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THE GREATER PLANETARY GOOD: FROM A PRECEPT TO A PROGRAM

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Introduction

Global challenges like the environmental crisis may be better understood and more effectively addressed by redressing neoliberalism's fundamental failure to foster the greater planetary good. What is urgently required is an adequate conception of this good and a strategy leading to a reconstitution of global society that conforms with this good. The article attempts to contribute to these daunting but necessary tasks by (1) conceiving the greater planetary good as a critical letting-be fostering biospheric survival and flourishing; and (2) proposing a practical three-stage strategy involving the conception, advocacy, and implementation of a blueprint of a global society.

Where We Seem to Be

The fundamental assumption driving this paper is the need for significant reformation or transformation of contemporary global society. This worldwide System, which crystallized in the 1980s and has rapidly gained ascendancy ever since, may be roughly described as "neoliberal." N. N. Trakakis (2015) provides an excellent synopsis of neoliberalism, citing its various key characteristics. A core aim is free trade in the context of an ever-more self-regulating market, and government contributes to this goal by greater deregulation, less interference, and greater privatization of the public sector (2015, pp. 292-293). Trakakis rightly notes that "Underpinning these principles is an . . . 'economic rationalism' . . . where all forms of rationality are collapsed into economic ways of thinking (e.g., cost/benefit analyses)" (2015, p. 293).

I often wonder whether the "assumption" that the present System requires reform or transformation demands rational and/or empirical justification among critical thinkers (hence, the inverted commas around the word): is it not obvious that structural change is required? Probably not: meeting little resistance in its global conquest, neoliberalist political economy appears to be generally met with tacit acceptance even among scholars. Of course, endorsements of the current System might vary wildly, from a certain negative affirmation, perfectly encapsulated by the famous formulation of democracy recited by Winston Churchill as "the worst form of Government except for all those other forms" (cited in Langworth, 2008, p. 574) to a Fukuyamaian triumphalism that declares neoliberalism the apex of humanity's sociocultural evolution (Fukuyama, 1992). Whatever one's degree of approval, capitalistic democracy is so entrenched in our hearts and minds that one finds it near-impossible trying to even imagine some kind of alternative, especially in the aftermath of the communist failure. However, in the short time since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the publication of Fukuyama's *End of History*, global society has witnessed

multiple and accelerating systemic failures, including the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), the “War on Terror,” and so on. At minimum, such phenomena urge us to rethink neoliberalism and even beckon us to critically consider significant systemic reform or regime change.

But one may cogently respond by recalling Churchill’s recitation: representing a system as the least worst and thus as anything-but-perfect or even very good allows more candid neoliberals to admit that the System is bound to have structural tensions and occasional ruptures (Niskanen, 2009, might be cited as an example in this regard [though I reject his logic—how could ethics be “undemanding”?]). This is quite a compelling point: it is easy to undermine Fukuyamaian triumphalism (and even Fukuyama appears to have distanced himself from neo-conservatism [2006]), but it is quite another thing to challenge a position with a certain humility inscribed within it. It is difficult to counter the reasonableness of a sentiment like: “Sure, our present System isn’t perfect, so it’s bound to have perturbations, but it’s better than the alternatives (if there are any) . . .” Hard to disagree with that. However, there is perhaps one crisis that most acutely exposes neoliberalism’s radical deficiencies; one crisis that most emphatically calls for the reformation or transformation of global political economy: the environmental crisis, of which the much-publicized, climate change challenge is but one of its many dimensions.

It would be reasonable to assume from the preceding discussion that I shall now proceed to identify and discuss the ways in which the environmental crisis exposes neoliberalism’s structural tensions and limits, or, to put it in starker terms, how capitalistic democracy is bringing the Earth to its knees—but I shall not proceed in this manner: several studies have already made significant inroads in this direction (refer to, e.g., Klein, 2014; Koch, 2011; Magdoff & Foster, 2011; Mathews, 1996; Peet, Robbins & Watts, 2011). Instead, I seek to outline a certain conception of the greater planetary good that would fundamentally inform global social organization. One of the advantages of proceeding in this way is that rather than developing an explicitly negative critique, I attempt the more constructive task of proposing a suitable way-of-being: one that is fastidiously informed by our material conditions and thus thoroughly realistic and rational, ethical and ecological.

