



FRANÇOIS HOUTART

FROM 'COMMON GOODS' TO THE 'COMMON GOOD OF HUMANITY'

With a foreword by the author and Birgit Daiber



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FOREWORD

FROM CRISIS TO CRISIS, WHERE ARE WE COMING FROM, AND WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Birgit Daiber and François Houtart

Must we really destroy the planet in order to develop? Does economic growth necessitate the sacrifice of millions of men and women? Is youth unemployment the price to pay for saving the economy? The succession of crises, the obstinacy in pursuing the path of neoliberalism, the generalization of injustices: all these pose some fundamental questions for humanity. Indignation continues to mount, all over the world. The cries of the oppressed are echoed in the moans of Mother Earth.

Initiatives to solve the crises continue to fail: the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen 2009 and subsequent meetings have not lead to binding decisions. The recommendations of the UN Conference on the financial and economic crisis calling for a regulation of destructive speculative capital have been ignored.

The time has come to take action and to do so by developing new ideas. However repairing the dysfunctions of the capitalist market economy, preaching green capitalism, regulating financial markets, struggling against poverty by doling out aid, drawing up security systems that are increasingly militaristic and criminalize resistance are all simply ways of adapting the existing system. What we now need is a radical change, another paradigm: in other words a fundamentally new orientation of the life of human beings on the planet.

The capitalist system has run its course: it has become more destructive than creative. We must construct an alternative. Most people live in confusion. Numerous politicians announce a gradual end to the crisis, even though all signs point to the contrary. Political parties considered progressive have become managers of the crisis. Moral institutions usually limit themselves to denouncing abuses without indicating the causes or condemning the logic of the system. The economic precariousness of broad sectors of the population tends to make them cling on to what they have acquired with such effort, rather than take on the risk of change.

So we must think; we must analyse; we must anticipate. This is a task for all of us, not just for a few experts. Where are we going? To reply to that question, we need to set up a permanent two-way dialectic exchange between doing and thinking.

To do so, we have to look at the many movements and projects which have already begun to take on this new challenge. The movements of the Indignados in Europe, the Occupy-Wall Street-movement in the U.S., the global justice networks, the environmental movements, the indigenous movements, the landless and small farmers movements, and the democracy movements in northern Africa and the Arab world are all an expression of the search for a new perspective. Exemplary projects like the new regional development bank in Latin America, i.e.

Banco del Sur, and the new speculation-proof payment system between Latin American countries, i.e. the Sucre, the guaranteed income for small farmers in India (NREGA), the Network for Transformative Social Protection (NTSP) in South-East Asia and many other local and regional projects show the determination of people wasting no time and working for a better future against all odds.

This booklet presents an analysis of the crisis as well as a prospect for the future. It has taken into account the hundreds of initiatives that foreshadow a new paradigm, that of the Common Good of Humanity, which means living harmoniously with nature, in a society that is just and which has an infinity of cultural expressions – in other words a utopia that calls for commitment. But if this is not to remain an illusion, the concept of the Common Good of Humanity has to be translated into practical terms. Theoretical orientations must guide our everyday life, but they must be continually updated in step with the experience of peoples' struggles.

This is now the time to present, for the discussion of everyone, a basis for the kind of thinking that can guide our action, give coherence to our thoughts and to serve as a basis for a convergence of movements to change the orientation of the common life of humanity on the planet. It is a work for the long term, but it needs immediate commitment. The next stage will be to identify the actors and formulate strategies – not to reinvent what already exists but to give new strength to the struggles and initiatives that are working towards the achievement of the Common Good of Humanity. This is what we want to achieve.

Brussels / Quito, 30 November 2011

FROM ‘COMMON GOODS’ TO THE ‘COMMON GOOD OF HUMANITY’

Francois Houtart

1 INTRODUCTION

All round the world there is deep unease caused by the growing divisions in society, lack of respect for justice, youth unemployment, abuse of power, destruction of nature. A new wave of social movements has emerged. The Social Forums enabled their globalization. A collective social consciousness is developing that things cannot go on like this. The economic development model that we have, with its political, cultural and psychological consequences, is at the origin of these imbalances. But it is necessary to find solutions urgently. The time has come to put forward new orientations and not just adaptations of the existing system. To reflect on this and to bring together the forces for change has become a top priority.

