

# Global Democracy and Human Self- Transcendence



# Global Democracy and Human Self- Transcendence:

*The Power of the Future for  
Planetary Transformation*

By

Glen T. Martin

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*This book is dedicated to the more than half of humanity whose lives are immiserated by the unrelenting structural violence, implacably and blindly imposed everywhere upon the Earth, devastating the future of its citizens and wreaking havoc upon all the Earth's living creatures.*

*This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.*

Deuteronomy 30: 19

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## PROLOGUE

### OUR PLANETARY CHOICE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

*Great problems do not permit of being **solved**. The greater the problem the more necessary it is to grow out of and beyond it. Problems are conflicts which require growth concurrent with them, that they may surpass their plane; they cannot be dealt with by question and answer. Those who dispute a problem are fighting usually on the same plane and merely confront the problems from diverse sides. . . . The truth is that all great questions form a unity and the answers come about through an ever larger and wider-embracing integration of provinces often lying apart from one another. . . . Thus the terrible entanglements of our times, the political and industrial convulsions, will hardly be capable of solution until we grow beyond them by an integration of these provinces with other provinces that do not directly pertain to economics and to politics.*

—Eric Gutkind

#### 1. Responding to Our Present Endangered Situation

**T**his book is about transformation and the dynamics of transformation. Its aim is to show that we have the capacity to move to a higher level of human existence that will solve our most fundamental problems. It shows not only that the capacity for self-transcendence informs the very structure of our being, but it also outlines the dimensions of where we need to be going. It is about the power of the future in human life. We are creatures and citizens of a transformed future. Self-transcendence means that we are capable throughout our lives of moving through ever higher, more integrated and fulfilling, levels of selfhood and civilization.

This book reveals the foundations and parameters of our global social contract without which we are not likely to survive very much longer on this beautiful and precious planet Earth. It shows that this contract is implicit within human futurity. As with individual persons, human beings are historically capable of moving through higher levels of selfhood. This

book outlines a *new conception of spirituality directed toward engagement* that can energize the transition to a redemptive holism—a deeper harmony, justice, and sustainability within a global social contract that lifts humanity closer to its true destiny.

This book is about the dynamics and opportunities for truly *choosing life*, of overcoming our personal and civilizational conflict, deadness, and boredom. To choose life means to discover the adventure that is intrinsic to human temporality. It is to enter upon the excitement of exploring a future that is ever greater and more joyful than the past. It is to live from the fullness of our being as creatures of genuine creativity, openness, and immense transformative possibilities. It means that we can soon join in solidarity with all other human beings by ascending to a global social contract.

A global social contract means that human beings join together in a binding agreement to run our planet democratically for the common good of all and future generations. They agree to form a *planetary federation* in which local issues are the responsibility of local governments, national issues of national governments, and global issues of the Earth Federation government. This would mean real non-military government, grassroots self-government, for human beings for the first time. I hope to show that this will also mean a vast increase in both human freedom and maturity, empowering our transitions to higher levels of existence. The following chapters, of course, will explain these thoughts in detail. They will show that such a contract is inherent in our human situation from the very beginning.

If government means a public authority, represented by executive, judicial, and legislative branches, that promotes and protects the *common good* of a community, then the world to date has had no such authority to protect or even define its common good. We will see that the United Nations by no means represents such an authority. Our endangered future in the early twenty-first century demands that we confront this burning issue: can human beings become truly self-governing for the first time in history? Can we transcend our anarchical past in which history is determined by innumerable wars, conquests, power struggles, corporate greed, and multiple ad hoc responses to disasters and emergencies? Can we decide to truly unite to bring democratic order, freedom, peace, justice, and sustainability to our planet?

Democracy means self-government. All citizens are equal before the law, and live within sufficient economic equality that allows their equality before the law to function effectively and justly. Democracy is not rule of the rich as under today's globalized capitalism. Democracy does not mean

oligarchy, or perpetual economic debt to the bankers, or dictatorship, or hegemony by imperial nation-states, or religious autocracy. It means self-government. Worldwide, human beings today are governed by everything and anything except themselves, and always from the point of view of special interests. We do not have a viable future unless we unite behind our common humanity and begin self-government based on our common dignity, freedom, love, community, human rights, and global ethics.

This book, therefore, approaches the idea of our global social contract from a number of angles. Each angle of approach—whether human dignity, human freedom, human and cosmic love, a planetary human community, human rights, or global ethics—enlarges the grounding for, and comprehension of, this core concept. It will become clear that each of these themes fundamentally relates to all the others. They all inherently demand a global social contract and together make a powerful case that we human beings are failing to actualize the next step in human self-transcendence. This book sometimes mentions the need for a “paradigm-shift” from fragmentation to holism. However, my use of this concept includes the idea of a *metanoia*, a fundamental transformation to living from the deep holism of reality, which is what it means to “choose life.”