Several provisos also need to be specified before proceeding any further. First of all, we should categorically reject any assumption that capitalistic democracy is the only source and driver of environmental degradation, which may be an “occupational hazard” for enthusiastic analysts of the nexus between neoliberalism and, say, anthropogenic climate change. The roots of the crisis run deep across time and place; it obviously precedes and exceeds neoliberalism. For instance, the Roman Empire wrought environmental havoc via deforestation (Williams, 2006; cf. Hughes, 2001). We should also be cognizant of the fact that alternative social formations existing in parallel with capitalistic democracy have also been ecologically devastating. Striking examples in this regard are various communist regimes in the twentieth century, particularly the USSR (Goldman, 1972; Komarov, 1980; Feshback & Friendly, 1992), while China remains infamous for its air pollution and other biospheric challenges (Shapiro, 2012). Nevertheless, as the above-cited research compellingly shows, global neoliberalism exacerbates and spreads the crisis with alarming efficacy.

Other sources and drivers of eco-violence are social institutions that are often trans-historical and transnational—a fact that further undermines the notion that the eco-crisis is a purely neoliberal affair. Emblematic in this regard are the various puritanical religions whose emphases on asceticism and otherworldliness have been unleashing negative effects on this world and its bodies (White, 1967; Kinsley, 1995). Of course, this does not automatically entail that religions are irreducibly anti-ecological: the dynamics between these institutions and environmental degradation are ambiguous and complex (Santmire,

1985; Kinsley, 1995) —indeed, aspects of various religions and spiritualities often inspire and inform ecological practice (Kinsley, 1995; Tucker, 2003), especially when it comes to earthier indigenous traditions (Grim, 2001).

Another factor that further reinforces the fact that the eco-crisis is not a merely neoliberal phenomenon is the proposition that we individual human subjects appear to be (intrinsically?) prone to unethical practices, including eco-violence. Discourses as divergent as Christian theology and Freudian psychoanalysis nevertheless converge on the notion of the human propensity for unethical behavior, of which greed, selfishness, covetousness, destructiveness, etc., all feed into our anti-environmentalism (the former tradition calls this propensity “original sin” while the latter explains it in terms of a divided self whose unconscious brims with devilish desires [refer to, e.g., Lee, 1949; McClelland, 1959; Gellner, 1985]). However, we must not exaggerate any individual propensity for evil, especially when we note that our social formations also fundamentally inform how we behave as individuals. Žižek’s (2012) incisive remark regarding the relation between the structure and the individual in the context of the GFC and its greedy financiers also applies to the eco-crisis (even though Žižek obviously exaggerates the structural dimension at the expense of personal responsibility by providing an “either/or” formulation of the problem): “let us not blame people and their attitudes: the problem is not corruption or greed, the problem is the system that pushes you to be corrupt” (Žižek, 2012 [no page number]). All of this is good news for those of us attempting to analytically determine to what extent neoliberalism drives and intensifies the eco-crisis and consequently to what extent we require ethico-structural change: history attests that bad personal behavior remains remarkably consistent over time, while social formations come and go; so, if we alter the System, we have a shot at overcoming the crisis, as well as possibly/probably curbing unethical agential behavior.

The key here is that our reformatory/transformatory strategies move beyond understandably “commonsensical” but ultimately naïve approaches exclusively/excessively grounded in the autonomous agential subject; we should be more attuned to the practices and structures that shape us individuals more than we know or feel. I attempt to incorporate these and related insights in the suggested leadership program, a strategy that might be able to get us from where we seem to be to where we ought to be — but first I articulate what this “ought” might be *vis-à-vis* a certain conception of the greater planetary good.

Where We Ought to Be

We may begin to form an adequate concept of the greater planetary good by simply observing the self-evident reality that encompasses us: we are corporeal beings “thrown”

The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity.