Alongside the Italian initiative for a referendum on water (one of the ‘common goods’), the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation organized a conference entitled *From ‘Common Goods’ to the ‘Common Good of Humanity’*, at Rome in April 2011. The aim was to reflect on the connections between the two notions, i.e. ‘common goods’ and ‘Common Good of Humanity’, in order to encourage thinking about the links between the two notions and to integrate the demands and social struggles for a change of society.

2 WHY ASSOCIATE THE NOTION OF ‘COMMON GOODS’ WITH THE CONCEPT OF ‘COMMON GOOD OF HUMANITY’?

The defence of the ‘common goods’ is, these days, an important priority for many social movements. The phrase includes both the indispensable elements for life, such as water and seeds, as well as the ‘public services’ that are today being dismantled by neoliberal policies, both in the South and in the North. The struggle consists of opposition to the wave of privatizations that are affecting many public utilities and networks, from railways, electricity, water, transport, telephones, woods, rivers and land to health and education. What in England used to be called, before capitalism, the ‘commons’,¹ has been gradually reduced in order to give rise to an economic system which transforms all aspects of life into merchandise – a necessary step for the accumulation of capital, now accentuated by the dominance of finance capital. Common land was considered wasted land and all non-capitalist use of it was considered ‘non-utilization’ (Michael Brie, 2011).

¹ The Commons were the communal lands of the peasantry in England which, starting in the XIII century, were gradually transformed into the private property of landowners through the Enclosures, who used these measures to fence off land, particularly for sheep raising. This provoked numerous peasant revolts.

Let it be clear that the primary purpose of revaluing 'common goods', in whatever form (nationalizations or other kinds of collective control), has been to break away from that lengthy period when economic logic emphasized the private and the individual, in order to promote the development of the productive forces and freedom of private initiative – so eliminating most of the public sector from its objectives. We have reached the stage when human life itself is being commodified. This new economic logic has taken hold of the political sphere, as became obvious during and after the financial crisis of 2008, through the operations put into effect to save the financial system without nationalizations, leaving them in the hands of those who were responsible for the crisis in the first place (and only indicting a few delinquents). Such policies have led to national-wide austerity measures, making ordinary citizens pay the price for the crisis, while neoliberal policies have been maintained.

The defence of public services and of 'common goods' forms part of the resistance to these policies, but it risks becoming a rearguard struggle if these are not seen in a broader context, that of the Common Good of Humanity of which they form part – that is to say the life of the planet and of humanity. Indeed, even bodies like the World Bank may recommend restoring certain sectors of public service. A number of the top businessmen are of the same opinion, too, after having seen that the wave of privatizations did not prove to be as profitable as anticipated.

The approach of the concept of the 'Common Good of Humanity' might seem overly theoretical, considering the social and political concerns that now confront us. Nevertheless it can serve as a useful working tool in dealing with contemporary problems, like the multiple crises that face us, as well as the convergence of the initiatives and struggles against a system that destroys nature and societies. It involves very concrete realities, the first being solidarity, weakened as it is by competitiveness and individualism, but also altruism, respect for nature, tenderness – in sum, everything that constitutes a human being.

Let us start with the crisis and all its aspects, showing how systemic it is. This enables us to see the problem of the 'common goods' and even the 'common good' (as opposed to the individual good) in a new light, integrating them into the perspective of the 'Common Good of Humanity'. We shall then move on to the need to revisit the paradigm of the collective life of humanity on this earth, emphasizing the practical aspects of such an approach in relation to national and international economic and social policies, and concluding with the proposal for a Universal Declaration of the Common Good of Humanity.

