

Ecological Civilization and Multipolarity: Ecocivilization as Communities of Communities

Arran Gare

Abstract: The collapse of the unipolar world dominated by the USA has opened the way to rethinking geopolitics in the quest for ecological civilization. The argument I will present here is that multipolarity paves the way for the creation of a global ecological civilization, and should be seen as integral to it. The unipolar world, imposing exploitative markets throughout the world by force, has been locking humanity on the path to global ecological destruction. The multipolar world opens up new possibilities. However, this does not mean that the collapse of the monopolar world will guarantee success in the quest for this global ecological civilization. It is necessary to work out the principles on which it could be based, and how these principles could be implemented. Here I will argue that the notion of ‘communities of communities’ combined with the notion of transculturalism provides a basis for these principles and for mobilizing people to realise them in practice.

Keywords: *ecological civilization; multipolarity; communities of communities; transculturalism*

Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 amounted to the triumph of the capitalist world order in which the USA and its ruling class was the dominant world hegemon, although the US ruling class was evolving into a global class. This class was capturing control of state institutions throughout the world and in alliance with other oligarchs, was using them to massively concentrate wealth and power. Their triumph was associated with

the triumph of neoliberal globalism, committed to defining all relations between people as market relations, although the imposition of markets was associated with increasingly oppressive institutions of social control, nationally and internationally. The global ruling class, largely based in transnational business corporations, along with transnational institutions supporting them—the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, and institutions of trade based on using the US dollar as an international currency, among others, created what amounts to a global police state characterized by the unprecedented development of technologies of war, social control, surveillance and mind control.¹ While the base for this global class has been in the USA where they largely control the institutions of the state, its members have no commitment to their own countries as nations. As the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher put it, there are only individuals, families and the global market, and she also claimed there is no alternative to this neoliberal order. Despite this denial of social institutions other than families and markets, USA now accounts for almost half the world's expenditure on armaments designed to keep in place the 'rule-based order', and it is through this military industrial and intelligence complex that the global class imposes and maintains markets and their access to the world's resources and to cheap labour.

The legitimacy of this 'rule-based' world-order has been to some extent undermined by massive concentrations of wealth, dismantling the welfare state in affluent countries, by the hypocrisy of USA in how it ignores the rules it claims to be upholding, and by undermining the economic and political security of vast numbers of people world-wide, including people living in USA and other supposedly affluent countries allied with it. The biggest challenge to this world-order, however, is the global ecological crisis. While efforts have been made by some members of this ruling class (notably, the Koch brothers) to convince people that there is no global warming and that there is no ecological crisis, most members of this ruling class recognize the reality of the crisis. The ecological crisis has engendered social movements calling for radical economic, social, political and cultural changes to deal with it, and as such, these movements have become the greatest challenge to the rule of this class.² The most enlightened members of the ruling class, to counter this challenge, have embraced the notion of 'sustainable development' as the solution, but argue that this will be best achieved by freeing markets to generate the required

¹ See David C. Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2001); Leslie Sklair, *The Transnational Capitalist Class* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001); William I. Robinson, *Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); William I. Robinson, *The Global Police State* (London: Pluto Press, 2020).

² Sklair, *Transnational Capitalist Class*, 206.

entrepreneurial activity to develop alternative, more efficient, environmentally sustainable technologies. All that is necessary is to liberate entrepreneurs to pursue profits. However, as Joel Kovel pointed out a quarter of a century ago in *The Enemy of Nature*, even when ruling elites in capitalist societies recognized the ecological crisis and attempted to deal with it, ecological destruction accelerated, and it has continued to worsen ever since.³ Despite efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions, each year new records are set for these emissions. Ecosystems continue to be destroyed and species are being driven to extinction at increasing rates.

The response of these ruling elites to this failure has been to intensify efforts to control subordinate classes and countries, corrupting institutions of democracy in USA and other core zones of the world economy, but most importantly, by effecting regime changes throughout the world either through engineering coups or through direct military interventions, focussing in particular on controlling countries with fossil fuel reserves. According to a report by the Congressional Research Service, a US government institution that compiles information on behalf of Congress, there have been at least 251 military interventions between 1991 and 2022, many of which had regime change as an implicit or explicit objective.⁴ Over a quarter of all U.S. military interventions in history occurred after the Cold War, reflecting the increase in intervention frequency during this period. The range of efforts to subvert and destroy governments or impose comprador elites in the name of ‘freedom and democracy’ have been well documented by William Blum in *Rogue State*⁵ and *America’s Deadliest Export: Democracy*.⁶ The first chapter of this second book described the coup in Ukraine in 2014, providing evidence for its having been organized outside Ukraine. Documentation of such subversion of governments has continued through the work of Lindsey O’Rourke.⁷

It is in this context that the strategies of the new ruling class have become more transparent, and also, why they have failed. With the challenge of communism apparently having been eliminated with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the global ruling class have used their power to control people more effectively, including manufacturing consent for

³ Joel Kovel, *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World?*, 2nd ed. (London: Zed Books, 2007), 13ff.

⁴ Ben Norton, “US Launched 251 Military Interventions since 1991, and 469 since 1798,” *Geopolitical Economy*, September 13, 2022, <https://geopoliticaconomy.com/2022/09/13/us-251-military-interventions-1991/>.

⁵ William Blum, *Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower* (London: Zed Books, 2002).

⁶ William Blum, *America’s Deadliest Export: Democracy* (London: Zed Books, 2014).

⁷ Lindsey A. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change: America’s Secret Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021).

their policies by concentrating media ownership, privatising public institutions, controlling the media, including the internet, and spending massively on public relations. As Bernard Stiegler has shown, controlling what people take to be reality is now based on technological control of people's thinking.⁸ Europe and USA have been engaging in what the German cultural theorist, Jonas Tögel, argued is cognitive warfare, militarizing societies by claiming threats to them that do not exist.⁹ Promoting what they claim to be freedom and democracy, rulers are removing all the constraints on markets imposed after the Great Depression and WWII, imposing markets on all facets of life. People have been depoliticised by undermining the economic security required for them to fulfil their functions as citizens, by sabotaging education systems and defining all relations between people as economic relations.¹⁰

Neoliberal globalism has unleashed the logic of markets as analysed by Karl Marx, extending commodification both extensively, to all corners of the globe, and intensively, commodifying more and more facets of life. In place of workers and citizens, people in affluent countries, if they have not been excluded from the economy altogether, have been redefined as consumers rather than citizens or workers. These depoliticised masses in the core zones of the world economy have benefitted from the exploitation of workers in and the resources of developing countries and their peripheries. This is neoliberalism as defended by Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman and first implemented by Augusto Pinochet in Chile, Margaret Thatcher in Britain, Ronald Regan in USA, and then almost universally, including by purportedly left-wing governments.¹¹ Unconstrained capitalism inevitably engenders crises of capital accumulation, or profitability. And as Raj Patel and Jason Moore have shown, the main concern of the capitalist ruling class from the beginning has been to deal with economic problems, most importantly, falling profits, by reducing the costs of inputs.¹² Neoliberal globalism has

⁸ Christina Howells and Gerald Moore, eds., *Stiegler and Technics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

⁹ Jonas Tögel, *Kognitive Kriegsführung: Neueste Manipulationstechniken als Waffengattung der NATO* (Frankfurt: Westend Verlag, 2023).

¹⁰ See Wang Hui, "Depoliticizing Politics, from East to West," *New Left Review* 41 (September–October 2006): 29–45; Ingrid S. Straume and J. F. Humphrey, eds., *Depoliticization: The Political Imagination of Global Capitalism* (Malmö: NSU Press, 2011).

¹¹ Michael Hudson, *Global Fracture: The New International Economic Order*, 2nd ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2005), x.