—Ludwig Wittgenstein

into existence (Heidegger, 1966a) who find ourselves among other material beings. And, perhaps a little less obviously, we subsist on a planet whose life-sustaining ecosystems are susceptible to human interference and destruction — a counteractive destructibility. The truth and import of such banal empirical observations may be obscured by their very obviousness. As Ludwig Wittgenstein

incisively pointed out: “The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden

because of their simplicity and familiarity” (2009, p. 104). So, what may we deduce from these banal observations? We can discern in such observations a fundamental and general ethical principle (the significance of the qualifier “general” in terms of exceptions is discussed in due course) that forms a key building-block for the concept of the greater planetary good: earthly entities and ecosystems that come-to-be should be allowed-to-be. This letting-be might be described in terms of “ontological rights” (cf. Crowe, 2009): by coming-into-being, entities and ecosystems have a right to be, and we humans ought to respect this right for them to appear and persist in their being by letting them be.

The principle and practice of letting-be, which contemporary familiarity may be largely attributed to twentieth-century hippie counter-culture, is actually endowed with a long but generally under-researched philosophical and religio-spiritual heritage. To begin with, there is the ancient Taoist notion of *wu wei*, which has to do with non-doing or actionless action (Liu, 1991). There is also the old German word *gelassenheit*, whose root term *lassen* means “letting” or “allowing.” This word was utilized by the controversial fourteenth-century Christian philosopher, theologian, and mystic, Meister Eckhart (who was tried by the Inquisition but seems to have died before a verdict was delivered), denoting notions of non-willing and detachment. In the early twentieth century, Martin Heidegger recalled Eckhart’s usage but took up the concept of *gelassenheit* in a more secular way in order to configure it in terms of “openness” and “releasement” (Heidegger, 1966b; Watts, 2014, pp. 91-94). Debra Bergoffen (2006, p. 99) notes how pioneering feminist Simone de Beauvoir (1948) also drew on the notion of letting-be in her development of an existential ethic. The basic reason for this very brief historical retracing is to indicate that the principle and practice of letting-be is certainly much richer and more discerning than might be suggested by its contemporary enframing in pop-philosophical or pop-psychological discourse and ultra-permissive culture—especially its disfiguring reduction to the hyper-relativistic or nihilistic non-ethic of “anything goes”: the two must not be confused or conflated. Their radical difference is brought into sharper relief as I proceed.

The practice of *gelassenheit*, then, is characterized by the seemingly paradoxical praxis of “actionless action” or “active passivity” — such “inactivity” is considered paradoxical in light of contemporary society’s hyperactivity, a busy-ness involving the incessant objectification, commodification, and destruction of entities and ecosystems. Whatever entity or system comes-to-be is not immediately, or principally construed, as a product to be reconstituted, stored, consumed, and squandered by us humans but rather allowed-to-be in its own being. Indeed, letting-be generally maintains a certain respectful “distance” from Earth others, providing the time and space for them to arise and persist in their being. By letting things be, we humans would finally (and quite easily) be able to co-exist with earthly entities and environments. Of course, such a practice does not preclude a loving relation to/with these others, but it must preserve this space or opening to let the beloved be. (The eco-practice of letting-be therefore stands in some contrast to a well-meaning but possibly intrusive environmentalism seeking deep “communion” with Earth others.) Furthermore, associated with this practice is a letting-go, for in order to let things be, we humans need to let them go. This is particularly crucial in the context of capitalistic democracy, which is driven by desires and practices associated with the objectification, commodification, possessiveness/hoarding, and destruction of entities and ecosystems. Letting-go-to-let-be thereby stands diametrically opposed to the global practices of hyper-production and hyper-consumption.

Thus far, I have been outlining a concept of the greater planetary good in terms of the principled practice of letting-be. But this is only half the story: by letting things be, we also allow them to survive and flourish. Hence, the greater planetary good involves the survival

and flourishing of entities and ecosystems. Before further elucidating this dimension of the greater planetary good, I should first add that this does not mean that letting-be should be merely reductively understood as something we do “just” as a means for survival and flourishing (“means” are often denigrated by lofty ethicists), for it is *also* an end in itself: its justification does not depend on its efficacy or outcomes (its justifications—if it needs any—are ontological, rational, ethical, ecological.) We should also note that the dynamic between these two aspects of the greater planetary good is circular or interdependent: by us humans letting things and ecosystems be, we foster their survival and flourishing, which, in turn, requires letting them be, and so on. “Letting-be” and “survival and flourishing” are two sides of the one “coin” — the greater planetary good.

