of universal commodification and

dehumanization.

In our contemporary world, social scientists James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer conclude that “the economic interest represented by these capitalist corporations converge with the national interests advanced and protected by the nation-states that make up what can be termed the ‘imperial state system’” (2005: 25). Social scientist Christopher Chase-Dunn exposes “the myth of the nation as a transcendent solidarity.” This “ideological mystification” is not only empty because states are controlled by tiny elites of capitalists rather than their citizens but also because even so-called democratic states “represent only the interest of their own citizens.” The world as a whole, the people of Earth, have no representation (1998: 36). However, under the current totalitarian “global formation,” “the state and the interstate system are not separate from capitalism, but are rather the main institutional supports of capitalist production relations.... And thus wars and geopolitics are a systematic part of capitalist dynamics, not exogenous forces” (ibid. 61).

The consequences of this totalistic system are everywhere apparent. System’s theorist Jacques Ellul concludes that worldwide “man indeed participates in the economy, but technique

causes him to participate not as a man but as a thing” (1965: 216). He continues: “When a man himself becomes a machine, he attains to the marvelous freedom of unconsciousness, the freedom of the machine itself” (1965: 226). The world imperial-capital system, in its “freedom of unconsciousness,” destroys not only nature but human beings. One study estimates the deaths caused in the wars of the current imperial center of the world system since the Second World War as 20-30 million persons [1].

Scientific studies like that of Gustave Speth’s *Red Sky at Dawn* (2005) are appearing everywhere showing the integrated destruction of our planetary biosphere by this system. Chris Williams, in his 2010 book, *Ecology and Socialism: Solutions to Capitalist Economic Crisis*, concludes that “capitalism is thus systematically driven toward the ruination of the planet and we underestimate how committed the system is to planetary ecocide at our peril. As stated above, ecological devastation is just as intrinsic to the operation of capitalism as is the exploitation of the vast majority of humans in the interests of a tiny minority, imperialism, and war” (2010: 232).

Meanwhile the NGO Oxfam concludes that 62 people own the same amount of wealth as

the poorest half of the world. Despite the talk of world leaders about the need to reduce inequality the gap continues to widen. The report concludes that “We cannot continue to allow hundreds of millions of people to go hungry while resources that could be used to help them are sucked up by those at the top”[2].

In 2012, Garry Leech published *Capitalism: A Structural Genocide* showing the genocidal nature of the world system itself. It is not necessary that people dominating this system intend to commit genocide, rather the system itself is structurally genocidal. Many millions die in the wars generated by the system and many millions die through being ground up in the mechanisms of the global economic machinery. There are people working and struggling on every corner of the global to modify this system in the name of greater justice, fairness, and environmental sustainability. But the immense system, like the great beast of the Apocalypse, simply absorbs their efforts through murder, suppression, or marginalization. It continues undiminished.

## **Dignity and the Other**

Our failure arises because we do not clearly envision an other to the system. We lack an

outside to the system. We have little or no conception of a practical utopia that could displace The System of inhumanity, greed, and destruction with a world community of dignity, love, and creative affirmation. In his 1988 book, *Ethics and Community*, for example, Enrique Dussel elucidates the teachings of Jesus and St. Paul as articulating such a utopian other. The Other in this case is the human person recognized in his or her personhood and linked with one another in a Community based on this personhood, hence, in a community based on love (agape).

This Other serves as the embodiment of an “eschatological hope” arising from the poor and marginalized of the world system. The Leviathan marches on, generating its own ethics (of complicity with the system), its own techniques for justifying and legitimating the system (the corporate press and mainstream journalism), and its own arrangements for the rule of law and justice (in which it martyrs the prophets, heroes, resisters, and whistleblowers of the system). From within The System there is only “reasoned criticism” and “responsible journalism,” never an outside that sees the system as a totality for what it is. What is absolutely forbidden is an eschatology that poses the possibility of a real transformation of the system premised on



the otherness of our true humanity: our love, dignity, and capacity for genuine community.

French thinker Emmanuel Levinas published *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* in English in 1969. The totality of the world system is opposed to the “infinity in the human face,” the recognition of the infinite depths of the Other that cannot be reduced or accounted for by the philosophies and sciences of the system. “Totalitarian thinking accepts,” he writes, “vision rather than language as its model. It aims to gain an all-inclusive, panoramic view of all things, including the Other, in neutral, impersonal light like the Hegelian Geist (Spirit), or the Heideggerian Being” (1969: 15). This system does not and cannot recognize the eschatological imperative.