Let us go back to the concepts. The first one, i.e. 'common goods', has been described before. The second one, i.e. the 'Common Good' that we are talking about is that which is shared in common by all human beings (men and women). Already Aristotle, in his *Politics*, believed that no society could exist unless it shared something in common, even if he thought this should be reduced to a minimum². However, we do not intend, in this document, to develop the philosophical aspect of the issue, but rather to look at it sociologically - in other words to study the way in which the Common Good of Humanity notion is posited today. In fact, this third concept is different from 'common goods' because of its more general character, involving the very foundations of the collective life of humanity on this planet: our relationship with nature, the produc-

² It was Riccardo Petrella who had the idea of re-introducing into progressive thought the notion of 'Common Good', confronted as it was by neoliberalism and the domination of the market (1998). He based his view of "a new world social contract" concerning assets, culture, democracy, land. According to him it is a question of formulating the principles and establishing the appropriate regulations, institutions and culture.

tion of life's necessities, collective organization (politics) and the interpretation, evaluation and expression of reality (culture). It is not a matter of heritage, as in the case of 'common goods', but rather of a state (of well-being, of *buen vivir*), that results from the way parameters combine to govern the life of human beings men and women, on this earth. It is also to be distinguished from 'common good' – as opposed to 'individual good' – as it is defined in the construction of a State, in other words the *res publica*, even if the concept of 'universal common goods' was introduced by the UNDP in its 1999 Report. In fact the concept of the 'Common Good of Humanity' includes the production and reproduction of life on the scale of all humanity: in sum it is a question of life and its capacity to reproduce itself.

Clearly, the concept of the 'Common Good of Humanity' includes the practical notions of 'common goods' and of 'common good' as currently interpreted. If we are starting out with some reflections on the current crisis, it is for the simple reason that this crisis is jeopardizing, not only 'common goods' and the 'Common Good' but also the very survival of human life on the planet and the capacity of nature to regenerate itself, i.e. the 'Common Good of Humanity'. Thus a review of the nature of this crisis becomes urgently necessary. It was indeed the accumulation dynamic that began to undermine the 'common goods' in Europe in the XIII century. Today, the land grabbing going on in the continents of the South for developing industrial agriculture (particularly agrofuels) and for mining is a new phase of the 'enclosure movement'. The same logic has impaired the idea of the 'Common Good of Humanity', both at the centre and in the peripheries of capitalism. It is the logic of death that prevails and not that of life. If we are to find solutions we must tackle the problem at its roots: in other words we must redefine the requirements for building the Common Good of Humanity today. This is why we should begin by illustrating the fundamental and systemic nature of the crisis and its principal elements.

3 THE MULTIPLE FACETS OF THE CRISIS

When more than 900 million human beings live below the poverty line, while their numbers keep increasing (UNDP, 2010); when every 24 hours tens of thousands of people die of hunger or its consequences; when, day by day, ethnic groups, ways of life and cultures are disappearing, endangering the very heritage of humanity; when the inequality between men and women is reinforced in the formal and informal economic system; when the climate is deteriorating: when all this is happening, it is simply not possible to talk only about a conjunctural financial crisis, even though such a crisis exploded violently in 2008.

3.1 THE DIFFERENT CRISES

3.1.1 The financial and economic crisis

It is a fact that the social consequences of the financial crisis are felt far beyond the borders of its origin and that are affecting the very foundations of the economy. Unemployment, rising costs of living, the exclusion of the poorest, the vulnerability of the middle classes: the number of its victims is expanding all over the world. This is not a matter of some accident along the way, nor is it only due to abuses committed by some economic actors who ought to be sanctioned. We are dealing with a logic that has persisted throughout the economic history of the last centuries (Fernand Braudel, 1969, Immanuel Wallerstein, 2000, István Mészáros, 2008, Wim Dierckxsens, 2011). From crisis to regulation, from de-regulation to crisis, as events unfold they always succumb to the pressure of the rates of profit: when these rates increase, regu-

lations are relaxed; when the rates diminish, the regulations increase – but always in favour of the accumulation of capital, considered to be the engine of growth. What we are seeing now is nothing new. It is not the first crisis of the financial system and there are many who say that it will not be the last.