Now, as is the case with the notion of letting-be, what we have with the coupling “survival and flourishing” is a very “obvious” or “commonsensical” formulation of this good. But, as I noted earlier, the obvious is often hidden by its simplicity and plain-sightedness. Even this dimension of the greater planetary good appears obvious: our large-scale eco-oppression and destruction demonstrate that we humans are dismally failing in realizing this good (for instance, species extinction and ecosystem degradation are occurring at alarming rates [Pimm, Jenkins, Abell, Brooks, Gittleman, Joppa, Raven, Roberts & Sexton 2014; Heywood, 1995]).

But what do I mean, exactly, by the broad and vague pairing “survival and flourishing?” As I proceed, I explain why such ambiguity is both inevitable and integral to the concept’s rigor. To assist me in this endeavor, I draw on Hans Sluga’s impressive *Politics in Search for the Common Good* (2014). In that work, Sluga compellingly contends that there may be various configurations of the common good (2014, p. 2; note that “common good” and “greater good” are considered interchangeable in the present context), and he recalls “justice,” “freedom,” and “individual well-being” in this regard (2014, p. 2). Sluga then proceeds to express a somewhat justified skepticism in terms of identifying one authoritative conception of the greater good: “If there were a determinate common good, we would have an easier time at passing judgment on our political reality” (2014, p. 4); and yet, Sluga then proceeds to mention—but only in passing and only if compelled to name one single good—it would be “survival or flourishing” (2014, p. 4).

My immediate reaction to Sluga’s formulation was delight, given that his conception accords more or less with an aspect of my definition of the greater planetary good—but why “more or less?” Sluga names this pairing as the fundamental/irreducible good “for society,” and my hunch is that his conception of society is probably anthropocentric (excessively human-centered); in other words, Sluga is likely referring to *human* society. Such a reading appears to be vindicated by the fact that only a few pages earlier, Sluga speaks of the somewhat related notion of “community” in the following way: “We can, moreover, envisage the community for which such a good is sought in different ways, as tribal, local, national, international, or even global, as egalitarian or hierarchical . . .” (2014, p. 2). There is no mention here of the good of the biospheric community. But if Sluga’s conception does, in fact, suffer from this delimitation (and we cannot know for sure, going by the text), it is easily overcome by reconfiguring “(human) society” as “planetary society”—the society of all entities and ecosystems. In a radically egalitarian maneuver, *democracy* would thus be transformed into an *ecocracy*.

There are also some very valuable and insightful aspects to be gleaned from Sluga’s terse formulation. First of all, (and most generally), his tentativeness and even perhaps hesitancy to offer a basic definition is admirable; when we advance ambitious conceptions (even if in passing), we should vigilantly retain a certain measure of doubt and openness to the possibility of being wrong, given that our thinking is fallible. (The trick, of course, is

to maintain the proper tension between ambition and humility.) The other more specific but somewhat concealed and even possibly unintended insight is the ambivalence inhabiting the phrase “surviving or flourishing.” At first sight, the significance of the “or” is unclear: is Sluga applying it here in the conjunctive and/or disjunctive sense? Given that he himself does not offer clarification, we can only speculate. On the one hand, he stipulates that he is about to offer “a single good” so the “or” may be understood as a conjunction. On the other hand, the two terms are usually understood to mean two very different things: *either* “mere survival” or “abundant flourishing.” While there is perhaps no need to definitively choose between the one and the other, I think interpreting the “or” as a conjunction is insightful in the sense that “survival” and “flourishing” might be understood as the two poles existing at each end of the continuum of being. Such an understanding may have several benefits, including the ability for us to suspend problems associated with trying to determine whether and to what extent an entity or ecosystem is “either” surviving “or” flourishing. I thus conjoin the two terms — i.e., “survival-flourishing” — to stylistically indicate the strategy of deliberately reading Sluga’s coupling as a continuum. Another benefit of reading “survival or flourishing” as a spectrum is that we may better discern their truest polarities: annihilation (versus survival) and oppression (versus flourishing). The most radical opposition does not lie between survival and flourishing, but between survival-flourishing and annihilation-oppression.