For Levinas, the “war” that issues perpetually from the system is contradicted by our “prophetic eschatology” as the “beyond of history.” “[Eschatology] does not introduce a teleological system into the totality; it does not consist in teaching the orientation of history. Eschatology institutes a relation with being beyond the totality or beyond history.... It is a relationship with a surplus always exterior to the totality...as though another concept, the concept of infinity, were needed to express this

transcendence with regard to the totality” (ibid. 22-23).

For Levinas the depths of our human freedom, of our choice to be responsible for the Other, lies an infinity incommensurable with the closed totality of finitude assumed by the dominant world system. For Errol E. Harris, the awareness of persons of their own finitude implies a criterion, and awareness of their infinitude that judges itself as such: “Accordingly I could not be aware of myself as finite unless I were aware of an infinite, and I could not be aware of that unless it were immanent already in my thought. It is through immanence in consciousness of the absolute reality that consciousness is self-transcendent” (1965: 66).

There is a dimension, inherent in our existential condition, that reflects the absolutely Other, the Infinite, that encompasses us and yet often eludes us. David Kirchhoffer, in his 2013 book *Human Dignity and Contemporary Ethics* chronicles the debate over the meaningfulness of the concept of human dignity in contemporary discourse. Some have proposed that the concept is meaningless because it can be used to justify entirely contradictory conclusions. For example, some claim that our human dignity prohibits the practice of allowing a planned

or voluntary death while others claim that our right to choose a voluntary death itself reflects our human dignity (2013: 92-95).

Kirchhoffer defends the meaningfulness of the concept of human dignity by offering a model of dignity as comprised of a nexus of multidimensional “component dimensions,” each temporally structured within a framework of “already” and “not yet” (Chap. 3). On the one hand it can be said that human beings already have dignity but that this concept is always within a context of a potential for actualizing that dignity, so that our past claims to dignity are always called into question by a potential and a becoming that seeks the actualization of dignity. He calls this dynamic of the future judging and overcoming the past “the eschatological proviso” (ibid. 207). The concept of dignity always involves a surplus, a surplus that demands something never entirely actualized within our temporal existence or within history. This “not yet” remains an integral dimension of human dignity (ibid. 216).

In sum, the otherness of human beings, their inherent dignity, can be perceived in their freedom (Levinas), in their self-awareness of finitude that inevitably points to Infinity (Harris), or in their temporality moving from

a past toward a futurity that implies the ideal of transformation in the light of otherness (Kirchhoffer). Perhaps the most fundamental philosophical elucidation of human dignity historically is found in the second formula of Kant's Categorical Imperative which states "Always treat every person as an end in themselves, never merely as a means." Kant elaborates the concept of an "end in itself" using the distinction between dignity and price. With price "something else can be put in its place as an equivalent." What has "intrinsic value," what is "exalted above all price and admits of no equivalent," has dignity. Only free, rational beings have dignity (1964: 102).

In the totality of the world system, under capitalism and the militarized sovereign nation-states, everything has a price, everything can and must be bought and sold, even human beings, even children, even the food that starving human beings need to eat. The world system is understood as a historically conditioned process of development that might slowly become progressively better through human ingenuity and rationally motivated efforts, but it is a system in which the future emerges out of a past in terms of a pervasive causal determinism that cannot be questioned within the realm of respectable discourse. People declare that "it will

be centuries before we can end war on the Earth,” or “it will be decades before humankind will be able to end poverty,” or “world government is a dream for the next century.” Within this system, people are tethered to the origin, to the past, in denial of their freedom.

The concept of dignity often functions within this system as a rhetorical device, as a statement of “mere ideals.” The 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins with the famous assertion that: “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” But nations around the globe recognize this as merely an ideal, not an immanent reality, not even as (unenforceable) international law. And for this reason they see little need to respect human rights in a world where everything has a price, and in practice, nothing is recognized as having intrinsic dignity (see Posner 2014).

The system denies the inherent otherness that is immanent everywhere but invisible to those conditioned by the dominant assumptions, who are fooled into believing that subjectivity is just an epiphenomenon of “objective reality.” Human dignity, they think, is a merely subjective ideal. What is denied is the power and reality of human

futurity: the eschatological demand that is inherent in the very structure of temporality. The future as a not yet, and human freedom moving into that future, and human self-awareness embodying a process of transcendence pointing to the Infinite—all embody an otherness not reducible to the causal determinism of the past, an otherness not subject to the law of price and equivalency, a system free of the domination and exploitation inherent in capitalism interlinked with the system of militarized sovereign states.