However, the financial bubble created over recent decades – thanks, among other things, to new information and communication technology – has increased the problems beyond measure. As we know, the crisis exploded with the phenomenon of the sub-prime mortgages in the United States: i.e. the insolvency of millions of people, which had been camouflaged for a time by a whole series of derivative financial products (Reinaldo A. Carcanholo and Mauricio de S. Sabadini, 2009, 57). In the industrialized countries, consumption has increased more rapidly than incomes (Joseph Stiglitz, 2010, 12). However, the phenomenon is much older, dating from the time when the virtual economy became more important than the real economy: in other words, when financial capital began to be more profitable than productive capital (Jorge Beinstein, 2009, 29). One of the main origins of this process, according to Joseph Stiglitz (2010,22), was the decision of President Nixon, in 1972, to suspend the conversion of the dollar into gold, which initiated new monetary policies within the framework of increased international economic interdependence (globalization).

Capitalism has experienced financial crises from very early on. The first was at the end of the 18th century, and they were to reoccur over subsequent years, the most recent one, at world level, being that of the years 1929/1930. This was followed, after the Second World War, by regional crises (Mexico, Argentina, Asia, Russia). In the countries at the centre of the system, the new world financial crisis of 2008 triggered a series of specific policies: indebtedness of the State, restriction of credit, austerity measures, etc. But the countries of the South were also affected, through decreases in exports (China) and in remittances (Central America and the Andean countries, the Philippines), and through rising oil prices, etc. They were less affected by insolvencies, which were characteristic of the North, and in fact many benefited from the rise in the prices of natural resources and accumulated important monetary resources. This created, however, as far as energy was concerned, an imbalance between the countries that produced oil and those that did not. As for food products, the rise in prices mostly affected the poorest consumers, particularly the women.

The fundamental cause of the financial crisis lies in the very logic of capitalism itself (Rémy Herrera and Paulo Nakatani, 2009, 39). If capital is considered to be the engine of the economy and its accumulation essential for development, the maximization of profits is inevitable. If the financialization of the economy increases the rate of profit and if speculation accelerates the phenomenon, the organization of the economy as a whole follows the same path. Thus, the first characteristic of this logic, the increase in the rate of profit as a function of the accumulation of capital, becomes very evident in the process. But a capitalist market that is not regulated leads unavoidably to a crisis. As the report of the United Nations Commission states specifically: “This is a macro-economic crisis” (Joseph Stiglitz, 2010, 195).

The context is similar to the crisis of the 1930s. However, the main difference is that the current financial and monetary imbalance is now combining with other kinds of crises, in the fields of food, energy and climate: all of which, though, linked to the same economic logic.

3.1.2 The food crisis

There are two aspects to the food crisis. One is a conjunction of short-term factors, the other is due to (structural) long term factors. The former can be seen in the sudden rise of food prices in 2007 and 2008. It is true that this can be attributed to several causes, such as dwindling reserves, but the main reason was speculative, with the production of agrofuels being partly responsible (maize-based ethanol in the United States). Thus over a period of two years, the price of wheat on the Chicago stock exchange rose by 100 per cent, maize by 98 per cent and ethanol by 80 per cent. During these years appreciable amounts of speculative capital moved from other sectors into investing in food production in the expectation of rapid and significant profits. As a consequence, according to the FAO director-general, in each of the years 2008 and 2009 more than 50 million people fell below the poverty line, and the total number of those living in poverty rose to the unprecedented level of over one billion people. This was clearly the result of the logic of profits, the capitalist law of value.

The second aspect is structural. Over the last few years there has been an expansion of monoculture, resulting in the concentration of land-holdings – in other words, a veritable reversal of land reform. Peasant and family agriculture is being destroyed all over the world on the pretext of its low productivity. It is true that monoculture can produce from 500 and even 1,000 times more than peasant agriculture in its present state. Nevertheless, two factors should be taken into account: first, this kind of production is leading to ecological destruction. It eliminates forests, and contaminates the soil and the waters of oceans and rivers through the massive use of chemical products. Over the next 50 to 75 years we shall be creating the deserts of tomorrow. Second, peasants are being thrown off their lands, and millions of them have to migrate to the cities, to live in shanty towns, exacerbating the tasks of women and causing urban crises, as well as increasing internal migratory pressure, as in Brazil; or they are going to other countries (Mexico, Central America, Colombia, Ecuador, Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Morocco, Algeria, West Africa).