We are now closer to concluding our sketch of an adequate concept of the greater planetary good (“adequate” rather than “comprehensive,” for the paper’s other basic aim is to outline a strategy for systemic change that may steer us along a path to a global society informed by this good). What remains to be accomplished is a further degree of refinement in terms of limit-cases to letting-be and survival-flourishing. But, first, an immediate objection arises: do such delimitations undermine the notions’ cogency and force? On the contrary: recognizing their limits and thus their non-absolute status does not make them any “weaker,” but rather signifies a prudential awareness of the fact that there will often/always be particular contexts for which they may need to make allowances. For instance, as universally authoritative as “Thou shalt not kill” may be, it cannot possibly apply to *all* scenarios. For example, in the limited case of self-defense, it would be profoundly unreasonable and unjust if someone who defends themselves from a gratuitous attack and kills their attacker in the process is punished for the killing. Hence, a notion is all-the-more rigorous when its limits are identified and confirmed.

This is particularly the case when it comes to the ostensibly, open-ended practice of “letting-be”: its qualifiers and limits guarantee its rigor. With such conditioners, this notion is recognized as a nuanced, *critical* letting-be — which radically differentiates it from a “letting-be” construed as an “anything goes” permissiveness. What, then, are key limit-cases to this notion as it is understood and presented in the broader conceptual context of the greater planetary good? One of its key limits is constituted by the very fact of creaturely intertwinement, of the radical interconnectedness of earthly entities, an interconnectedness that essentially impedes any thoroughgoing letting-be. Jay McDaniel rightly notes two such impediments, which may be understood as “necessary violences”: “life inevitably involves the taking of other life. Every time we wash our faces we kill billions of bacteria; every time we eat, we support the death of plants, and often, animals” (1990, pp. 126-127). The principle and practice of letting-be is inevitably and non-unethically transgressed in cases of such “necessary violences” (Manolopoulos, 2009).

Another exception to letting-be occurs on the level of the individual, for *gelassenheit* applies to the self as much as it applies to the socio-ecological. To begin with, one generally lets-oneself-be. But there will be exceptional conditions and/or contexts (e.g., untreatably

susceptible psychopathologies, excruciating terminal illnesses, traumatic abuses, etc.) in which the individual adamantly desires to end their life. While suicide remains deeply stigmatized and even often criminalized, a progressive global society would recognize its validity in certain extreme cases — the right for individuals to decide to no longer be. Assisted suicide or euthanasia would likewise be an exception to the general principle of letting-be, though it would obviously involve stringent standards and would be strictly regulated to ensure its proper practice.

Another significant limit-case for letting-be pertains to ecosystems: while many of the Earth's ecologies foster survival-flourishing, there are certain natural processes that inhibit survival-flourishing. Consider desertification: whether an expanding desert is essentially a natural process and/or generated or intensified by human action, it often/usually impedes the survival-flourishing of things. Hence, rather than letting such a process be, we humans ethically transgress this principle by transforming it into a more supportive one. Such intervention is justified when we recognize (as Žižek [2013] does) that “Mother Nature” is not always nurturing as natural disasters emphatically demonstrate — a fact that overzealous environmentalists might be prone to ignore.

Having sketched a concept — or perhaps more precisely, given its ethico-prescriptive dimension: a *precept* — of the greater planetary good, I now attempt to outline a practical reformatational/transformational process that may guide us toward a global society fundamentally informed by this good.

How We Might Get to Where We Ought to Be

The process of global change that is being outlined here involves three basic steps/stages. The first is the formation and functioning of a global network of thought leaders hailing from various key social fields (politics, economics, education, etc.) who would collaboratively produce a blueprint of a world order that would be driven by and produce something like the greater planetary good sketched above. The organization would be an international community that effectively addresses and redresses existing systemic crises and minimizes the risk of the emergence of new ones. One of the most fundamental questions that the network would tackle is whether the dominant political economy of capitalistic democracy requires structural reform or whether it needs to be transformed/replaced as one particular individual, I (or any one person) would be incapable of offering a definitive answer in this regard, which accounts for why I have been utilizing the ambivalent coupling “reformation/transformation” throughout the present work. The network, on the other hand, would thoroughly debate this issue, taking the requisite time to thoughtfully work through a solution. I myself would be very surprised if the network concluded that global neoliberalism is the “best” or “least worst” of all possible political-economic systems—especially if it is informed by something like the precept outlined in the present work. But only if/when such an authoritative body is created could we ever determine somewhat definitively whether social reformation or transformation is required. The question of the most suitable form of global social organization may be an issue in which the network is split, mirroring the possibility that two alternative systems may be equally good/least bad; what might be required in such exceptional circumstances is a democratic vote by the network participants to determine the outcome.