¹² Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore, *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet* (Carlton, VIC: Black Inc., 2018).

intensified this logic, and from the 1970s onwards has been focussed on reducing costs of labour and natural resources, particularly oil and gas.

There are no more frontiers to cross to achieve this, however, and the quest to cheapen inputs by undermining the power of working people and subjugating other countries to access their resources has undermined not only US power but the current capitalist world-system, along with the global ecosystem. As Austro-Marxist Karl Polanyi, who defended the re-embedding of markets into communities associated with the rise of social democracy observed, “the idea of a self-adjusting market implied a stark utopia. Such an institution could not exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness.”¹³ This is what is happening with the defeat of social democracy from the 1970s onwards. Eco-Marxists have further advanced research on the destructive logic of markets, showing how Marx himself in his notebooks had predicted much of what has taken place in recent years.¹⁴ Now, the monopolar world is beginning to disintegrate and is facing the challenge of an organized multipolar world.

The Disintegration of the Monopolar World

The disintegration of the monopolar world amounts to the failure of the Wolfowicz Doctrine, formulated in 1992, that the USA should remain the sole superpower, maintaining dominance by preventing the emergence of any rival power and ensuring unquestioned U.S. military superiority throughout the world. The Norwegian professor of peace studies, Johan Galtung, who had predicted nine and a half years before it happened that the Soviet Union would collapse in ten years, predicted in 2000 that the US empire would collapse in twenty-five years. In his book, *The Fall of the US Empire – And Then What?*, he summed up the reasons for this: “The cause of the decline and fall of western imperialism is western imperialism itself, or, in other words, its ever-expanding or at least never contracting cosmology.”¹⁵ The triumph of being the sole superpower corroded the basis for this power, both within the United States and globally.

Within the United States there was a massive transfer of wealth from the poor to the wealthy. Between 1989 and 2018, the top 1% of Americans increased their wealth by \$21 trillion, from \$8.4 trillion to \$29.5 trillion, while the bottom 50% lost \$900 billion, from

¹³ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 3.

¹⁴ Kohei Saito, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism: Capitalism, Nature, and the Unfinished Critique of Political Economy* (New Delhi: Dev, 2018).

¹⁵ Johan Galtung, *The Fall of the US Empire—and Then What?* (Transcend University Press, 2009), 183.

owning \$0.7 trillion to being indebted by \$0.2 trillion. Their life expectancy has been reduced, and less well nourished, they are shorter.¹⁶ The wealthy have used their wealth to further consolidate their power, taking control of both major political parties, most importantly, the Democratic Party, while undermining the economic security of the rest of the nation, which is a condition for people to participate effectively in politics. Much of this was achieved through transnational corporations outsourcing production to developing countries. Workers there were paid a pittance, often living in highly polluted environments, with vast profits going to these corporations. In the process, the USA was deindustrialized, and most people forgot how to organize and produce goods, and their capacity to develop innovative technologies or develop new ways of thinking declined. Economic activity, apart from the military-industrial complex, focussed on the 'FIRE' sector of the economy—finance, insurance and real estate, generally transferring wealth from poorer to wealthier people. A class of idle poor was created, equivalent to the plebeians of the Roman Empire. Peter Turchin, applying concepts developed in theoretical biology to human history, has shown that such wealth pumps, pumping wealth from the poor to the wealthy, combined with overproduction of elites, inevitably results in political disintegration and societal decline.¹⁷

At the same time, people in developing countries have learnt how to manufacture the most technologically advanced products and further develop the technologies for this. China is the obvious example, but India, Brazil and other countries have followed the same path. The Russian Federation, which appeared to be deindustrializing under Yeltsin, changed direction, reindustrialized and developed a formidable armaments industry. China did not just accept its role in providing cheap labour to transnational corporations, but began to challenge the technological supremacy of the USA.

The ambition of the US government has been to move on from destroying the Soviet Union to destroying the Russian Federation. This ambition was articulated by Dick Cheney starting in the 1990s when he was Secretary of Defence under George Bush Snr and pursued by him more aggressively as Vice-President to George Bush Jr., particularly after France, Germany and Russia united to condemn the invasion of Iraq in 2003. This goal was then pursued by leaders of the Democratic Party, but came up against a resurgent much more powerful Russia than had been anticipated. NATO was successful in orchestrating the overthrow of the pro-Russian Ukrainian government in 2014 and then,

¹⁶ Peter Turchin, *End Times: Elites, Counter-Elites and the Path of Political Disintegration* (New York: Penguin, 2023), 68ff.

¹⁷ Turchin, *End Times*.

abrogating the Minsk agreements, training, arming and integrating Ukraine's armed forces into the NATO military machine, then called for NATO to incorporate Ukraine and install nuclear missiles directed at Russia on Russia's border.¹⁸ Russia was lured into a military conflict in 2022 by Ukraine attacking the Donbass Republics which had rebelled and sought independence when their elected government had been overthrown in 2014.¹⁹ Russia responded, but did not collapse as anticipated. It appears that Russia will not only succeed in freeing the four Eastern oblasts to join Russia and securing Crimea, but has been able to play a major role in organizing the BRICS countries into a multipolar challenge to the unipolar world, aligned with China, bypassing US financial institutions and US control of international trade, and reviving the United Nations and its original charter. The Global South have for the most part aligned themselves with Russia and China in this challenge.

The outcome of this has been that USA under President Trump has abandoned any pretence of working within the framework of international law, invading Venezuela to take over its oil reserves, threatening to do the same thing with Greenland and invading Iran, in the wake of Israel's blatant disregard for international law and genocide of Palestinians, supported by USA.

In the Prologue to *The Fall of the US Empire*, Galtung recounted his father's prediction in 1941 that Hitler would fail: "Because he does not know when and how to stop."²⁰ This is the core of Galtung's argument that the US empire would fail. And I am suggesting, that with this failure ends the era of modernity, that is, the civilization that originated in West Europe in the Fifteenth Century with the imperialism of Portugal and Spain, financially backed by Northern Italian and Flemish bankers, leading to the conquest of the Americas and subsequent domination by Europeans of over 80% of land surface area of the world by 1914.

Imperialism, Capitalism, Liberalism and the Radical Enlightenment

Before going on to consider what can replace this civilization, it is necessary to characterize it. Its proponents purport to be upholding freedom and democracy, upholding the tradition of liberalism. Its culture originated with the Western form of Judeo-Christian religion integrated with neo-Platonic philosophy denying any value to

¹⁸ See Glenn Diesen, *The Ukraine War & the Eurasian World Order* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2024), chaps 7-8; Benjamin Abelow, *How the West Brought War to Ukraine* (Great Barrington, MA: Silas Press, 2022), 61.

¹⁹ William I. Robinson, *Can Global Capitalism Endure?* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2022), 91.

²⁰ Johan Galtung, *The Fall of the US Empire—and Then What?* (Transcend University Press, 2009), 7.

nature or people other than Christians.²¹ As noted, modernity began with the imperialism of Portugal and Spain conquering the New World, and continued with the imperialism of the Dutch, the English and the French, and later, the Germans. Patel and Moore have shown how it was this imperialism that inaugurated the birth of capitalism in which the end of economic enterprises became the quest to accumulate more capital.²² Supporting this, European culture was reformed in the Seventeenth Century scientific revolution, promoting Cartesian dualism, Newtonian atomism, mechanistic materialism, and an instrumentalist notion of reason.²³ Ethical and political philosophy were reformulated on the assumption that people are egoists and society is based on a contract between these egoists. John Locke, aligned with Newton and building on the work of Hobbes, was its most influential proponent. He argued that it is the acquisition and protection of property that is central to social and political life. The end of life was reconceived, from cultivating virtues to maximising pleasure and minimizing pain and accumulating wealth, with freedom redefined as liberty to pursue these ends without interference from others, provided that life and property of these others and contracts with them are respected. This is the original doctrine of liberalism, incorporated into economic theory and defended in the Eighteenth Century by the philosophers aligning themselves with Newton and Locke, characterized by Jonathan Israel as the “Moderate” Enlightenment.²⁴ It was this liberalism that justified the imposition of markets to define the relations between people, with markets expanding to encompass the entire world. The fusion of the new science of Descartes and Newton with technology led to the industrial revolution, followed by a sequence of technological revolutions, all driven by the quest for profits and capital accumulation through technological mastery of nature and people, and to new, more subtle forms of imperialism. These are the ideas that have been revived and reformulated with neoliberalism, based on privileging the concept of information and conceiving living beings as information processing cyborgs.