The next step is demanded by what we know and who we are at the most fundamental levels, it is implicit within our human futurity and the depths of the present moment. It emerges, I hope to show, from the urge to wholeness arising from the very heart of the cosmos, from being itself, embodied within our human futurity. Comprehending and actualizing these ideas is not therefore a mere philosophical exercise. It is absolutely central to the possibility of human survival and flourishing on our beautiful planet Earth during the twenty-first century. We must overcome the evils of fragmentation, hatred, fear, greed, and lust for power. As wisdom philosopher Raimon Panikkar asserts, “Evil is real and so is freedom. Destiny is also in our hands” (2013, 54).

Despite this multiplicity of topics, this book applies a philosophical anthropology and “integrative mysticism” to our human condition that has developed through some 45 years of reading, reflection, and meditation (Martin 2005, chap. 5). It sees human beings as inherently self-transcending creatures. It reveals that we have not yet fully understood the immense significance of human life or the dynamics of thought, dialogue, spiritual growth, and freedom. Such intellectual and spiritual growth opens humanity to a perpetual transcendence portending a truly transformed and uplifted planetary civilization. Understanding these things has now become central to our survival on this planet.

The ascent to a global social contract is not merely a technocratic solution premised on the horizontal dimension that ignores the deepest aspects of the cosmos and being. This book makes an unprecedented attempt to bring temporal existence and the dynamics of spiritual awakening (often radically differentiated) into a conceptual and intuitive harmony. Human temporal existence is not opposed to ‘eternity’ but, so to speak, a manifestation of its holism. Panikkar writes: “This *novum* does not take refuge in the highest by neglecting the lowest; it does not make a separation by favoring the spiritual and ignoring the material; it does not search out eternity at the expense of temporality” (2013, 36).

This book argues that human civilization has not yet reached the democratic and unifying foundation for economics, politics, culture, or spirituality that is implicit in our common historical project. That proper foundation includes our common humanity, and our common ability to grow toward a worldcentric and planetary maturity, and our common ability to live from the holism at the core of our being, with all that these entail. We still cling to the tribalism of nation-states, with its horrific militarism, imperialism, endless wars, and human misery.

We still cling to the dogma of unregulated capitalism with all that this entails of poverty, hunger, environmental destruction, and endless human misery. We must “get control of this headless horseman, this driverless (or multidrivered) behemoth which is almost certainly hurtling us all toward the precipice” (Chase-Dunn 1998, 297). Chris Williams concludes: “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” (2010, 232). In the face of these global disasters, our inherent capacity for self-transcendence provides great hope that the future can indeed be different from the past. The future need not lie on a horizontal continuum with the horrors of the past, but can mean ascent to a higher level that is truly different.

The chapters below show that we can no longer base our global institutions on such false premises. We must face up to the fact that we are all human beings who cannot be legitimately tribalized in the form of endless wars of those loyal to their conflicting tribes. Nor can human beings be legitimately commodified, dehumanized by “free trade” labor markets or other systems of exploitation and degradation. The unity in diversity that characterizes our common human developmental project is not an amalgam of tribes arbitrarily patched together but rather an awakening to our truly common humanity and common project of freedom that is integral to the diversity of persons, cultures, religions, races, and nations.



We have reached a point where we can no longer cling to the pseudo-realities of race, nation, ideology, dogmatic religion, property, or other forms of “ego-identities,” personal or collective, that *define who we are through the denial of others*. Identities formed through the denial of others are tearing our world apart and making us incapable of moving to a planetary and more fully human level of existence. Indian thinker and activist Swami Agnivesh declares that, “the irreducible goal is the full unfolding of the potential and scope of our humanity. It is the empowerment to be fully human” (2015, 14).

Militarized sovereign nations are ghosts—pseudo realities. The unlimited private accumulation of wealth, always in one way or another inherently at the expense of society and the environment, is a ghost—a pseudo reality. Critical social thinker Guy Debord, in *The Society of the Spectacle*, declares that capitalism lives through the construction of pseudo-realities, spectacular illusions. He summarizes, “Considered in its own terms the spectacle is an *affirmation* of appearances and an identification of all human social life with appearances. But a critique that grasps the spectacle’s essential character reveals it to be a visible *negation* of life—a negation that has taken on a *visible form*” (2014, 4).