This first stage of this proposed process of systemic change presupposes Reason's capacity to create solutions to very vexing structural problems. This procedure is thus “logocentric” (Reason-centered). I contend that rationality has the capacity to achieve such a task—in the same way, it might be argued, that Enlightenment Reason played an integral

part in many progressivist accomplishments over the past few centuries (refer to, e.g., Israel, 2001, 2006, 2011), but any sustained validation of this claim exceeds the scope of the present work. I also contend that the network of thinkers could collaboratively produce a blueprint: if individuals such as Plato (1974) and Thomas More (2005) have been able to produce somewhat flawed but nonetheless brilliant blueprints, then it is not unreasonable to surmise that the most powerful minds in the world could collectively create an *adequate* architectonics—the network is not expected to produce a blueprint of the “perfect” society. It is also worth noting here that the blueprint would be flexible enough to accommodate unforeseeable contexts and contingencies. Of course, the greatest hurdle is not whether humanity’s combined cognitive capacity could achieve such a feat but whether the network could *cooperate* sufficiently enough to produce a viable blueprint. We can only ever find out if/when such a network is formed and functioning.

Given that the network would be a network of *thinkers thinking* through fundamental social issues obviously means that the suggested systemic-change process is heavily cognitive. This feature differentiates it from much leadership research. As Michael Mumford and others pointedly remark: “A superficial reading of the literature on leadership (Bass & Bass, 2009; Yukl, 2011) seems to point to a conclusion. Leaders do not need to think — they must act” (Mumford, Watts & Partlow, 2015, p. 301). I concur that leadership studies have focused far too heavily on action at the expense of cognition. Prior to the 2000s, very few

Follow reason as leader as
though it were a god.

—CICERO

scholars paid much attention to the cognitive dimension (e.g., Fiedler & Garcia, 1987), though I am particularly encouraged to note that Mumford and other scholars are redressing this shortcoming (e.g., Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Owen Jacobs & Fleishman, 2000; Mumford, Connelly & Gaddis, 2003; Mumford, Friedrich, Caughron & Byrne, 2007; McKenna, Rooney & Boal, 2009; Marcy and Mumford, 2010; Vessey, Barrett & Mumford, 2011; Harter, 2015). The logicentric nature of my proposed leadership

strategy appears to go significantly further in shifting the emphasis from human actors to rational processes and products: in this case, the key “product” being the blueprint. (I am exceedingly fond of Cicero’s exhortation in this regard: “follow reason as leader as though it were a god” [1952, p. 170]). In any case, at least there is now a growing body of research that identifies, explores, and advances the crucial role of cognition in leadership.

Now, once a blueprint is “finalized” (to reiterate: the blueprint would be flexible enough to accommodate the unforeseeable and exceptional), the network would then begin the process of advocating it. The network participants would present the blueprint to their own networks (colleagues, students, etc.), who would then promote it to their own networks, so that the blueprint would begin to gain social traction in ever-broadening “concentric” circles, gaining the attention of artists and activists, workers and the unemployed, and so on. In other words, the aim here would be for the architectonics to gain ever-increasing popularity, ultimately generating mass appeal. Internet technology and social media would thus be anticipated to play an integral role in this regard. The anticipated popularity of the blueprint is premised on the reasonable assumption that our multiplying systemic crises will only intensify, creating greater public awareness, debate, and the need for reformation/transformation. Hence, the blueprint would be embraced due to its provision of rigorously thoughtful solutions to the world’s problems (i.e., its immediate practical-functional dimension) but also because the envisaged society would be significantly more reasonable, more just, more joyful, etc. (i.e., its long-term inherent value).