Political Theologian Jürgen Moltmann in his 1984 book *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics*, states that “the dignity of human beings consists in this, that they are human and should be human. Their existence is a gift and task simultaneously. It presents them with the task of actualizing themselves, their essence, and thus coming into their truth.... If one’s self is his or her essence as human, the self-actualization has nothing to do with egoism, but is one side of the biblical commandment of love: ‘love your neighbor as yourself’” (1984: 10). The fundamental existential fact of human existence is our temporality, and our human “essence” involves, therefore, both “gift and task.” The task is that of love and freedom to secure both itself and a peaceful, just, and liberated world community. In other words: a peaceful and

loving world community premised on human dignity.

Within the structure of personal temporality and within the historicity of civilization, the otherness (human dignity) implicit in our past (what we are) also confronts us as an unconditional demand coming from the future. The transcendence hidden and buried within a past dominated by one-dimensional totality is no longer hidden and buried but confronts us as a demand for transformation, for becoming what we are potentially (what we are and should be). The system of totality is ever concerned to colonize the future with the conditions of determinism and incremental evolutionary change deriving from the past. One may be a conservative or a progressive, but no sane, “educated” person embraces his or her eschatological freedom.

As Paul Tillich expresses this paradox of the system of totality versus the eschatological imperative: “A being that experiences a demand is no longer bound to the origin.... It is something unconditionally new that transcends what is new and what is old within the sphere of mere development.” (1987: 143). Søren Kierkegaard also understood this eschatological priority of the future, demanding a struggle between

my finitude and the Infinity permeating our human condition (1959). This is the demand of genuine otherness, the demand that we enter into relationship with that otherness. It is the demand that human freedom and dignity be recognized and become fundamental in human relationships, thereby transforming the totalistic system based on universal price and equivalency in the direction of eschatological fulfillment of our human quest, premised on human dignity.

Moltmann expresses the demand of eschatology in the following way: “The criticism of past reality takes place in the name of past and present possibilities for the future. The criticism of origins serves the future. The criticism of traditions and institutions seeks freedom for the new. Thus, Kant was the first to put the modern question to religion: ‘What may I hope for?’ The experience of transcendence is shifted with this question from metaphysics to eschatology” (1984: 99). To dwell on the idea that rights and dignity are connected with some “essential nature” (metaphysics), is to abdicate the eschatological dimension of freedom that expresses our dignity more radically and fundamentally. Dignity is not secured by the past alone. Indeed, to take the metaphysical stance alone is simultaneously to open up the



door to deconstruction, relativism, and one-dimensional atheism (Kirchhoffer Chap. 1). Our dignity is manifest in transformative freedom under a command from the future.

Those who claim there is some metaphysical essence within human beings that gives us our dignity may well be omitting the immense power of human temporality to free us from an oppressive past toward the actualization of human liberation. Kant proclaimed that every free, rational being was an end in themselves. But he also declared that a free rational being moves into a future under an absolute obligation to establish “the Kingdom of Ends” (1964). Kant recognized that the utopian vision of a Kingdom in which everyone treats all the others as ends in themselves arises as a direct consequence of our rational freedom that operates under its categorical imperative. A Kingdom of Ends is a social-political realm in which human relationships are no longer governed by “price” and the system of false equivalencies, but are now governed by the imperative of human dignity.

## **Love and Community**

Kant asserted that his formula “always treat persons as ends in themselves never merely as

means” fulfilled Jesus’ commandment to love one’s neighbor. A command cannot be a call to have an “inclination” toward other people such as attraction or sympathy. Rather, the relation for Kant had to be one of respect for intrinsic dignity. The great commandment in Matthew 22 involves a double love: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The word for “love” in both cases is agape.

To love someone as an end in themselves is to love their absolute otherness, their dignity, the Infinity in their human face. This otherness derives from God in the Western religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). It is an expression of God in the Eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism) (Hick 2004: Chap. 18). This is not to love some ideal that is merely an abstraction: because a human being is a concrete whole in the Hegelian sense—an inseparable synthesis of individual uniqueness and our common humanity. As Dussel declares, “We are dealing with a relationship of infinite respect” (1985: 10). You cannot have infinite respect for an abstraction, but only for concrete persons who are a synthesis of our universal humanity and each one’s unique individuality.