Together with public services, agriculture is now one of the new frontiers for capital (Samir Amin, 2004), especially in times when the profitability of productive industrial capital is relatively reduced and there is a considerable expansion of financial capital seeking new sources of profit. Recently we have witnessed an unprecedented phenomenon: the land grabbing by private and State capital, particularly in Africa, for the production of food and agrofuels. The South Korean corporation Daewoo obtained a concession of 1,200,000 hectares in Madagascar for a period of 99 years, which provoked a serious political crisis in that country and finally a revision of the contract. Countries like Libya and the Gulf Emirates are doing likewise in Mali and various other African countries. European and North American mining and agro-energy multinationals are securing the opportunity to exploit tens of millions of hectares for long periods, as Chinese State and private enterprises are also doing.

There is very little concern in these initiatives for the ecological and social implications, which are considered as ‘externalities’, i.e. external to market calculations. And this is precisely the second aspect of capitalist logic, after the growth of the rate of profitability. It is not capital that is having to deal with the negative effects, but local societies and individuals. This has always been the strategy of capital, even in the countries of the centre, with no concern for the fate of the working classes, or for the peoples in the peripheries under colonialism. There is no concern, either, for nature and the way of life of local populations. It is for all these reasons that the

food crisis, in both its conjunctural and structural aspects, is directly linked to the logic of capitalism.

3.1.3 The energy crisis

Let us now look at the energy crisis. This goes well beyond the present explosion in the price of oil and forms part of the drying-up of natural resources, which are being over-exploited by the capitalist development model. One thing is clear: humanity has to change the sources of its energy in the coming 50 years, moving from fossil fuels to other sources of energy. The irrational use of energy and the squandering of natural resources, have become especially evident since the Second World War and in particular during the recent era of the Washington Consensus, i.e. the generalized liberalization of the economy which is the hallmark of the neoliberal epoch of capitalism.

The individual consumption (in housing and transport) that is typical of this model is voracious in its energy requirements. And yet the liberalization of foreign trade is causing more than 60 per cent of our merchandise to cross the oceans, with all that this entails in terms of energy use and the contamination of the seas. Each day, more than 22,000 ships of over 300 tonnes, are navigating the seas (M. Ruiz de Elvira, 2010). This traffic ensures a desirable exchange of goods, but it is also perpetuating the principle of unequal exchange with the peripheral countries that produce raw materials and agricultural commodities. It enables, too, the utilization of 'comparative advantage' to the maximum. Products can be sold cheaper, in spite of having to travel thousands of kilometres, because the workers are more heavily exploited and because laws to protect the ecology are non-existent or too timid.

The precise years when the oil, gas and uranium peaks will be reached can be debated, but we know that these resources are finite and that the dates are not so far off. In some countries, like the United States, Great Britain, Mexico and various others, the process has already begun. Inevitably, as these resources run out, the prices of their products will increase, with all the social and political consequences. International control over the sources of fossil energy and other strategic materials becomes more and more important for the industrial powers and they do not hesitate to resort to military force to secure it. A map of the military bases of the United States indicates this clearly: the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan confirm it. The role of the United States as the universal guarantor of the global system is fairly obvious, in view of the fact that its military budget amounts to 50 per cent of the military expenditure of all other countries combined. No country – not Great Britain, nor Russia, nor China – spends a quarter of what the United States spends in this sector. Clearly this is not only to control the sources of energy, but to ensure the perpetuation of the whole economic model.

The question of agrofuels has to be seen in the context of the future scarcity of energy. Because of expanding demand and the foreseeable decline in fossil energy resources, there is a certain urgency to find solutions to the problem. Since new sources of energy require the development of technologies that are not yet sufficiently advanced (like solar and hydrogen energy) and since other solutions (like wind energy) are interesting but marginal or not economically profitable, agrofuels appeared attractive for the time (François Houtart, 2009). They are often referred to as biofuels, because the basic material is living and not dead as is the case with fossil fuels. However peasant movements in particular contest this terminology because the massive production of agro-energy actually destroys life (nature and human beings).