The aim of the blueprint's advocacy process is thus to gain a worldwide following. In other words, a rationally-derived blueprint would be something of a "leader": the focus would shift away from shaky human agency to a more stable locus of leadership. (Cicero's seemingly hyperbolic remark about "following reason" now begins to appear more plausible and applicable.)

So, once the blueprint is popularized and the masses are mobilized, we would arrive at the third stage of the process: "people power" would be leveraged to institute the required structural changes (assuming, we recall, that the network of thought leaders concludes that there is indeed a better alternative to the existing System, be it reformation or transformation). The global movement's sincere intention and expectation would be that those who stand to lose by systemic change (i.e., existing power elites) voluntarily allow such reform/transformation to occur, given the overwhelming display of solidarity by their opponents. *If* there is resistance (which is possible and even perhaps probable, given what would be at stake), then the movement would be forced to apply some pressure in the form of "civil disobedience," such as protests, strikes, and so on. This pressure would be fundamentally informed by the exemplary thought and practice of leaders such as Gandhi (1961) and Martin Luther King (1964).

But what if such non-violent strategies are ineffective? In other words, what if they do not produce the desired outcome of social reformation/transformation? *If* non-violent measures do not succeed, then the movement would be in the unenviable position of having to seriously consider, threaten, and even enact violent action, i.e., the forced removal of oppressive-annihilating structures in order to implement the blueprint. Obviously this is a shocking and extremely disturbing possibility, especially for us rationalists who infinitely prefer peaceful processes of change, but it would be considered by the movement as a *desperate last resort*. But doesn't any recourse to force directly contravene the principle of letting-be that I have been strenuously advocating in this work? In a literal sense, yes; but here we encounter another limit-case: as it is figured here, *gelassenheit* would allow the imposition of violence upon those humans and human systems that disallow humans, other creatures, and ecosystems to be. In other words, the principle of letting-be may be contravened to disallow those agents and systems who disallow the being of earthly entities and ecosystems. Or to express it differently: good violence resists/stops bad violence—for only good violence may sometimes be the only way of overcoming bad violence. As contentious as this proposition may be, its rigor is most evident in the previously-cited practice of self-defense: the bad violence of unjustified attack may be overcome with the good violence of justified counter-attack.

Given the contentiousness of this proposition, it is unsurprising that affirmative treatises have rarely been presented, such as Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968), although Slavoj Žižek has bravely and rigorously recuperated this line of thought, variously figuring good violence as "ethical" (2004), "divine" (2008), and "defensive" (2013). Self-defense is the most obvious type and example of "good violence": what makes it justified is the very acceptable rational argument that entities have the right to protect and preserve themselves. Extending this rigorous logic, we may contend that the transformative movement's violence would be a counter-violence to the systemic violences (environmental, economic, political, etc.) that batter the world each and every day. But, as I have emphasized, recourse to such force would only be a *desperate last resort* if all peaceful options fail.

I also urge that we not become too distracted at the present time by the question of good violence: my immediate objective is to stimulate research and debate about the most

rational and effective leadership process involving the critique of neoliberalism and its reform or replacement, a process perhaps informed by a notion of the greater planetary good in which earthly entities and ecosystems are allowed-to-be in order to survive and flourish. Of course, I have here *proposed one possible path* for transformation, and I am very open to alternative options if/when they can be demonstrated to be equally/more rational. I also recognize that my proposed strategy may not turn out to be foolproof in terms of completely eradicating greed and corruption: as I argued earlier and drawing from both Christian and psychoanalytic discourses, it seems that we humans have a proclivity to what is traditionally (and today unfashionably) called “sin.”

So I remain somewhat skeptical about their thoroughgoing/complete eradication at the level of the individual and the structural, though we open-minded ones remain open to these kinds of possibilities. Hence, Žižek’s remark cited above requires some modification: the problem is *both* this human proclivity to sin *and* “the system that pushes you to be corrupt” —and my proposed strategy attempts to *reduce/minimize* systemic violence and the violence that “pushes us” to be corrupt, while recognizing that such behavior may/will not be fully eradicated. But this recognition is precisely one of the drivers of my call for transformation: what we are simultaneously enduring and perpetuating today is atomic and systemic greed and corruption.

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