It should be noted that originally, liberalism was opposed to democracy. Locke defended rule by people with property, that is, oligarchy. Such liberalism was characterized by C.B. McPherson as ‘possessive individualism’, and Locke defended the right of these oligarchs to integrate the poor, massively increased through the enclosure of the commons, into the commercial system by forcing them to work under the most brutal conditions.

²¹ Arran Gare, *Nililism Inc.: Environmental Destruction and the Metaphysics of Sustainability* (Como, NSW: Eco-Logical Press, 1995), chap. 4.

²² Patel and Moore, *History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*.

²³ Gare, *Nililism Inc.*, chap. 5.

²⁴ Jonathan I. Israel, *The Enlightenment That Failed* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 4.

Furthermore, Locke defended imperialism, slavery and the genocide of indigenous people in the colonies. Domenico Losurdo in his study *Liberalism* has shown that this defence of imperialism, slavery and genocide was not an aberration but central to the notion of and the condition for liberty as most liberals defended it, with even critics of the worst aspects of slavery, such as Montesquieu and de Tocqueville, still defending some slavery.²⁵ In the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries such values were further defended through Darwinism and Social Darwinism, with Naziism in Germany being far from an aberration.²⁶ Britain, Germany and USA concurred regarding their race as superior, as the elect people entitled by virtue of their power to subjugate others, as the Ancient Israelites believed they were entitled to exterminate the indigenous populations of the promised land. Upholding this tradition, neoliberals by redefining freedom and politics through the categories of economics, amounted to the destruction of democracy and to the revival of Social Darwinism in which might makes right. The current behaviour of Israel in carrying out genocide of Palestinians and USA in invading Venezuela and planning to invade Greenland illustrates the continuation of these values.

However, there were influential counter-traditions opposed to mainstream thought. After all, Jesus belonged to a tradition in Judaism that rejected the exclusivity of the Israelites and their pre-occupation with money, promoting instead universal love, including of one's enemies, and some Christians have been influenced by these values. Greek philosophy upheld ideas about nature and humans very different from those that came to dominate in the Seventeenth Century. Such ideas were revived in the Renaissance, particularly the Florentine Renaissance, in which there was a rebirth of ideas from Republican Rome and Ancient Greece, giving rise to education in the humanities. This recovered the Ancient Greek notion of education as *paideia*, developing people's humanity. The Renaissance reached its fullest development in the natural philosophy of the Nature Enthusiasts, most notably, with Giordano Bruno who argued for an infinite, self-organizing universe, and with the historical thinking of Giambattista Vico calling for imagination to understand people from the past with very different ways of thinking. It was these renaissance thinkers who were the target of philosophers in the Seventeenth Century and their ideas were suppressed; but they were revived in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century as a reaction to mechanistic thought and all its implications in what

²⁵ Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

²⁶ Losurdo, *Liberalism*, 338.

has come to be known as the ‘Radical Enlightenment’.²⁷ While Jean-Jacques Rousseau was pivotal in this revival, it flourished most vigorously in Germany through the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and his students J.G Herder and J.G Fichte, and then through Hegel, Schelling, Marx, Dilthey and those they inspired. It was the tradition of the Radical Enlightenment, revealing the limitations of reductionist thinking and reviving the notion of nature as self-organizing and conceiving humans as essentially social, participating creatively or destructively in nature, that drove the quest for genuine democracy as people governing themselves.

Central to this tradition was Herder’s notion of culture, rejecting both Cartesian dualism and the view of humans as nothing but complex machines, and calling for an appreciation of diverse cultures and their associated communities. The notion of culture implies ‘communitarianism’ in opposition to atomic individualism, seeing individuals as only emerging as self-conscious agents through their culture, even if as individuals they then develop the capacity to question and transform their own culture. It is by virtue of culture, which includes language, that humans are capable of far more complex forms of cooperation and creativity (and destruction) than any other animal is capable of. It is by virtue of culture that humans develop or fail to develop loyalty to their communities. This notion of culture also implies that our current culture, including its beliefs and deep assumptions about the nature of reality, its forms of art, its sciences, technologies, buildings, its social, economic and political institutions, are the creations of people and can be changed, developed or transformed.

Marx’s critique of political economy is an exemplary achievement of cultural critique, showing how what is normally taken for granted, that all sorts of processes and potentialities, including human labour power, can be objectified and treated as commodities with value nothing but exchange value, can be questioned. Political economy is shown to be the product of a particular culture, with the categories of economics functioning as the forms of being or existence in the social order based on this culture. The discourse of political economy, taking for granted and reflecting social life mediated by such categories, legitimates this social order, but in doing so, presents a distorted, one-sided view of reality. Most importantly, what is presented as freedom because people are free to buy and sell what they like and to freely make contracts, is really a form of slavery in which most people, deprived of access to the means of production, are made dependent upon

²⁷ See Margaret C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans*, 2nd ed. (The Temple Publishers, 2003); Arran Gare, *The Philosophical Foundations of Ecological Civilization: A Manifesto for the Future* (London: Routledge, 2016), 157ff.

people who can harm them. Marx revealed further consequences of this culture that people within it are blind to, consequences which are increasingly oppressive, enslaving even the ruling class to the logic of the market, and as eco-Marxists have pointed out, this logic is destroying the environmental conditions for humanity. Most importantly, this work revealed that the categories of economics are the categories of a particular culture, the product of human creativity. As such, this culture can be transformed. We do not have to continue organizing life around these categories. We can create a social and economic order based on more defensible categories that acknowledge that humans are essentially creative, social beings participating in processes of nature. Defending this requires the replacement of the scientific materialist or mechanist world-view by a relational/process world-view.

Upholding the notion of culture also entails the possibility that people in different cultures can criticise and learn from each other. In opposition to Social Darwinism in which progress was seen to involve subjugating and eliminating more primitive people and defeating rivals, the Radical Enlightenment, rejecting the Eurocentric view of history, called for appreciation of diverse people, including people who had been designated primitive. Such people were strongly defended by cultural anthropologists. Recognizing culture in this way involves taking responsibility for one's own culture and the communities formed by it, including its institutions. It calls for the education of people to develop their full potential to participate in political and cultural life and to take responsibility for the future of their communities and its members. This was the mission of the humanities. Major advances were made in this regard, subordinating markets to communities, extending the franchise for elections and setting up the public institutions of the welfare state to control markets. Efforts were made to overcome imperialism and racism and create a community of humanity, setting up the League of Nations and more importantly, the United Nations in which Franklin Roosevelt and his New Deal supporters played a major role. Some of the impetus for this came from Marxists, including revisionist Marxists, but they were not the only agents for these changes. John Maynard Keynes, influenced by the British social liberals, identified the illusions of freedom associated with markets and also argued that economic activity should be subordinated to higher ends. After WWII Keynes provided plans for an international financial system with an international currency that would have avoided the growth of indebtedness between countries, unfortunately rejected by Americans. Orthodox Marxists, conceiving of the superstructure as a mere instrument serving the development of the forces of production and portraying history as the history of class warfare, are often closer to the mainstream of

modernity than the Radical Enlightenment, or to Marx himself, who was a major figure in the Radical Enlightenment.