Historically contingent nation-states, whose boundaries one cannot see from space, nor from an airplane, have become a spectacular set of appearances to the point where people think of themselves *first* as Americans, Chinese, or Russians rather than as human beings living together on planet Earth. Video screens worldwide bounce the spectacular disasters of this ersatz world system into every corner of the planet. These systems generate *nihilism*: the loss of any meaning and value other than instrumental, false values such as wealth and power.

The largest global empire in history is that of the United States (with its many vassal states such as the UK, Israel, and Saudi Arabia), with its huge military, and its vast NSA, DEA, and CIA, lawless networks of secrecy, corruption, endless wars, murder, and mayhem. This reference to the USA does not include the majority of its citizens who are decent human beings, but rather the so-called 1% (really 10%) of transnational corporations, “deep state” military and security leaders, and global banking cartels. All of these forces employ vast networks of criminal “security” agents whose job it is to corrupt governments worldwide through blackmail, bribery, kidnapping, torture, and murder—in order to make them client governments in a vast (corporate-imperial) system of global corruption, domination, and exploitation. Only if we face the realities of who and what we are, and the dynamics of our own self-

transcendence, can we rise above this horrific condition to a peaceful and harmonious global civilization.

I have written about this corrupt and violent world system in a number of previous books.\* Two recent books by contemporary authors stand out that also reveal this system in great detail: *The CIA as Organized Crime* by Douglas Valentine (2017) and *The Lost Hegemon: Whom the Gods Would Destroy* by F. William Engdahl (2016). A fundamental part of self-transcendence is becoming deeply aware of the unsatisfactory nature of our present condition. To really see and recognize something for what it is, remains the first and crucial step in transcending it.

The way out of this nightmare for the people of Earth is genuinely democratic government ensuring transparency for all agencies, including the civilian world police (fully transparent and accountable to the law), all branches of the executive function (with no authority to suspend or subvert the *Constitution*), and similar accountability for all other government agencies. It is essential to eliminate the propaganda-cover of “enemies,” whether these be terrorists, foreign mercenaries, “communists,” or agents of some implacable enemy government or religious sect. It is essential that the media not be owned and operated by the same 1% who use “security forces” to destroy and destabilize all perceived threats to their domination.

It is essential to take both “security” and “mass media” out of their hands, to eliminate the “war-system” entirely, and thereby to establish a peace system, a truthfulness system, a justice system, and a sustainability system for the Earth. The synergy of this integration will mean the emergence of a genuine *freedom system* for all humanity and future generations. We can ascend to a higher level of awareness and integration that transcends and transforms the obvious failures of contemporary political and economic systems.

We will discover in detail that the only legitimate basis for public authority is the sovereignty of the people who live upon the Earth—and global institutions that reflect their freedom, dignity, and their holistic unity in diversity. The perpetual war, fear, and domination systems of the world require fragmentation: they require racism, ethnocentrism, male domination, social chaos, instability, and desperation, as well as the system of so-called “sovereign” nations to maintain their power, control, and wealth. In a word, they require lack of maturity. North American poet Walt Whitman declared that, “when all races, sects, classes have vanished, a genuine solidarity of MEN will emerge—a world primal again.”

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\* For example, chapter three of *Millennium Dawn* (2005), chapters four to six of *Triumph of Civilization* (2010), and chapter five of *One World Renaissance* (2016).

If we change the system to one of true democracy based on our innate human ability to become ever more aware, even more mature, and move to higher levels of civilization, then we can create a decent life for all the people on Earth. We shall see that this ascent has truly cosmic implications for, as Panikkar asserts, “The destiny of the universe passes in and through us” (2013, 34). None of this can be successful without a binding global social contract.

We will find in this book that we can transcend these pseudo-realities and found a planetary civilization on life, rather than on the negation of life in spectacular illusions. Changing the world system and redeeming ourselves spiritually and intellectually function dialectically as parts of the same process. Both will happen simultaneously. We have a *right* to perpetual growth toward ever-greater maturity and the conditions that make this possible. We have the *right* to become whole persons living from the depths of being—the unity in diversity of ourselves, the cosmos, and the divine. We have a *right* to become ever more fully human. We have a *right* to “choose life.”

Agnivesh correctly asserts that “the destiny of our species is being hijacked by the forces of ungodly economics and predatory politics” (ibid., 15-16). Most wars, and the threat of nuclear war that may end human existence, are the result of clinging to these pseudo-realities, the denial of our common human dignity. Human beings have the capacity to transcend this sordid condition. As philosopher Jürgen Habermas declares: “At the global level, the universalistic meaning of human rights reminds us of the need to develop a constitutional frame for an emerging multicultural world society” (Mendietta & VanAntwerpen 2011, 28). That is the aim of this book.