Yet respect for the individual uniqueness of personhood does not mean individualism as opposed to community. “Freedom of the spirit has in fact nothing in common with individualism,” Berdyaev writes, “to be free is not to be insulated; it is not to shut oneself up, but, on the contrary, to break through in a creative act to the fullness and universality of existence” (1962: 63). The fullness and universality of existence includes the universality of our common humanity, our indivisible “unity in diversity.” Love for the Other is love for both the universality and the individuality of the Other. This love is the result of a free creative act. In *Applied Spirituality* (2016), Swami Agnivesh writes:

The spiritual task is to bridge the gulf between knowledge and action. Fundamental to this is the duty to draw together the self and the other. If our religiosity is robust enough to love our neighbors as ourselves, it will have a powerful and proactive content. A passionate pursuit of social justice will necessarily be an ingredient of our spirituality, with compassion as its hallmark. Compassion is the ability to love others in deeds no less than words. (2016: 12)

When persons relate to one another in

this way, they become a community, for Agnivesh, this means “the human family as a whole (vasudhaiva kutumbakam) (ibid. 19). “In community,” Enrique Dussel writes, “all individuals are persons for one another.... The community is the real, concrete agent and mover of history. In community we are ‘at home,’ in safety and security, ‘in common’” (1988: 11). This understanding of a community does not require that all people in the community know one another. It is quite possible to live with “a relationship of infinite respect” within a multitude of strangers, which is the vision of Kant’s Kingdom of Ends. This community is the “concrete agent and mover of history” because it derives from the eschatological demand inherent in our futurity. The demand that we respect the infinite dignity of each is simultaneously the demand to actualize the true human community.

In his book *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (1984), Benjamin Barber draws a contrast between the liberal, “thin” democratic notion of community in which each individual is autonomous and the “community” becomes nothing more than a platform for “achieving individual objectives” and the conservative idea of “community” as an organic interlocking of tradition, culture,

and history that subordinates the individual to its often “hierarchical” social order (1984: 230-31). The third alternative, he declares, is “strong community,” which Barber defines by reference to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s idea in *The Social Contract* that a genuine democratic community “produces a remarkable change in man” in which the citizen’s ideas are broadened and “his whole soul elevated.”

Hence each of us, as deeply and uniquely individual persons, is also inherently social, and our democratic contract, the joining together through a complete alienation to the community only to receive everything back again, now binds us together as “citizens” within a common general will (1974). Today, this confronts us as our global possibility: our ascent to a planetary human community.

Philosopher Paul Ricoeur states that hermeneutical elucidation of my humanity can reach the point where “My field of motivation is open to the whole range of the human.... My humanity is my essential community with all that is human outside myself: that community makes every man my like. My character is not the opposite of that humanity: my character is that humanity seen from somewhere, the whole city seen from a certain angle, the partial

totality” (1967: 93).

The framework and manifold of ideas that people embrace define for them the kinds of communities that can arise from their social interaction. A libertarian set of ideas will result in a “thin” community barely held together by laws and minimalist public institutions. A conservative (Burkean) set of ideas will result in a community of social hierarchy, privilege, and inequality. If I adopt the idea of a universal human community implicit in my own self-awareness, as Ricoeur, Errol Harris, or Swami Agnivesh describe this, then all of humanity becomes my community, and in the conversion to this mode of being my “whole soul is elevated.”

I become a world citizen. I become cognizant of every human being as a member of the human community, bearing a common dignity and facing a common future informed with eschatological potential. My love becomes like the agape of God taught by Jesus in Matthew 5: like the sun and the rain it falls “equally on the just and the unjust,” indiscriminately on the good and the evil. I begin to see the relation to this universal love emanating from my world citizenship and the eschatological vision, also taught by Jesus, of bringing the Kingdom of God to Earth. Or I begin to see the transformative

potential of Kant's Categorical Imperative in which my recognition of the infinite dignity of others immediately implies the absolute moral obligation to actualize the Kingdom of Ends.

The authentic human community, living together in peace and justice on the Earth, is a product of that mature love that recognizes the dignity of each. The universal equality that is a corollary of this community is the equality of our common dignity, for in the world of prices and equivalencies there is no real human equality, only endless differences of wealth, social status, education, measurable physical and mental capacities, etc. The authentic human community is implicit in the eschatological structure of human futurity. "The only source of true social equality," Berdyaev affirms, "is to be found in a recognition of the dignity and worth of the human person" (1962: 221). Human freedom, dignity, and equality are interdependent and inseparable realities.