The success of the Radical Enlightenment in promoting democracy led people who identified themselves as liberals to embrace the term ‘democracy’. In some cases, such as John Stuart Mill, British Idealists such as T.H. Green and American pragmatists such as John Dewey, this was genuine, and they paved the way for the development of social democracy. However, these were philosophers influenced by the Radical Enlightenment and have been characterized as social liberals or liberal socialists. Oligarchs promoting liberalism following the tradition deriving from Locke, were hostile to the achievements of the social liberals. They embraced ‘democracy’ as a slogan to use against people organizing and fighting for social justice, using this to protect the property rights of oligarchs and corporations and to impose further markets, creating the illusion of democracy while effectively enslaving people and manufacturing consent for this. At an international level, this subversion of democracy has been most blatantly operative since the death of Franklin Roosevelt, with the US effecting regime changes throughout the world to facilitate exploitation of resources and people, claiming to be defending freedom and democracy against communism while installing comprador elites to subjugate the rest of the population.²⁸ With neoliberalism, freedom has been identified with market mediated action, the freedom to shop, using this to dismantle or cripple state institutions in the core zones of the world economy, institutions designed to control markets and essential for the functioning of genuine democracy.

Multipolarity in Opposition to Neoliberal Globalism and Imperialism

If the monopolar world, promoting neoliberalism and practicing imperialism in the name of freedom and democracy, is disintegrating and being replaced by a multipolar world, what does multipolarity mean? Its proponents see it as liberation from enslavement to the US military-industrial complex, subordinating humanity to the US based financial system and transnational corporations which have been taking over the resources of entire countries. Multipolarity is being promoted by countries struggling to free themselves from domination in the current world order, but where will this lead? It could mean the growth of fascism with humanity descending into a world of constant warfare between centres of power. To avoid descending into chaos, possibly ending in a nuclear war, it is necessary to put forward a realistic vision of what kind of order could be created. There are several

²⁸ Blum, *Rogue State*; Blum, *America's Deadliest Export*.

contenders for this, and before suggesting a vision integrating multipolarity with the vision of ecological civilization, these need to be considered.

One of the most forceful and influential proponents of multipolarity is Jeffrey Sachs, a Professor of Economics, a public policy analyst and an advisor to governments, and director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University. He identifies himself as a social democrat and an environmentalist. His vision is really a development of the ideas of the New Dealers from the 1930s and of Franklin Roosevelt's vision of a peaceful world order achieved through international relations maintained through the United Nations based on advancing international law. He has condemned USA's foreign policy since then (although President Kennedy was attempting to revive Roosevelt's vision) characterized by repeated breaches of the charter of the United Nations by interfering with the governance of other nations, fostering conflict and engineering regime changes while ignoring rulings by the United Nations. He argues that it is necessary to recognize a number of power centres in the world which can provide the force necessary to uphold a peaceful world-order. To avoid conflict between them, these centres should be separated by neutral states that should not allow themselves to be used by more distant centres of power to threaten militarily their neighbouring centres, as Cuba did when it allowed the Soviet Union to place nuclear missiles aimed at the United States on its territory (in response to Turkey placing US nuclear missiles on its territory, threatening the Soviet Union, and the US threatening to invade Cuba) and which Zelensky as President of Ukraine called for prior to the Ukrainian military conflict.

This is a vision influenced by the ideas of the Radical Enlightenment, although ignoring crucial aspects of it. It advances Roosevelt's vision of a future based on recognizing the sovereignty of nation-states with relations constrained by international law as the foundation of world-order, a vision originally proposed by Schelling at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. This is basically in accord with the idea of nation-states that emerged from the Treaty of Westphalen of 1648 in which Switzerland and the Dutch Republic were recognized as nation states, recognizing their freedom from the Austrian and Spanish Habsburgs. However, Sachs has not fully developed this vision of the future, nor considered which nation or nation or nations would be centres of power in South America or Africa, for instance, or considered the role of culture in nations, as argued for by Rousseau, Herder and Fichte. He has not engaged with the question of how freedom of individuals should be characterized in the context of their membership of nations. He does not consider how nations maintain their coherence as nations, or how to deal with the claimed rights of people to organize into comprador elites to betray their national

communities, or the claimed rights of countries to choose who to align themselves with and what defence arrangements to make with other countries, or the claimed right of the majority of a country to suppress and even commit genocide of minorities, although Sachs and those aligned with him are clearly opposed to neoliberalism on these issues. Nor does he examine the base of power by nations in their control of natural resources, most importantly, usable energy, or how the struggle for access to and control of these resources underpins most of the conflicts between nations. That is, he does not situate his policy proposals in a broader philosophy of history defining the nature of humans and their potentials and liabilities and their place within nature.

A more radical proponent of multipolarity is the Russian philosopher, Alexander Dugin, expounded in his book *The Theory of a Multipolar World*.²⁹ Arguing for what he claims to be a scientific theory of multipolarity, Dugin takes his point of departure from the work of Samuel Huntington and his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*.³⁰ Dugin focusses on the notion of civilization and, arguing against Huntington and other globalists, argues for a future when no one civilization will impose its norms, values and institutions on the entire world, but in which a diversity of civilizations will be recognized. This is not viewed by him as a return to the past, but a postmodern creation. Unlike Huntington, Dugin is optimistic about what such an order will be.

Arguing for the inseparability of the notion of civilization and the notion of culture, essentially as defined by Herder, is very much in accordance with the Radical Enlightenment. Dugin calls for appreciation of diversity of norms and goes on to clarify what is involved in making civilizations effective actors. He is highly critical of international relations theorists such as Sachs for being captive to the Westphalian tradition of thought, which he argues is now obsolete. It is now impossible to conduct relations between civilizations in the legal framework originating in the West. As actors, these civilizations do not have sharp borders like nation-states. Dugin argues that with these fuzzy boundaries, a multipolar world order can be maintained.

However, the multiculturalism that Dugin defends does not provide the basis for these different civilizations to reach agreement. What is emerging at present are various forms of fundamentalism in which there is no basis for reconciliation of differences, as well

²⁹ Alexander Dugin, *The Theory of a Multipolar World* (London: Arktos, 2021).

³⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003).

described by Tariq Ali in *The Clash of Fundamentalisms*.³¹ These can evolve into various forms of fascism. As with the conflict in Israel, if it continues on its present path, the only possible end is the complete destruction of one side of the conflict by the other. Furthermore, to the extent to which Dugin can oppose such conflicts it is because he is not consistent in his defence of multiculturalism. He claims that his approach is scientific. Science, as Dugin himself notes, is a product of Western civilization, with proponents of 'scientism' claiming to have found the way to true knowledge superior to the claims of ordinary people or of other cultures. It is a claim that has been challenged by more consistent critics of Western civilization, such as Bruno Latour, although Latour's position, being consistently multicultural, has generated its own problems. To avoid such difficulties it is necessary to draw on the full potential of the Radical Enlightenment.

Radical Enlightenment and Dialectics

The development of the notion of culture was closely related to appreciation of diverse cultures, understanding these, and communicating with people from very different cultures. This in turn was closely related to the development of dialectics, a form of dialogue that reveals limitations to various ideas and ways of thinking, both theoretical and practical, and engenders creative thinking as a consequence.³² Without going into the long history of the notion of dialectics from the Greeks onward, although history is essential to dialectics, a few essential features of dialectics as it was developed in the Radical Enlightenment should be noted. The most basic is that assumption that we are situated in the world initially through our cultures with their traditions and history, but through dialogue with others we develop the capacity to reflect upon, critique and develop our culture and its traditions, with science itself being a cultural tradition developing through dialectical reasoning consisting of multiple traditions of research, dialectically related to the broader traditions of philosophy. While some proponents of dialectics have striven for a means to gain absolute certainty in knowledge, as with Hegel's later effort to 'geometrize' dialectics or Engels' effort to reduce dialectics to three dialectical laws, the most consistent form of dialectics acknowledges that this is not possible and acknowledges that there is far more to being than we could ever understand, but claim we can still have progress as deficient ways of thinking are identified and overcome. Dialectics, denying the possibility of finding absolute foundations for knowledge, offers a path between relativism and

³¹ Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity* (London: Verso, 2003).