For a while, the agrofuel solution was supported by ecological organizations and movements, while it was dismissed by business leaders. Around the middle of the 2000s, the attitude of the latter changed. Experience in the production of ethanol based on cane sugar in Brazil and maize in the United States proved that the technology was relatively simple. The same went for agrodiesel based on oil palm, soya and other oil-producing plants, like jatropha. In Brazil the beginning of the ethanol wave coincided with the 1973 oil crisis, making it possible to reduce the importing of very expensive crude oil. In the United States the problem was to reduce its dependence on external sources of oil, as it did not consider the countries concerned very reliable. This justified the production of ethanol assisted by large State subsidies, with maize yielding less agrofuel than cane sugar.

A number of countries have started to legislate the use of a certain percentage of 'green energy' in their overall consumption. The European Union decided that by 2020 the proportion should be 20 per cent, with 10 per cent in green liquid, that is, agrofuels. These plans mean it would be necessary to convert millions of hectares to cultivation for this purpose. In fact, Europe in particular (but also the United States) does not have enough land to satisfy the demand, given its enormous consumption. As a result, towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century, there has been a growing interest in the continents of the South that possess a lot of uncultivated land.

Agrofuels are produced as monocultures, that is, by the utilization of huge areas of land to grow a single crop. In many cases this entails the elimination of enormous forests, as is happening in Malaysia and Indonesia. In less than 20 years, 80 per cent of original forest in these countries has been destroyed to make way for plantations of oil palm and eucalyptus. Biodiversity has disappeared, with dire consequences for the reproduction of life. Not only is a great quantity of water needed to produce these crops, but large amounts of chemical products are used as fertilizers and pesticides. As a result the underground water and rivers flowing into the sea are heavily contaminated. Furthermore, the small landholders are being expelled and many indigenous peoples are losing their ancestral lands, which has led to numerous social conflicts, and even violence. If current plans are implemented between now and 2020, tens of millions of hectares will be dedicated to agrofuel monoculture in Asia, Africa and Latin America – continents that contain most of the nearly one billion hungry people on the planet. All this for a marginal result in terms of energy.

To implement these projects, what we are seeing is, on the one hand, financial and speculative capital entering into this sector and, on the other, a wave of land grabbing, especially in Africa. In Guinea Bissau there are plans to convert 500,000 hectares – one seventh of the country's territory – to jatropha cultivation to produce agrodiesel. The capital will be coming from the casinos of Macao (where Portuguese is spoken, as in Guinea Bissau, which facilitates business discussions). The Prime Minister is the principal shareholder of the bank responsible for this operation. Up until now peasant resistance and the doubts of several ministries (including that of the Prime Minister) have halted the project, but this may not be possible for long. Dozens of similar projects exist in many other countries, such as Tanzania, Togo, Benin, Cameroon, Congo and Kenya.

In October 2010 an agreement was concluded between President Lula, Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council and Mr José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, to develop 4,800,000 hectares of sugar cane in Mozambique (this also

represents one seventh of the country's cultivable land), using Brazilian technology and European funding in order to supply Europe with ethanol. This will enable Europe to achieve its plan to use 'green' energy but there is little concern about the effects for the natural environment and the population of that country.

The development of agrofuels overlooks the ecological and social 'externalities', following the characteristic logic of capitalism. It is based on a short-term calculation, which does not take into account the costs that the market will not carry and which will be borne by nature, societies and individuals. These practices also correspond to the laws of accumulation and the immediate interests of financial capital. In other words, it is a typical capitalist project.