Moltmann writes: "International solidarity in overcoming the horror of starvation and the threat of world military crises has, therefore, because of the rights of humanity, a precedence over loyalty to one's own people, to one's own class, race, or nation. Individual communities and states have human duties in the face of

the rights of the whole of humanity to life, freedom, and community. Therefore, human rights point to a universal community in which alone they can be realized” (1984: 26). Human rights derive from our common human dignity and its eschatological potential. Implicit in the structure of history is our capacity to break with the myth of the origin (our deadening slavery to past causalities) and actualize the universal community of Earth.

Christopher Chase-Dunn concludes that “we need to shape the emerging world society into a global democratic commonwealth based on collective rationality, liberty, and equality. This possibility is present in existing and evolving structures. The agents are all those who are tired of wars and hatred and who desire a humane, sustainable, and fair world-system. This is certainly the majority of the people of the Earth” (1998: 26). Collective rationality demands a global socialist community premised on our planetary common good.

Under a democratic socialist world system, the common good informs the global community. As Michael Luntley expresses this: “On the social model, we start as members of a community that predates our individual cares and rights and which supplies us with duties



and bonds to others” (1990: 133). This means that discussion of a common good and common purpose for humanity is made possible for the first time. Capitalism destroys that discussion and structurally imposes the need for cutthroat competition in order to survive:

Socialism is not a moral theory which offers a particular vision of the good life, instead it is a theory about how the good life is possible. It is, in short, a theory about the conditions necessary for creating a society in which our lives are shaped by moral values...rather than a society in which our moral traditions have been erased by forces inimical to the moral life.... It is capitalism which has been largely responsible for the destruction of the conditions necessary for the good life. (1990: 15)

The moral traditions of civilization have everywhere been undercut by the global ascendancy of The System comprised of naked power relationships inseparable from pervasive economic commodification of human beings and nature. Capitalism erases those traditions in the name of money, profit, and competition. Jacques Ellul describes this process of erasing moral traditions: “He who has money is the slave of the money he has. He who has it not is the slave of a mad desire to get it. The first and

great law

is consumption. Nothing but this imperative has any value in such a life” (1965: 221). Human dignity, rights, and freedoms have little meaning in such a system. These values all belong to humanity as a whole. The law of consumption and individual greed destroys these values.

My rights are violated when those of my neighbor are violated. Since all rights derive from what is common and universal about us, our dignity, we cannot live in a world of sovereign militarized territorial states in which rights are said to be violated in some places and not in others. Kant suggested this in his 1795 essay “Perpetual Peace.” The very structure of the system of sovereign nation-states, recognizing no enforceable laws above themselves, means that we exist on this Earth in an immoral condition of “war.” This condition, which Kant calls “savage and barbaric,” gives us the absolute moral obligation to leave it for the rule of enforceable republican law, premised on freedom and equality. It requires us to begin “a federation of free states” that have left this state of nature and exchanged senseless freedom for “rational freedom” (1957: 115). This federation would be tantamount to establishing humanity as a universal community of rights and duties.

The genuine community is democratic and socialist. As philosopher Alan Gewirth declares, the respect for human beings necessarily includes respect for both freedom and well-being (1982). Capitalism disintegrates authentic communities. It commodifies and dehumanizes persons into instruments of production, to be bought and sold. It commodifies the human body to a commodity for organ trafficking, sex trafficking, and child trafficking. Socialism means that society sees itself as a community in which we are mutually responsible for one another, our values, and our basic needs. It understands that an authentic community involves mutual solidarity.

Philosopher Mortimer Adler asserts: “In the economic order, socialism parallels democracy in the political order. It stands for the ideal of economic equality, as democracy stands for the ideal of political equality.... Among the natural, unalienable, and human rights is the economic right to a decent livelihood.... It is communism, not socialism, that is incompatible with democracy and with private-property capitalism” (1991: 18). A socialist community respects human freedom while recognizing the communal mutual obligation of human beings. Berdyaev writes that “Only a form of Socialism, which unites personality and the communal

principle, can satisfy Christianity.... But the true and final renaissance will probably begin in the world only after the elementary, everyday problems of human existence are solved for all peoples and nations, after bitter human need and the economic slavery of man have been finally conquered” (1961: 130-31).