This book presupposes patterns of thought and reasoning and insight that may challenge the reader. This should be seen as a positive feature that is welcomed, because humanity (all of us) needs to be challenged if we are going to create a decent future for newer generations. Logic, reasoning, and insight are not static and fixed faculties but can change and develop over time. As philosopher Errol E. Harris declares: “This is because intellect is not a static faculty but a constantly growing and developing function of the mind, the principles of whose activity evolve with the insight that it achieves” (1977, 68). We need to think in creative and innovative ways because today we face threats to human existence and a viable human future from many directions. The old patterns of thinking are no longer sufficient.

Yet our capacity to *reason* fundamentally links with not only creative thinking, but with spiritual awakening and compassionate identification

with other persons, living creatures, and the mysterious depths of the Cosmos itself. Human beings are a whole and are tasked to make the conflicting impulses, drives, and emotions within themselves into the dynamic whole that Plato, Aristotle, and many thinkers throughout history recognized as human virtue (*arête*). Both reason and our awakening spirituality recognize the global threats to human growth and transformation and envision how we might overcome these threats and create a decent existence for all persons within a sustainable natural environment. As Panikkar declares:

We are all co-responsible for the state of the world. Today's powers, though more anonymous and more diffused, are quite as cruel and terrible as the worst monsters of history. . . . In this just elapsed century of "civilized Man" and "planetary civilization" there have been over a hundred million people slaughtered in wars. We have not progressed—not even economically. . . . The problem is urgent. . . . We must assume that the role of the philosopher is to search for a truth (something that has saving power) and not to chase after irrelevant verities.... We are dealing with something that is more than an academic challenge. It is a spiritual endeavor to live the life that has been given to us. (2013, 4-5)

The role of the philosopher is the search for liberating truth, truth that is self-aware and critically informed. We should not ignore the "hermeneutics of suspicion" elaborated in different ways by such thinkers as Kant, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Foucault, and Derrida, a hermeneutics that often tends to subvert the human drive to self-transcendence through seeing this as self-deception for one reason or another. I have dealt with several of these thinkers in previous writings, including Nietzsche, whose challenge of nihilism and despair I addressed in my first book that appeared in 1989, and I have pointed out the elements of authentic self-transcendence that remain present in the thought of Kant, Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger (Martin 2005). The holism described in this book is not the "totalization" criticized by Michel Foucault (1972) or Emmanuel Levinas (2006).

The holism of the cosmos manifests in us as a creative futurity capable of encountering depths of existence irreducible to the totality of "things." The hermeneutics of suspicion can be valuable in helping us clarify our human situation. However, it is becoming ever clearer that human beings are not only faced with the problems of truth and value but also with concrete threats to the very existence of civilization and our human project, such as the threat of nuclear war (Ellsberg 2017) or climate disruption. (As I write this, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists has just moved the famous Doomsday Clock to two minutes before midnight.) We

can no longer afford to remain paralyzed by doubt and debilitating skepticism. I hope to show that such skepticism both distorts and omits the possibility of genuine human self-transcendence.

Climate disaster or “catastrophic climate change” is coming rapidly upon us. Planet-wide loss of agricultural land, global fisheries, and forests dovetails with a progressively unreliable climate that will no longer reproduce these essentials for life. Rising oceans threaten to displace hundreds of millions from the coastal lands of the world and to flood hundreds of millions of acres of prime agricultural lands. Acidification and rising temperatures in the oceans threaten to destroy the vast phytoplankton beds that serve as both the basis for the planetary food chain and a primary source of the oxygen that we breathe (Speth 2004; Homer-Dixon 1999; Starke 2009).

The process of global warming cannot be reversed at this point in time. The melting of the Arctic ice cap alone represents just one irreversible tipping point that will alter the planet’s climate irrevocably. We cannot stop the process, but we can address our situation as effectively, cohesively, and wisely as possible. But any effective, cohesive, and wise response on the part of humanity requires a global social contract. It requires the united, coordinated action of a global public authority representing the common good of the people of Earth and future generations. We must overcome our institutional, psychological, and cultural fragmentation and unite for survival and flourishing in genuine freedom to the extent that these are still possible.

In spite of the dismal prospectus that arises when we examine our fragmented global condition—economically, politically, culturally, and psychically—there are real grounds for hope in the understanding that has come to animate thinkers everywhere on Earth during the past century. This involves the growing consciousness of *emergent evolution* and its complement *political and economic transformation* through human beings taking the next step into planetary maturity. Our nearly 13.8 billion year old universe has produced emergent levels of complexity and consciousness—from life itself, to sensation, to perception, to consciousness, to reason, love, compassion, and now, planetary maturity.