³² Gare, *Philosophical Foundations of Ecological Civilization*, 2016.

dogmatism, including the dogmatism of scientism, allowing for indefinite progress in inquiry and in the development of culture, sometimes characterized by major innovations. Dialectics itself can develop dialectically. The conditions for enquiry, including social practices, technologies, the media of communication, institutions and specialized cultural fields should also be acknowledged as involved in such dialectical reasoning. This is dialectics as understood by Schelling and presupposed by Marx.

Central to dialectics is the effort to develop a coherent, comprehensive characterization of physical existence, which must be able to acknowledge the reality of dialectical thinking and make sense of its possibility. This involves being able to make intelligible the reality of life, from its most basic forms to sentient life and to human beings able to enquire about the nature of the universe and the place of humanity within it. In this quest philosophers, scientists and mathematicians inspired by Schelling and drawing on non-Western and older traditions of thought, transcended Cartesian dualism and Newtonian physics. This is the tradition of process metaphysics. The development of this tradition has engendered biosemiotics in which life is identified with the emergence of semiosis, the production and ‘interpretation’ of signs. These extend from the most primitive responses of the most basic forms of life to their environments, to vegetative, animal and then human forms of semiosis. ‘Interpretants’ can be particular biological forms, actions, signalling, and in the case of humans, symbolic interaction in which the meaning of signs, presupposing the other forms of semiosis, is based on conventions. The possibility of semiosis is explained through thermodynamics and the emergence of new enabling constraints, which also account for both development and evolution from the first forms of life through the development of ecosystems, eukaryotic cells to primitive, multi-celled organisms to plants, fish and animals and then to humans and their cultural and social evolution.³³ In all cases, what is involved are new forms of symbiosis or cooperation producing and maintaining in existence these forms, and also new forms of conflict, which can also function as enabling constraints.

Such evolution is characterized by scaffolding. As a founder of biosemiotics, Jesper Hoffmeyer argued:

³³ S. N. Salthe, “The Natural Philosophy of Ecology: Developmental Systems Ecology,” *Ecological Complexity* 2 (2005): 1–19.

... this evolutionary process is the building up of a pattern of semiotic scaffoldings, a tightly wound web of checks and balances gradually establishing itself through myriads of semiotic interactions between organisms: Nature in fact is not so much about “tooth and claw” as it is about sensing, interpreting, coordinating and social co-operation.³⁴

The conditions for later developments are supplied by earlier developments, although what emerges in this way can then modify the scaffolds which made the later developments possible, either augmenting the scaffolding and thereby their own conditions of existence, or damaging or destroying these scaffolds.

This is also the case with the evolution of humanity from bands of hunter-gatherers to more complex social forms, including tribes, civilizations, nations, socio-economic formations and institutions and political and forms of scientific and cultural enquiry, and from mythological thinking of hunter-gatherers to the development of religions, philosophies and scientific enquiry of modern civilization. Progress can be identified in this evolution, but it is not linear. As Hegel argued, it has been characterized by the rise and fall of civilizations, dark ages, regressions and rebirths or ‘renaissances’ along with new forms of life. The scaffoldings for the achievements of civilizations have not always been benign. Social integration required for peace has often been provided by wars. It was the most brutal of the warring states in Ancient China, the Chin, which unified China, in doing so making possible the much more benign civilization of the Han Dynasty. The brutality of European civilization with its imperialism, capitalism, mechanistic worldview and industrialization has unified the world, possibly providing the scaffolding for a peaceful world-order committed to augmenting the conditions for life and humanity. This need not involve the destruction of this scaffolding, but might require its transformation. Dialectical thinking calls for recognizing what is in place and absorbing and utilizing the best of it to create something new, whether this be a new scientific theory or a new world order.

This is essentially what Schelling argued at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. Schelling noted that “through the virtually unrestricted expansion of world relations...the Orient and the Occident are not merely coming into contact with one another, but are being compelled ... to fuse into one and the same consciousness, into one consciousness that should for this reason alone be expanded into a world-consciousness.”³⁵ Schelling also

³⁴ Jesper Hoffmeyer, “Introduction: Semiotic Scaffolding,” *Biosemiotics* 8 (2015): 154.

³⁵ F. W. J. Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, trans. Bruce Matthews (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 94.

called for the creation of something like the United Nations to protect nations from each other. Whatever its deficiencies, it should be recognized that the Treaty of Westphalen designed to end Thirty Years War by recognizing the right of all countries to have their own religion, did provide the scaffolding for recognizing and respecting diversity world-wide, for overcoming imperialism and organizing relations between countries based on the rule of law, even if this notion has been corrupted and used to develop more subtle forms of imperialism. Similarly, industrialization, initially driven by the quest to disempower and exploit more efficiently workers and colonized countries, was providing the conditions for workers and other exploited people to overcome their oppression completely, as Marx argued. It is possible to acknowledge the oppressiveness and huge failings of modernity, revealed through the perspectives of very different non-European civilizations, incorporating these perspectives and the forms of life that made them possible, while utilizing the culture and institutions of modernity as scaffolding to create a new civilization, modifying rather than totally destroying this scaffolding to do so.

Scaffolding the Creation of a Global Ecological Civilization

The drive for ecological civilization should be understood dialectically in this way, with its quest scaffolded by the past history of life and humanity. Xi Jinping refers to a sequence of civilizations—agricultural civilization, industrial civilization and then ecological civilization. Agricultural civilization was the scaffolding for industrial civilization, which altered this scaffolding, introducing new technologies of farming, chemical fertilizers and pesticides etc. some of which augmented the scaffolding, while others damaged it. This is a huge problem now. Agricultural and industrial civilization can be seen to provide the scaffolding for ecological civilization which aims to modify both agriculture and industry so that the conditions for these are strengthened. China has been working hard at this, transforming deserts into forests or agricultural land, and sterile lakes into vibrant aquatic ecosystems supporting a large fishing industry, while developing renewable, non-polluting sources of energy.

However, there is a much more radical dimension to the notion of ecological civilization promoted both within China and globally, the creation of a global civilization to transcend the civilization of modernity. The scaffolding involved is much more complex. While the notion of ecological civilization has been taken up and promulgated most strongly in China, it is now being embraced around the world, generally strongly embracing this radical dimension. To begin with, as an idea, both ‘ecology’ and

‘civilization’ have their origins in European civilization, but have facilitated going beyond it.

‘Civilization’ is clearly an evaluative term meant to define the superiority of Europeans over other people, but in doing so, provided the scaffolding for critiquing Europeans. For instance, when Mahatma Gandhi was asked what he thought of Western civilization he replied: “I think it would be a good idea.” It is a contested term, and in only some formulations of its meaning is it advanced by proponents of the Radical Enlightenment. It is both a process of developing civility, and a noun of a peaceful social order based on such civility. It is when combined with the notion of culture and cultivation, implying a more robust sense of civility involving realizing people’s highest potentials, that it is advanced by the Radical Enlightenment. The notion of diverse civilizations associated with diverse cultures is even more important in this regard, involving historical inquiry of the kind promoted by Vico, and then with Herder’s work, allowing for co-existing civilizations. Civilizations in this sense were developed to allow for civilizations within civilizations, as Ancient Greek, Roman, Medieval and Modern civilizations are all components of European civilization. The notion of ecological civilization in its radical sense allows that the civilizations co-existing in the world can form the scaffolding for the development of a global civilization, to some extent transforming particular civilizations to create a peaceful relation between different civilizations. Members of European or Western civilization inspired by the Radical Enlightenment were promoting this development, and even if this quest was corrupted by Western imperialists who have used it to subordinate everyone to the core zones of Western civilization, it should be recognized that this concept has provided the scaffolding for a genuine global civilization that is no longer just a facet of Western imperialism.