The great failing of the modern world, which is the intrinsic limitation of The System, is that the immense technological prowess that is fully capable of promoting good medicine, real communications for mutual understanding, and production of basic necessities for all is used instead for militarism, war, domination, exploitation, propaganda, and endless consumption. The utopian promise of technology is prostituted to The System, to inhuman and criminal ends: to the Spanish Empire, the British Empire, the German-Nazi Empire, the Russian-Stalinist Empire, or the American Capitalist Empire. However, ultimately, it will be everyone or no one (a loving planetary socialist community or extinction), for The System is rapidly moving human beings toward their own extinction. Only a global socialist community can humanize technology and place it in the service of well-being and creative freedom. Berdyaev speaks of “the truth...that everyone is responsible for everyone else, that all are

interconnected, that a person is not an isolated entity” (1960:60).

## **Practical Utopia**

The utopian impulse is the impulse to freedom, the struggle against the system and the empire. Thinkers like Levinas and Berdyaev have envisioned this otherness as an eschatological beyond or demand that forever lures the present moment toward self-transcendence. The utopian demand cannot be ignored or eliminated from the human project because doing so would be the end of human freedom and dignity and the beginning of the absolute totalitarian dehumanization. However, we live in a concrete world that points to, and can provide a means to, that utopian fulfillment in a practical and actualizable form.

Indeed, the entire cosmos is temporalized and a vast, divine mystery is being realized through it, as Hans Jonas and others have pointed out. What can emerge is the entirely new: freedom can emerge from the seeming unfreedom of causally conditioned evolutionary processes. Political philosopher Hannah Arendt recognizes the “miraculous” character of this emergence:

Our whole existence rests, after all, on a chain of miracles, as it were – the coming into being of the earth, the development of organic life on it, the evolution of mankind out of the animal species. From the viewpoint of the processes in the universe and in nature, and their statistically overwhelming probabilities, the coming into being of the earth out of cosmic processes, the formation of organic life out of inorganic processes, the evolution of man, finally, out of the processes of organic life are all “infinite improbabilities,” they are “miracles” in everyday language. It is because of this element of the “miraculous” present in all reality that events, no matter how well anticipated in fear or hope, strike us with a shock of surprise once they have come to pass. The very impact of an event is never wholly explicable; its factuality transcends in principle all anticipation. (1968: 169-70)

And the miraculous is not confined to the evolutionary past alone, for the present moment is filled with that mystery and depth of the line between a past and an unfinished and open future. Arendt concludes in the same place that “a capacity for performing miracles must likewise be within the range of human faculties.” As Block expresses this: “The world substance, mundane matter itself, is not yet finished and

complete, but persists in a utopian-open state, i.e. a state in which its self-identity is not yet manifest.... Consequently not only the specific existent, but all given existence and being itself, has utopian margins which surround actuality with real and objective possibility” (1963: 96).

Martin Buber expresses the principle this way: “Man is the crystalized potentiality of existence. But he is this potentiality in its factual limitation. The wealth of possibility in existence from which the animals are kept away by their exiguous reality is exhibited in man in a sign that is incomprehensible from the standpoint of nature.... He remains the centre of all surprise in the world” (1972: 437-38). Our human situation includes a “wealth of possibility” not available to the animals. A free being encounters this possibility as an eschatological demand, a demand for transforming and actualizing the utopian potential inherent in his situation. One cannot separate the world from man (subjectivity from objectivity), except as an arbitrary intellectual construction: It is not a matter of affirming our subjectivity versus an “objective” factual reality. It is, rather, our total “human situation” itself—a synthesis and dialectical tension of fact and freedom, that exhibits utopian margins.

The utopian demand can be made practical. It can be linked to concrete historical circumstances and possibilities forming a possible bridge from here to there. “This utopia,” Enrique Dussel writes, “impossible in history, nevertheless can guide our reflection even though it be only to see the alienation in which we live and realize the need for liberation at diverse levels” (1985: 139). “There is no totally new work, least of all of the revolutionary kind,” Block states, “the old work is merely continued more clearly, brought to success” (1991: 132). The past need not causally determine a one-dimensional and self-enclosed pedestrian present; the past can provide the seeds of a liberating transformation drawing on the past and pointing to an ever-renewed future. A good political constitution creates substantial legal stability while simultaneously offering ample opportunities for perpetual changes into the future. The works of Marx do not offer a blueprint for a closed totalitarian communist “end to history” but rather a springboard for continually moving into a more humane and liberated future.