We need to embrace the vision of our emergent evolutionary journey toward the actualization of a fully human planetary civilization. We need to see this on an epic scale: on a gigantic mythic scale in which we become the heroes in the struggle to bring fourth our divine-human destiny. We need to face the immense responsibility that emerges when we become fully conscious of the fact that we are, in the words of

philosopher, scientist, and theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, “the axis and the leading shoot of evolution” (1959, 36).

## 2. Human Growth and Development

The holism of today’s sciences that the present writer explored in depth in *One World Renaissance* (2016) and earlier books widely comprehends that the evolutionary process has produced us as *self-conscious* creatures: aware of the processes of evolutionary development toward freedom, reflection, and spiritual awakening and capable of moving these capacities toward ever-greater completion through the process of self-transcendence. The cosmic creative impulse has become conscious of itself in us—in human dignity, freedom, love, and community. We need to think, feel, and see with the now self-aware eyes of the cosmos—how are we to *choose life*, rather than death? Teilhard declares:

The flame that for thousands of years has been rising up below the horizon is now, at a strictly localized point, about to burst forth: thought has been born. Beings endowed with self-awareness become, precisely in virtue of that bending back upon themselves, immediately capable of rising to a new level of existence: in truth another world is born. (1969, 102)

This book articulates this immense potential inherent in human life for rising to a higher level of existence, to give birth to another world. All the elements are in place and familiar to us: our dignity, freedom, love, capacity for community, human rights, and global ethics. We shall see that the possibility of such ascending higher, of transformation, is built into the very structure of our lives. The solution to our self-destructive and suicidal planetary problems is “rising to a new level of existence.” The future can hold for us an ever-greater joy, excitement, and fulfillment. We can overcome our present world of dissolution and death.

In practical terms this means that we simply need to become more fully human, to live with dignity, love, reason, freedom and community on our precious planet Earth. What is emerging in us through the process of cosmic evolution requires that we live fully within our planetary community of unity in diversity. We need to become prophets of an actualized human community (chapter six below), in which system change and spiritual change emerge together to the point where “another world is born.” How do we achieve such a community?

An actualized human community would manifest and enhance the central end or goal of all common human associations and political

contracts: to allow each person to develop her personal potential to the maximum possible within the supporting embrace of his or her community. The self-transcendent capacity of each of us to grow and develop is mirrored by our collective ability for transcendence toward more advanced social contracts, from early Greek city-states, to medieval fiefdoms, to nation-states, to a global social contract. Our individual capacity for creating a better personal future is interdependent with civilization's capacity for creating a better social contract, enhancing the common good of all.

At the concrete human level of reason, love, and compassion, we find that we, as both individuals and a species, can evolve and grow through ever more profound actualizations of these qualities, a fact that can give us tremendous hope for the future. Both well-known mainstream psychologists and "integral," spiritual thinkers have reached a profound consensus concerning the basic stages of human growth and development. They may make use of slightly different terminologies and stage differentiations, but a basic pattern of growth has emerged that points forward toward a redeemed and transformed human reality.

These ideas, therefore, have not been limited to philosophers and other abstract thinkers. Many of them have been empirically investigated by contemporary psychologists and social scientists. There has been a broad movement toward a consensus about stages of growth, human needs, and human possibilities that dovetails with these pronouncements about hope for the future. The starting point for a philosophy of human self-transcendence, therefore, involves a substantial component of confirmed psychology and social science. Let us review some of these basic ideas.

During the mid-twentieth century, psychologist Abraham Maslow developed his now famous "hierarchy of needs" (2013). Maslow argues that there are five levels of needs that human beings must satisfy. The first level involves "physiological needs" such as food, sleep, sex, etc. These function as our first priority. After these needs, the second fundamental concern of human beings involves "safety needs" such as income, sufficient resources, and security of persons. If these basics are obtained, then we have a third level of needs to satisfy that can be termed "belongingness," such as needs for family, love, friendship, and intimacy. The fourth level of needs in human beings involves "esteem needs." These include gaining respect from others, development of self-confidence, friendships, etc. At the fifth and highest level is "self-actualization" in which a person may blossom in creativity, morality, and possible self-transcendence.

This schema recognizes the need for self-transcendence in human beings. It places this need, generally speaking, after more basic survival, social, and psychological needs have been satisfied. We can easily recognize truth in this, of course, in that people desperate to satisfy basic needs are not likely to listen to Mozart, read Dostoevsky, or even participate in democratic political processes. Chapter four below will argue that socially we require good government that can supply the matrix for the satisfaction of all these needs, beginning with the basics. Chapter seven will argue that we have a *right* to the conditions that can satisfy the more basic levels of need, thereby making self-transcendence more likely and possible.