It is when combined with the notion of ‘ecological’ that its full potential is revealed. Ecology developed as a subdiscipline of biology, scaffolded by the development of evolutionary theory, which in turn had been scaffolded by the development of physical science and the scientific revolution of the Seventeenth Century. This in turn had been scaffolded by the revival of institutions of learning and natural philosophy in the Middle Ages. The Seventeenth Century tradition of science, associated with scientific materialism, legitimated and served European and the Western imperialism. This whole tradition was challenged by the thinkers of the Radical Enlightenment, challenging the basic assumptions of scientific materialism, incorporating ideas from non-European civilization,

as was shown by Joseph Needham in his study of science and civilization in China.³⁶ Influenced by Marx and Alfred North Whitehead, embracing Whitehead's process/relational ontology, Needham argued that through the development of this ontology, which he argued was inspired by Chinese philosophers, science has become the science of the whole of humanity, transcending the parochialism of particular civilizations. Ecology, now explicitly developed on a process/relational ontology promoted by the Radical Enlightenment, in which the primary beings of the universe are conceived to be self-ordering activities that only exist in and through their relations to other processes, with structures having a derivative status. With this ontology it is possible to overcome the divisions between the sciences, the humanities and the arts, bringing into focus and uniting opposition to the mainstream culture of modernity. However, it was the development of science in Western Europe that provided the scaffolding for this global science. The scientific revolution advancing this post-reductionist science is still underway, and involves a revival of natural philosophy to advance the process/relational ontology on which this scientific and cultural revolution is based. This has brought ecology to the fore not only as a major branch of science, but as the reference point for defining science and as the foundation for challenging and replacing Eurocentric culture.³⁷

There have been reductionist trends in ecology, but as I have suggested, overall, ecology has advanced post-reductionist thinking based on a process/relational ontology, becoming a focus for the more radical developments in science. These developments challenge Cartesian dualism and Newtonian cosmology and the whole tradition of Newtonian science, including mainstream interpretations of relativity theory and quantum theory. Ecology is developing the concepts and ways of thinking required to see humans as culturally formed, conscious beings, avoiding the reductionism of psychologists and economists promoting scientism. Human ecology in particular is important for overcoming the division between science and the humanities, especially when incorporating thermodynamics, hierarchy theory, biosemiotics and ecosemiotics.³⁸ It also

³⁶ Arran Gare, "Daoic Philosophy and Process Metaphysics: Overcoming the Nihilism of Western Civilization," in *Metaphysical Foundations of Knowledge and Ethics in Chinese and European Philosophy*, ed. Guo Yi, Sasa Josifovic, and Asuman Lätzer-Lasar (Munich: Fink Wilhelm, 2014), 111–136.

³⁷ See Robert E. Ulanowicz, *Ecology: The Ascendent Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); Arran Gare, "Toward an Ecological Civilization: The Science, Ethics, and Politics of Eco-Poiesis," *Process Studies* 39, no. 1 (2010): 5–38; Turchin, *End Times*, 297ff.

³⁸ See Salthe, "Natural Philosophy of Ecology"; Arran Gare, "Ecological Civilization as Ecopoiesis," in *Handbook of Ecological Civilization*, ed. Michael A. Peters, Benjamin J. Green, Greg William Misiaszek, and Xudong Zhu (Singapore: Springer, 2025).

provides the concepts required for rethinking ethical and political philosophy in the current world.³⁹

Integrating Ecological Civilization and Multipolarity as Communities of Communities

Human ecology as a branch of ecology provides the concepts required to understand the nature of the current world-order. Immanuel Wallerstein argued we now live in a world-system, and provided a history of its emergence and development, and current structure. He observed that based on relative incomes it has a triadic structure of core zones, semi-peripheries and peripheries, with very little movement of countries or regions between these zones. Among the core zones, there has been a hegemonic power dominating the other core zones and also the semi-peripheries which in turn dominate and help exploit the peripheries. Much of the history of this world-system has involved wars over which country would be the hegemonic power, beginning with Venice, then the Dutch Republic, then Britain after the Napoleonic Wars in which France was defeated, then USA after the First and Second World Wars, in which Germany was defeated. From this perspective, it now appears that the USA is being challenged by China which could become the next world hegemon.

The nature of this world-order has been made intelligible through human ecology and thermodynamics. Utilizing Richard Newbold Adam's effort to characterize power as control over the triggers for transforming usable energy, Stephen Bunker in, *Underdeveloping the Amazon: Extraction, Unequal Exchange, and the Failure of the Modern State*, showed how the core zones maintain their power by channelling the flows of energy to themselves.⁴⁰ They become productive economies controlling most of the world's energy transformations, using their control over triggers to keep in place this structure which facilitates their domination of the semi-peripheries, which then use their power to extract usable energy from the peripheries. These are the extractive economies. Control also involves transformations of energy, and is affected by education systems and institutions in the core zones that not only operate to control the peripheries, but instil loyalty of its members, while also convincing people in semi-peripheral countries to develop policies and institutions to 'modernize', which in practice facilitate their

³⁹ Gare, "Toward an Ecological Civilization."

⁴⁰ Stephen G. Bunker, *Underdeveloping the Amazon: Extraction, Unequal Exchange, and the Failure of the Modern State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

exploitation by the core zones. As Bunker argued on the basis of his study of Brazil, this is a system that is destroying the global ecosystem.

From this perspective it is easy to see that the collapse of the Soviet Union involved transforming Russia into a semi-peripheral country with its oligarchs organizing the country to extract usable energy. The Russians, unlike the Ukrainians, mobilized against this. The core zones operating with greater intelligence could have formed a relationship with the Russian leadership under Putin to integrate Russia with Western Europe, but this would have also involved transforming Russia into an extractive economy with Russia focussing on exporting oil and gas, feeding the core zones while depleting its own resources. The structure would not have been challenged, as it now is.

Bunker considered what would be involved in overcoming this structure. For a start, he argued, it would involve a radical revaluation of both labour and natural resources, somehow slowing the flow of energy to the core zones. He also showed how difficult this will be, given the huge differences in power due to differences in access to usable energy. While attacking the ideology of modernization and the modern state engendered by it, he did not offer much in the way of an alternative ideology or vision of an alternative political order, let alone dealing with the problem of how to develop and promulgate such a vision. However, as I have suggested, the ideas of ecology, scaffolded by the development of science and all that made science possible, as one of the greatest achievements of civilization, can be used to recover and develop ideas from the Radical Enlightenment and from non-European civilizations that are very easily grasped and can easily be counterposed to highlight the deficiencies of the dominant ideas of modernity. From this perspective Dugin's arguments can be appreciated, but shown to be compatible with the arguments of Jeffrey Sachs, whose position can at the same time be strengthened.

Core ideas of Aristotle can be revived to serve this purpose. Aristotle was the main target of Thomas Hobbes who provided the most basic categories of social and political life dominating modernity, including the central ideas of mainstream economics, both classical and neoclassical. One of the most important ideas of Aristotle, largely forgotten about, is that constitutions should be judged according to whether they facilitate people living the best possible life, or achieving *eudaimonia*. *Eudaimonia* was seen to be achieved by realizing people's highest potentialities, developing their highest virtues. Such virtues were understood in relation to participating in the life of the polis or community, in its governance and in philosophical inquiry, that is, developing the virtues of prudence, courage, and above all, justice and wisdom. These were seen as the virtues required to maintain the polis and the conditions for achieving *eudaimonia*.