“There is no liberation without economics,” Dussel writes, “without humanized technology, without planning, and without beginning with a historical social formation” (1985: 63). Concrete realities in the present can partially embody



liberating qualities while symbolizing higher ideals and further revolutionary achievements. Dussel extolled the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua as embodying the practical utopian drive, open to the future and further transformation. Nicholas Berdyaev remained faithful to the Christian-Marxist imperative of a liberating socialism from deep within his Russian background. Ernst Bloch intentionally lived much of his life in East Germany, faithful to the utopian promise inherent in the Marxist vision.

The utopian conscience lives from its freedom, for its capacity for independence of the determinism of the past and the possibilities of transformation. “Creativity arises from the deep potentialities of spirit and freedom,” declares Berdyaev (1972: 307). “Evolutionism denies liberty, creative activity, and new experiences lived out in the depths of being, in exactly the same way as they are denied by the static conception of the world” (ibid. 312). Evolutionism, the tracing of causal development into the past, is eminently valuable if it is not totalized into a theory of universal determinism. For out of the evolutionary process, freedom has emerged, as Hans Jonas has elucidated at length (1984). The telos of evolution is itself freedom, and the perpetual process of self transcendence

that constitutes the personal and historical dialectic.

“For the just person,” Dussel writes, “the other is the utopian order without contradictions; the other is the beginning of the advent of a new world that is distinct and more just” (1985: 43). Recognition of the “Other,” however, means founding society on the principles of dignity and freedom. For Christopher Chase-Dunn, this simply derives from our collective rationality: “We need to shape the emerging world society into a global democratic commonwealth based on collective rationality, liberty, and equality” (1998: xxvi).

Terry Boswell and Chase-Dunn recognize the crucial role of a utopian vision for establishing a global polity and democratic world system: “The lack of a ‘utopian’ goal against which to organize criticism and more importantly, to direct progress, has led erstwhile progressives and leftist intellectuals into the nihilism and endless relativism of postmodernism.... Getting past this impasse requires a theory of a realistic alternative at the global level, which we find in the idea of global democracy” (2000: 9).

Thinking, reasoning, takes many forms. One of its highest forms, most in conformity with the

dynamic, temporalized structure of reality, is the dialectical form. Dialectic looks to reconciling and transcending the contradictions of the past with a higher synthesis itself judged according to its sufficiency, consistency, and coherence with both past and the utopian margins of futurity. The conscience can and must always judge the past: see in the past contradictions and conditions that must be overcome in a redeemed future. Block writes:

The main thing is that utopian conscience-and-knowledge, through the pain it suffers in facts, grows wise, yet does not grow to full wisdom. It is rectified—but never refuted by the mere power of that which, at any particular time, is. On the contrary it confutes and judges the existent if it is failing, and failing inhumanly; indeed, first and foremost it provides the standard to measure such facticity precisely as departure from the Right; and above all to measure it immanently: that is, by ideas which have resounded and informed from time immemorial before such a departure, and which are still displayed and proposed in the face of it. (1963:91)

Here we have a concise statement of our human condition with regard to its utopian dimensions. Under the holistic paradigm, discovered by all 20th century sciences, the

false early-modern split between fact and value has been overcome (Martin 2016, Chap. 2). The factual situation in which we find ourselves historically is always subject to judgement with respect to its “departure from the Right.” The Right includes the vision of human liberation implicit in human futurity, or eschatological potential: the absolute demand for a peaceful, just, and free human condition.

The very real freedom that we experience does not merely eventuate in the “subjective dreaming” of something that we may personally wish for. The very real freedom that we experience opens up for us a dimension that is capable of judging the factual situation and finding it lacking. That is why it can be “rectified but never refuted” by the facts. The facts are secondary to freedom, they do not determine it. The factual situation is on a lower order of existence than the eschatological demand and the framework of freedom that encompasses it. Religious philosopher Eric Gutkind declares: “The Way—The Jump— There!! Suddenness is the hope, rather than evolution.” “Capitalism is an organized irreality, an established emptiness.” “Man is greater than he thinks.” (1969: 28, 35, 106).