The chapters below will make clear why we require a global society that maximizes the conditions for the self-actualization or self-transcendence of human beings. Maslow himself has spent his career studying experiences of self-actualization and self-transcendence, which he calls “peak experiences.” He argues that this study has provided us with an objective picture of our human situation, social scientifically confirmed. If this is the case, then we need a world system directed toward self-transcendence, something fundamentally different from our contemporary world disorder and chaos.

The word “experiences,” as Maslow uses it, is not to be understood as indicating idiosyncratic subjective moments of isolated individuals, but rather as contributing to a view of our common human potentialities and an objective set of values that can be linked to healthy human growth and development. He affirms that, “A new vision is emerging of the possibilities of man and his destiny, and its implications are many, not only for our conceptions of education, but also for science, politics, literature, economics, religion, and even our conceptions of the non-human world” (2014, 157).

“All this implies a naturalistic system of values,” Maslow affirms, “a by-product of the empirical description of the deepest tendencies of the human species and of specific individuals” (ibid., 169). He calls these values “B-values” or “Being values,” and elucidates them a number of places in his works. They include such values as wholeness, perfection, completion (fulfillment), justice, beauty, goodness, truth, and self-sufficiency (autonomy) (ibid., 75-76). They are derived from the overwhelming consistency of responses from people who have experienced self-actualization and self-transcendence.

We will, of course, investigate these values more fully in the course of this book. Maslow concludes that the “characteristics of Being are also the values of Being” (1964, 94). These possible “perfections” of our human



nature are available to all people, he affirms, and as such should supply the goals for culture, education, and government. They constitute “the far goals of all ideal, uncovering (Taoistic, non-interfering) psychotherapies; the far goals of the ideal humanistic education; the far goals and the expression of some kinds of religion; the characteristics of an ideally good environment and of the ideally good society” (ibid., 95).

What Maslow calls the “far goals” of human civilization I have named the “utopian horizon” of human temporality that we will discuss throughout this volume. This horizon is embedded within the immediate present of each of us. Therefore, as Maslow’s own work asserts, none of these values are really far away. They are all implicit in the very structure of the living present with its implicit possibility of actualization, of breakthrough to its utopian dimension. I will argue that our human temporal structure itself opens us up to the quest to address all our need levels *simultaneously*, and that, by moving to higher levels through self-transcendence, we can alter the entire dynamic of our needs.

The holism of our lifeworld, therefore, demands a process of transcendence in relation to all these needs as defined by Maslow. If we become more fully aware of our intrinsic temporalized human structure and its implications, the immense potential of human self-transcendence will open up for us. Before explicating this dynamic further, let us consider several other thinkers who have modeled stages of cognitive, moral, emotional, and spiritual growth in human beings that may play a role in the perpetual revaluation of our needs as we move to higher levels of maturity.

Psychologist and philosopher Eric Fromm and others of his generation pioneered the idea that human beings need to grow as individuals and a species toward a worldcentric maturity based on the fullness of “being” rather than the selfishness of “having” (1996). Psychologists such as Lawrence Kohlberg (1984), whose perspective on growth was affirmed by Jürgen Habermas (1979) and other philosophical thinkers, developed a model of growth leading from childhood toward an adulthood of “autonomy,” independence, and, ultimately, harmony with the cosmos.

A very similar schemata of human individual and species growth, derived from the work of psychologist Carol Gilligan and integral thinker Ken Wilber, traces human development from childhood to an awakened actualization of our potential using the following stages. Here I have synthesized a variety of schemata presented by Wilber in *Integral Spirituality* (2007). The most fundamental stages of human growth can be identified as those in Figure 1.

GENERIC STAGES OF GROWTH TOWARD MATURITY
<b>Egocentric</b> (egoistic)—the obsessive self-regarding orientation of childhood and immature adults.
<b>Ethnocentric</b> —thinking that (often unconsciously) gives ontological priority to one’s own culture, religion, or nation.
<b>Worldcentric</b> —developing compassion, care, and universal rational principles applying to all humanity (and often to all life on Earth).
<b>Kosmocentric-Integral</b> —harmonizing masculine and feminine elements within the whole of one’s being, integrating a dynamic cosmic consciousness of unity in diversity within our historical and personal lives, living with ever-greater direct awareness of the holistic, ineffable depths of existence.

Fig. 1

There is no need here to debate details of this schema. It is simply used as one example of the growing consensus of psychologists and spiritual thinkers.\* It is commonly reproduced as development from egocentric, ethnocentric, worldcentric and kosmocentric. The first three stages, where an overwhelming consensus lies, describe the process of human growth from immature egoism through an ethnocentric focusing on one’s own culture, kind, or background to a mature, worldcentric perspective: seeing the human project and our life on this planet as a whole.