Aristotle's political philosophy can be interpreted through the concepts of ecology as a special case of what is required for any healthy biotic community or ecosystem, where component organisms are provided with niches or homes in which they can flourish and develop their potential to augment the environment of the whole ecosystem and thereby its other members insofar as these also are augmenting the conditions for the flourishing of the community. They are contributing to the health and vitality of the ecosystem. The virtues identified through Aristotle's philosophy can be interpreted through ecology as particular examples of characteristics of members of ecosystems which contribute to the community, that is, the conditions or 'niches' or 'homes' of other 'good' members of the community or ecosystem, facilitating their flourishing, thereby augmenting the life or vibrancy of the community, including its resilience in the face of changes and challenges to it. That is, they are participating in 'eco-poiesis' - home making or niche making of the ecosystem or biotic community.

Ecosystems are composed of other ecosystems and exist in environments created by broader ecosystems. Organisms themselves are highly integrated ecosystems and ecosystems of ecosystems, emerging in the context of other ecosystems. Human communities are also ecosystems consisting of communities of communities, characterized by both a struggle for life against destructive forces along with highly developed forms of semiosis, the basis of human cultures that make it possible for humans to cooperate, control their destinies and take responsibility for themselves and their various communities.

Appreciating this, makes it possible to generalize Aristotle's political philosophy and characterizing of the polis and individual lives to much more complex societies and civilizations, appreciating that these are communities of communities, existing as such in broader biotic communities or ecosystems. As such, virtues can be ascribed not only to individuals, but to communities themselves and to broader communities of communities, judging them according to whether they are augmenting or undermining the niches or homes of other communities, making it possible for them to flourish and for its component members to fulfil their potential to contribute to the life of these broader communities. That is, they can be judged according to whether they are augmenting life and the conditions for life, generating vibrant communities. Building on Aristotle's work we can elaborate and further develop an ethics and politics of eco-poiesis taking into account far more in considering the conditions for achieving a good life.⁴¹ Political life can be conceived in relation to diverse economic, social, political and cultural fields that are

⁴¹ Gare, "Toward an Ecological Civilization."

components of the much more complex world we now live in. The quest for wisdom involves more than just engagement with philosophy, important as this is. It involves engaging in the cultural life of one's communities.

With work in human ecology, we can also understand better the nature of power relations, the threats posed by the exploitation of others, and how these power relations should be appreciated and modified to sustain and augment such eco-poiesis, re-evaluating nature and labour in our practices and social and economic organization, as Bunker called for. It is through understanding the whole of humanity in all its complexity and its participation in broader biotic communities in this way that provides the basis for transcending the Eurocentricism of modernity, and while having been scaffolded by ways of thinking and institutions developed in European civilization, this provides the basis for a global civilization that acknowledges diverse civilizations, their diverse cultures and their significance, while uniting them culturally at a higher level.

At the same time, through such ecological thinking we can also recognize the importance of nations and international relations culminating in the United Nations, even if 'nations' and 'nationalism' were products of Western civilization. Nations are not likely to be displaced as major political agents, despite the efforts of neoliberals, and should have an important place in a post-Western world order, accompanied by 'nationalism' as a territorial ideology, recognizing all people in particular territories are part of 'imagined communities', as 'nations' were characterized by Benedict Anderson.⁴² The notion of 'nation' recognized in the Treaty of Westphalen in 1648 was designed to overcome conflict based on religious differences. Nationalism has been important in fighting Western imperialism, particularly after World War Two, and this was aided by the United Nations. As Dudley Seers argued, the notion of nationalism can be extended to grant a place to major regions of the world encompassing other nations, as is emerging in Latin America and elsewhere.

This extended nationalism was strongly defended by Herman Daly and John Cobb Jr. in *For the Common Good*.⁴³ Daly and Cobb called for communities of communities and communities at multiple levels rather than nations. As with ecosystems, communities can not only be hierarchical but can intersect, as the community of scientists around the world is compatible with them also having loyalty to their nation or civilization. Daly and Cobb's notion of communities facilitates appreciating this. Even while recognizing different

⁴² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

⁴³ Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb Jr., *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 8ff., chap. 9.

civilizations, as called for by Dugin, we can still accept Sachs' version of a multipolar world and his suggestions for how a peaceful world-order could be achieved based on accepting the significance of nations, following Daly and Cobb, referring to both nations, civilizations and the whole of humanity, even the global ecosystem, as communities. Nations are the primary political agents in the world, and even if civilizations themselves are also gaining agency, there is no reason why these have to be opposed. They can be mutually constraining. The corruption of the United Nations and international law by rogue States proclaiming or aligning themselves with a rule-based order can be effectively challenged by rejecting legal positivism, the doctrine deriving from Hobbes that legislation itself determines what we label just and unjust. Legal positivism according to which enacted law itself defines justice, a philosophy which now dominates Anglophone countries, is merely an application of Hobbes' claim that might makes right. Reformulating and reviving the tradition of natural law, building on Aristotle's philosophy but utilizing concepts developed by Hegel and rethinking them through ecological concepts, provides a framework for incorporating insights from all civilizations into expanded notions of justice and law.⁴⁴

Conclusion: Ecological Civilization and Transculturalism

Recognizing diverse civilizations in this context does not require the self-refuting doctrine of multiculturalism, claiming to be universal while denying universality. It does involve upholding the quest for a global civilization requiring component civilizations to acknowledge the significance of each other and the broader civilization of which they are components. However, in this context, the uniqueness of each civilization and its history can and should be accorded a place. This involves 'transculturalism' as defended by Mikhail Epstein, upholding the importance of dialogue in which people from different cultures and traditions of thought respect each other, learn from each other and criticise each other.⁴⁵ Territorial communities can benefit from having people with different cultural backgrounds through transculturalism, as was achieved in Switzerland where four languages are spoken, and more recently, in South Africa after the ending of apartheid. Civilizations and more local communities, including nations, can and should retain their identity while participating in transcultural practices associated with ecological civilization. A diversity of civilizations is important for this global civilization because it retains

⁴⁴ Arran Gare, "Law, Process Philosophy and Ecological Civilization," in *Chromatikon VII*, ed. Michel Weber and Ronny Desmet (Louvain-la-Neuve: Les Éditions Chromatika, 2011), 133–160.

⁴⁵ Mikhail Epstein, *The Transformative Humanities: A Manifesto* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 60ff.

diversity and provides the means to explore different possibilities and to check civilizations' tendency to strive for dominance over others. A diversity of power centres, which can be reinforced by recognizing diverse civilizations, is also necessary to check decadence within each civilization, especially the tendency of ruling elites to concentrate wealth and power in their own hands, crippling those engaged in creative work, including philosophers, historians, scientists and artists. These tendencies to strive for domination with resulting decadence have revealed themselves in the USA (and Western Europe) after the decline and disintegration of the Soviet Union.⁴⁶ However, competition between particular civilizations can be valuable if it is constrained so as to avoid violence or subversion of each others' cultures and institutions. In other words, diverse civilizations need to be recognized, but at the same time civilized to function productively as components of a global, ecological civilization. As Samuel Huntington concluded in his seminal work on civilizations: "In the clash of civilizations...the global 'real clash,' between Civilization and barbarism, the world's greatest civilizations, with their rich accomplishments in religion, art, literatures, philosophy, science, technology, morality, and compassion, will ... hang together or hang separately."⁴⁷

Advancing the Radical Enlightenment, Aristotle's ethical and political philosophy can be used to provide the scaffolding to better defend the valuable aspects of Western civilization, such as the notion of rule of law based on justice, international law, and the United Nations, while incorporating wisdom from all civilizations. These achievements should not be dismissed as components of the Eurocentric world-order, as they have been by Dugin. They are achievements of the Radical Enlightenment, which to some extent involved another Renaissance of Greek thought. For instance, Aristotle's characterization of *eudaimonia* as the ultimate end of human life was based on his characterization of humans. *Eudaimonia*, best translated as 'a fulfilling and fulfilled life', requires participation in furthering the common good of one's polis or community. This should be recognized as far more defensible than Hobbes' conception of humans as nothing but mechanisms moved by appetites and aversions, who treat others as mere instruments, and Locke's diluted but less consistent version of this, conceiving the good as what is conducive to pleasure and evil as that which is conducive to pain. Hobbes' and Locke's impoverished conception of humans only had plausibility while science was identified with a mechanistic world-view, although they are still defended by psychologists and economists who have not recognized that the mechanistic world-view is no longer supported by advanced science.