But in the face of The System leading humanity

rapidly toward extinction and desecrating our human dignity in every aspect of its implacable mechanistic forward motion, we can say that the utopian demand has become the most practical and immediate of demands. Benjamin Barber describes this demand inherent in our present situation:

Ours is a new age in which borders have grown porous and the global social contract calls for a novel and unprecedented Declaration of Interdependence. Nation by nation, democracy can no longer survive.... Hobbes' contradiction that to overcome anarchy within nations, one had to create a sovereign nation-state system in which there would be anarchy among nations, can no longer stand. The costs have become too high, leaving the predators of international anarchy to feed not just on individual states but the nation-state system itself. The call today for the globalization of democracy, the globalization of law, the construction of strong international institutions that allow genuine participation, is no longer simply a romantic call of irrelevant world federalists for an impossible utopia. It has become a call of national security, an imperative of a new realism. (2003: 86-87)

We need a bridge from here to there under this "imperative of a new realism." We need

a concrete means, a model for “practical utopia” that can serve as guide and ideal for a paradigm-shift from The System to peace, justice, freedom, and sustainability. This bridge is found in the Constitution for the Federation of Earth. Our human freedom is not left to idealistic abstractions alone. It has the ability to establish a morally based and brilliantly designed democratic world system.

### **The Earth Constitution as Practical Utopia**

Written by hundreds of world citizens working together over a period of 23 years from 1968 to 1991, the Earth Constitution embodies a common sense set of governmental procedures and agencies designed to be run by a common sense World Parliament comprised of a House of Peoples, a House of Nations, and a House of Counsellors (who represent the whole of humanity). The Constitution not only sets up an eminently practical and logical set of governing bodies and procedures, it also outlines in Article 17 the steps to full actualization divided into three stages, making its ratification doable, pragmatically possible. It is found on-line in many places [3].

Even with the practical requirements for ratification laid out in Article 17, the

Constitution understands itself to be the basis for a founded world system. Unlike The System now in place (which evolved from the earlier-modern paradigm without ever having been ratified by anyone), the Earth Constitution requires conscious ratification by the people and nations of Earth. Its founded character makes the Constitution an eschatological document, a moral decision made by humanity, despite the very practical structure that it constructs for governing our planet. The people of Earth use their freedom to choose to put an end to the nightmarish system now leading us toward extinction. They chose to use their freedom to set up (establish) a peace system, a justice system, a freedom system, and a sustainability system.

The forms and procedures for these four dimensions of a liberated world system are all embodied in the Constitution as a whole, as well as its two bills of rights (Articles 12 and 13), its preamble, and its integral vision. The Constitution establishes global agencies for protection for these rights (the World Ombudsmus and World Courts), and it extends the entire range of traditional rights (civil, social, and economic) to the newly emergent rights to peace and a protected planetary environment. Once ratified, the Earth Constitution remains

a document amenable to our eschatological imperative: Article 18 mandates a “World Constituent Assembly” within 10 years of ratification, and then every 20 years after that, at which times the Assembly will be able to make any changes deemed necessary in order to continue the process of securing human liberation and the protection of nature for future generations.

The Constitution explicitly promotes the “unity in diversity” of humanity and declares in its Preamble that “the Earth’s total resources shall be equitably used for human welfare,” and “basic human rights and responsibilities shall be shared by all without discrimination.” It mandates global public banking directed toward universal prosperity for all, while “minimizing disparities” within a framework of sustainability. Without naming itself politically, the Constitution will establish global democratic socialism transforming our fractured world into a holistic planetary human community.

The Constitution ends war, disarms the nations, and establishes a universal democracy based on human rights and reasonable political and economic equality for all persons on the Earth. It mandates the development of economic and legal systems that ensure ecological health



for the planet, and it protects cultural and other forms of diversity worldwide. In the present moment, it can serve both as a concrete vehicle for human liberation that needs ratification and as a practical utopian model that can serve as a “regulative ideal” for the direction in which humanity needs to move.

The Earth Constitution establishes humanity as a political, economic and democratic community within which persons can really treat one another as bearers of human dignity and freedom and no longer as tools for production, exploitation, consumption, or domination. Under the banner of our common humanity, it unites our love and our dignity in the transcendence of a truly practical utopia—the consequence, within our present historical juncture, of the ethical-eschatological affirmation of our human freedom.

## Notes:

[1] <http://www.sott.net/article/273517-Study-US-regime-has-killed-20-30-million-people-since-World-War-Two>

[2] <https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=global%20wealth%20distribution%202016>

[3] E.g., <http://www.radford.edu/~gmartin/CEF.pdf>

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