But “growth,” here, can be misleading, since moving from one stage to another may characterize the beginning stages (as the child’s brain grows and the socialization process proceeds), but the higher “awakened” stages may require a leap, a breakthrough to what in spiral dynamics is called the “second tier” (Beck and Cowan 2006). It may require an “OUT” as they shout in Zen. Transformative thinker Eric Gutkind declares rightly that

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\* In *Integral Spirituality* (2007), Wilber provides a wealth of comparative material from various thinkers, including charts and graphs, that elaborate stages of growth over cognitive, emotional, moral, and other dimensions of human development.

“the present crisis of humanity is no longer susceptible to gradual cures” (1969, 63). We need to become global citizens now, not in some distant future. We need to actualize the genuine unity and freedom that lies beneath the multiplicity of nations, races, and cultures on planet Earth.

The process of human awakening moves through periods of discontinuity, leaps, or temporary regressions because the process, both in individual development and in human history, is in its depths profoundly dialectical, and dialectical processes cannot be modeled on any neat progressive schema such as the one outlined above. Nor can our human futurity forget the past with its immense suffering and injustice, for this is fundamental to our practical-utopian vision of a transformed future. The bourgeois or positivist amnesia of the past and its dynamic struggles amounts to an attempt to preserve a profoundly unjust and fragmented status quo. It amounts to a maturity-fear as well as an egoistic grasping for power and possessions that in effect denies our common human dignity and equality.

### 3. The Transformative Vision

Nevertheless, we can derive a vision and genuine hope from the idea of transformative growth that can inform our struggles within the complex, changing realities of history. We can mount a critique of systems of domination, exploitation, and immaturity with a view to human futurity and transformative potential. Karl Marx declared that “the moment you present men as the actors and authors of their own history, you arrive . . . at the real starting point” (in Brenkert 1983, 55).

We can take responsibility for the future. We can continue the process of inner transformation in concert with outer transformation. The two are bound together within what Marx termed our common “species-being.” Is the key to transformation class struggle alone or does it include our moving to a higher level of maturity and consciousness? Clearly, we can envision the practical-utopian horizon of human self-transcendence.

To reach the worldcentric stage, therefore, is not an endpoint, but a profound beginning of a perpetual journeying into ever-greater wonder, awareness, harmony, freedom, and love. At this stage, we can begin to see the immense possibilities of human knowledge, of ever-deeper understanding, and of mystical unity with the depths of the cosmos. Life becomes a wondrous journey into an ever-widening future.

This book joins together two aspects of our humanity that are often separated by spiritual thinkers—time and the timeless depths of Being. I believe that this split is somewhat arbitrary. The whole, with its ineffable depths, manifests in the evolutionary cosmos and in human temporality.

Past and future emerge from these depths. From this understanding, the practical-utopian vision, linked to human futurity, becomes ever more clear.

Sociologist Karl Mannheim distinguishes “ideology” from “utopia.” The first may involve a set of ideas conforming to or justifying a particular society. Practical or “relative utopias,” on the other hand, include “those ideas and values in which are contained in condensed form the unrealized and the unfulfilled tendencies which represent the needs of each age.” Such utopian ideas are “dialectical,” he affirms, for “The existing order gives birth to utopias which in turn break the bonds of the existing order, leaving it free to develop in the direction of the next order of existence” (1936, 179). This book argues that we must actualize the practical utopia implicit in our human situation in the form of a global social contract.

Françoise Choay sums up the function of the utopian imagination that creates the human-made (“anthropogenetic”) space within which we live:

As our societies enter a world in which the West’s prosthetic vocation seems pledged to one-dimensionality, Utopia still remains a living entity. It still beckons us to the subversion of a radical social critique and to the revalorization of an anthropogenetic space. And finally it reminds us of the antinomic condition of human beings, obliging us to explore that condition further in its ineluctable depths. (In Schaer, et. al. 2000, 352)

Here again, we see the need for the “subversion of a radical social critique” of our one-dimensionality, our inability to seriously explore the antinomies of good versus evil, truth versus lie, past versus future, and authentic spirituality versus one-dimensional thought and religion. Utopias oblige us to explore these “ineluctable depths” of our human condition.

Philosopher Paul Ricoeur similarly links the literal meaning of utopia, “no-place,” to its positive social and civilizational function: “From this ‘no place’ an exterior glance is cast on our reality, which suddenly looks strange, nothing more being taken for granted. . . . We see our cultural system from the outside precisely thanks to this nowhere” (1986, 16-17). I will argue that a deep understanding of human temporality with its orientation to the future empowers and transforms our life in the present, while at the same time illuminating our pervasive negativity, dissolution, despair, and denial of the fullness of life. The “nowhere” of our utopian horizon serves an objective critical and liberating function.