⁴⁶ Turchin, *End Times*.

⁴⁷ Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 321.

Aristotle's non-mechanistic characterization of humans and his communitarianism were greatly advanced through the German Radical Enlightenment. Inspired by Herder and Schelling, this involved incorporating the wisdom of other civilizations, working towards a global consciousness. These advances can now be defended and further developed through post-reductionist natural science, largely inspired by Schelling.⁴⁸

Aristotle gave a central place to the notion of justice as giving people their due, which with his political philosophy, was the basis for the natural law tradition of jurisprudence.⁴⁹ The notion of justice was marginalized along with Aristotle's conception of humans by the Hobbesian/Lockean tradition of thought with its focus on contractually based rights. Following Aristotle, justice can again be made central in ethics, politics and jurisprudence. Opposition to injustice, which can now involve extending recognition of the intrinsic value of the whole of humanity and all living beings, can be recognized as a major driving force for the progress of humanity. 'Rights' can be given a place in this tradition of thought, but always defined in relation to and subordinated to the quest for justice. However, through Chinese traditions of thought which have privileged 'humanity' as the ultimate virtue, we can also argue that justice should always be defined in relation to and subordinated to this notion of humanity. Then humanity should be defined in relation valuing life as such, as fostered by Indian traditions of thought. What is required is an ecological civilization incorporating multipolarity, conceiving of life and humanity in accordance with ecological thinking as communities of communities, integrated without homogenization through transculturalism and the multi-levelled institutions supporting it.

Bibliography

- Abelow, Benjamin. *How the West Brought War to Ukraine*. Great Barrington, MA: Silas Press, 2022.
- Ali, Tariq. *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*. London: Verso, 2003.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. Rev. ed. London: Verso, 1991.
- Blum, William. *America's Deadliest Export: Democracy*. London: Zed Books, 2014.
- Blum, William. *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*. London: Zed Books, 2002.

⁴⁸ Gare, *Philosophical Foundations of Ecological Civilization*, 126ff.

⁴⁹ Gare, "Law, Process Philosophy and Ecological Civilization."

- Bunker, Stephen G. *Underdeveloping the Amazon: Extraction, Unequal Exchange, and the Failure of the Modern State*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Daly, Herman E., and John B. Cobb Jr. *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future*. 2nd ed. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994.
- Diesen, Glenn. *The Ukraine War & the Eurasian World Order*. Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2024.
- Dugin, Alexander. *The Theory of a Multipolar World*. London: Arktos, 2021.
- Epstein, Mikhail. *The Transformative Humanities: A Manifesto*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2012.
- Galtung, Johan. *The Fall of the US Empire—and Then What?* Transcend University Press, 2009.
- Gare, Arran. “Daoic Philosophy and Process Metaphysics: Overcoming the Nihilism of Western Civilization.” In *Metaphysical Foundations of Knowledge and Ethics in Chinese and European Philosophy*, edited by Guo Yi, Sasa Josifovic, and Asuman Lätzer-Lasar, 111–136. Munich: Fink Wilhelm, 2014.
- Gare, Arran. “Ecological Civilization as Ecopoiesis.” In *Handbook of Ecological Civilization*, edited by Michael A. Peters, Benjamin J. Green, Greg William Misiaszek, and Xudong Zhu. Singapore: Springer, 2025.
- Gare, Arran. “Law, Process Philosophy and Ecological Civilization.” In *Chromatikon VII*, edited by Michel Weber and Ronny Desmet, 133–160. Louvain-la-Neuve: Les Éditions Chromatika, 2011.
- Gare, Arran. *Nihilism Inc.: Environmental Destruction and the Metaphysics of Sustainability*. Como, NSW: Eco-Logical Press, 1995.
- Gare, Arran. *The Philosophical Foundations of Ecological Civilization: A Manifesto for the Future*. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Gare, Arran. “Toward an Ecological Civilization: The Science, Ethics, and Politics of Eco-Poiesis.” *Process Studies* 39, no. 1 (2010): 5–38.
- Hoffmeyer, Jesper. “Introduction: Semiotic Scaffolding.” *Biosemiotics* 8 (2015): 153–158.
- Howells, Christina, and Gerald Moore, eds. *Stiegler and Technics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013.
- Hudson, Michael. *Global Fracture: The New International Economic Order*. 2nd ed. London: Pluto Press, 2005.
- Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003.
- Israel, Jonathan I. *The Enlightenment That Failed*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

- Jacob, Margaret C. *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans*. 2nd ed. The Temple Publishers, 2003.
- Korten, David C. *When Corporations Rule the World*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2001.
- Kovel, Joel. *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World?* 2nd ed. London: Zed Books, 2007.
- Losurdo, Domenico. *Liberalism*. London: Verso, 2006.
- Norton, Ben. "US Launched 251 Military Interventions since 1991, and 469 since 1798." *Geopolitical Economy*, September 13, 2022.
<https://geopoliticeconomy.com/2022/09/13/us-251-military-interventions-1991/>.
- O'Rourke, Lindsey A. *Covert Regime Change: America's Secret Cold War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021.
- Patel, Raj, and Jason W. Moore. *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet*. Carlton, VIC: Black Inc., 2018.
- Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1957.
- Robinson, William I. *Can Global Capitalism Endure?* Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2022.
- Robinson, William I. *Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Robinson, William I. *The Global Police State*. London: Pluto Press, 2020.
- Rockhill, Gabriel. "Imperialist Propaganda and the Ideology of the Western Left." Interview by Zhao Dingqi. *Monthly Review* 75, no. 7 (December 2023): 13–35.
- Saito, Kohei. *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism: Capitalism, Nature, and the Unfinished Critique of Political Economy*. New Delhi: Dev, 2018.
- Salthe, S. N. "The Natural Philosophy of Ecology: Developmental Systems Ecology." *Ecological Complexity* 2 (2005): 1–19.
- Schafer, Paul D. *Revolution or Renaissance: Making the Transition from an Economic Age to a Cultural Age*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2008.
- Schelling, F. W. J. *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*. Translated by Bruce Matthews. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- Sklair, Leslie. *The Transnational Capitalist Class*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.
- Straume, Ingrid S., and J. F. Humphrey, eds. *Depoliticization: The Political Imagination of Global Capitalism*. Malmö: NSU Press, 2011.
- Tögel, Jonas. *Kognitive Kriegsführung: Neueste Manipulationstechniken als Waffengattung der NATO*. Frankfurt: Westend Verlag, 2023.
- Turchin, Peter. *End Times: Elites, Counter-Elites and the Path of Political Disintegration*. New York: Penguin, 2023.

Ulanowicz, Robert E. *Ecology: The Ascendent Perspective*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Wang Hui. “Depoliticizing Politics, from East to West.” *New Left Review* 41 (September–October 2006): 29–45.

Arran Gare is an Australian philosopher known mainly for his work in environmental philosophy, philosophy of science, philosophy of culture and the metaphysics of process philosophy. He currently holds the position of Associate Professor in the Faculty of Life and Social Sciences at Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Australia.