The profound biblical injunction to “choose life” need not be linked to any particular religion, nor even to a generalized faith orientation. The choice between choosing life and death is inherent in our human existential situation from the very beginning. To choose life is to choose transformative growth toward a better future. It is to choose to affirm

human temporality: a choice to embrace our higher human possibilities for love, creativity, and justice. It is to choose freedom and its transformative possibilities that are integral to our human situation. No set of “religious” beliefs is necessary to actualize the creative process intrinsic to our common human structure. Regardless of religion, we have the capacity to discern “the utopianism inherent in the human reality in its integrity” (Vahanian 1977, 16).

We cannot slowly evolve a global social contract over the next hundred years. This gradual model, adopted by many so-called “global thinkers” and advocates of a slowly evolving “world parliament,” is a prescription for planetary omnicide. Human beings must make the leap to second tier, world-centric thinking, to transformative thinking, without delay. We must collectively decide to establish a global social contract through an immediate *awakening* to who and what we are and should be.

Gutkind declares, “The world has an origin and a goal and is suspended between the two. Each moment in its process represents the whole of it in ever new forms, totality and singularity united” (1969, 57). We need to actualize the holism of humanity and human civilization without delay. The “goal” will not be a determinate condition but rather an open-ended journeying into a transformed future. The holism, the totality, is already there, waiting to emerge. However, a global social contract can provide a clear and reliable framework for a transformed human future.

To embrace a global social contract would mean awakening to the unity of totality and singularity, what Panikkar calls “wholeness and concreteness” (2013, 29)—a humanity united, a world of mutual recognition, of recognizing “the infinity in the human face” (Levinas 1969). It would mean *completion* of the human community in fundamental senses, as I will elaborate below. Our identities must leap beyond ego-identities, which justify themselves through the denial of others through the creation of arbitrary borders, differences, and boundaries. They must rise above the pseudo-realities of race, nation, ideology, dogmatic religion, or property.

We should not think of this process of transformative growth toward wholeness and holism as somehow irrational and “mystical” in the negative sense of these terms. Many advanced philosophers from Hegel to Errol E. Harris have pointed out that reasoning and logic have different functions and different senses depending on the level of comprehension from which they arise. Harris, in *Formal, Transcendental, and Dialectical Thinking: Logic & Reality* (1987), examines these distinctions at some length. To live from the holism at the core of our being is not in the slightest “irrational.”

Our thinking needs to become both dialectical and transformative because reality exists as a whole, itself dialectical and transformative. Harris quotes physicists David Bohm and B.J. Hiley regarding the universe: “One is led to a new notion of the unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of analyzability of the world into separately and independently existing parts” (2000b, 100). Dialectic means “seeing things together, recognizing the interdependence of differences, and identifying opposites in their complementary interrelations” (ibid. 199).

Marx scholar Bertell Ollman describes the dialectical approach: “only the procedure that moves from the whole to the part, only the prior acceptance of the identity of each part in the whole, permits adequate reflection on the complex changes and interaction that constitute the core qualities of the real world” (1976, 267-68). In the chapters that follow, we will be looking at our human and planetary situation as a whole, seeing things together, and asking what follows from this understanding that we are one interdependent species living within a single interdependent planetary biosphere. We must become the wholeness that is the real foundation of our being.

Nearly every person can dialectically, spiritually, and hermeneutically move toward the realization of wholeness in themselves and can similarly comprehend the wholeness of the universe that has been discovered and emphasized by contemporary science, ever since Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity appeared in 1905. Out of this wholeness comes an integrated thinking that understands human life, the process of evolution in the cosmos, and the unity of our planetary biosphere as expressions of the unity in diversity (holism) of the universe (Laszlo 2016). This emphasis on holism and its corresponding dialectical and transformative logic is one reason why this book moves far beyond much of the contemporary literature on “global governance.”

From this understanding arises insight to the possibilities of human existence and our planetary future that are often closed to those thinkers mired in the British and American analytic traditions where thought clings to set theory and the predication of particulars over universals then requiring empirical instantiation (cf. Harris 1977, chap. 4). Such fragmented thinking today becomes more and more inadequate as ever more sciences confirm the integral wholeness of things. Yet the leap from politics, history, and the social sciences to the holism revealed by the natural science has yet to seriously affect the “logic” of many of those who write today about global issues, democracy, human rights, or the future of humanity. Nevertheless, a broad awareness of the oneness of the human family continues to spread rapidly throughout the globe.