3.1.4 The climate crisis

The climate crisis is well recognized and, every day, information becomes increasingly precise, thanks to the various conferences of the United Nations on the climate, on biodiversity, on glaciers, etc. Here we shall just briefly sum up the situation. While the present development model is emitting greenhouse gases (especially CO₂), the carbon sinks - that is, the natural places where these gases are absorbed, particularly forests and oceans - are being destroyed. In addition, the destruction of ecosystems through the massive application of chemical products, monocultures, exploitation of natural resources like oil, gas and minerals are producing irreversible damage which can even affect the climate.

There are two more aspects that are not always sufficiently emphasized. The first is the 'ecological debt'. Since the beginning of mercantile capitalism, the natural resources of the South have been exploited at enormous human and ecological cost. The 'externalities' of this plundering have been borne exclusively by the colonized regions. The political independence of these countries did not change the logic of the relationship. Over the last few years, the land grabbing and over-exploitation of mines to satisfy the needs of the North have accelerated, causing ecological disasters, not to mention social conflicts. Thus the ecological debt must be taken into account in the external public and private debt of the countries of the South. It is only fair that the consumers of products that have been extracted from the South should be the ones to pay the consequences of these 'externalities' (ecological and social damages). Indeed, in this way, they really have contracted a debt. The other aspect is the ecological costs of military activities. First, wars are extremely wasteful and affect nature by the ecological destruction caused by bombing, the utilization of chemical products³ and CO₂ emissions. Moreover, the production of armaments involves using materials that exhaust the natural wealth of the earth and their production processing emits greenhouse gases. It is just not possible to spend some 1,000 billion dollars a year without creating serious destruction for ecosystems.

The warming of the planet continues, the level of the sea rises. Our ecological footprint is so great that, according to a body that is specialized in the matter, by about the middle of August 2010 the planet had exhausted its capacity to renew itself naturally. As we have access to only one planet, this means that the model is unsustainable. Furthermore, according to the report by Dr. Nicholas Stern to the British Government, it was stated, already in 2006, that if the current

³ Agent Orange, used during the Vietnam war to destroy forests where the guerrillas were fighting in the South, is still causing – forty years later – a huge amount of destruction and affects thousands of children who are born with deformities because of the accumulation of toxic products.

tendency continues there would be between 150 and 200 million climate refugees by the middle of the present century (Nicholas Stern, 2006). More recent statistics give even higher figures.

All this is unfolding within a landscape in which wealth is concentrating, including among the economic and political decision-makers. Twenty per cent of the world population, according to the UNDP, consumes 80 per cent of the planet's economic resources. It is true that there are many millions of people who, over recent decades, have attained a certain level of consumption but they represent a minority among the more than 7 billion human beings. The 20 per cent of the richer ones have a purchasing power that is very useful for the replication of capital and provides an outlet for financial derivatives. The rest of humanity is considered, as Susan George has said, 'superfluous billions' (S. George, 1999). In fact, they do not contribute to the production of surplus value and have hardly any purchasing power. As the World Bank has recognized, the distance between the rich and the poor continues to increase (*World Bank Report*, 2006).⁴ As a result of these upheavals, the development model is globally in crisis. Some talk of a crisis of civilization, which can be seen in uncontrolled urbanization, the crisis of the State, the increase in violence to resolve conflicts and many other manifestations of the same kind. To extricate ourselves from a situation that is globally so disturbing, we clearly need solutions. The different opinions on the question can be classified in three categories.

3.2 WHAT SOLUTIONS?

3.2.1 Changing the actors, not the system

Some people, preoccupied mainly with the financial crisis, are in favour of castigating and replacing those directly responsible for the economic mess – “the chicken thieves” as Michel Camdessus, former director of the International Monetary Fund, calls them. This is the theory of the capitalist system (the neoclassical theory in economics) that sees favourable signs in all crises, since they make it possible to get rid of weak or corrupt elements in order to resume accumulation on a sounder basis. The actors are to be changed, not the system.

3.2.2 Establishing regulations

A second view proposes regulation. It is acknowledged that the market does not regulate itself and that there should be national and international bodies that take on the task. The State and specific international institutions should intervene. Michel Camdessus himself, in a conference with Catholic entrepreneurs in France, talked of the three hands: the "invisible hand" of the market, that of regulation by the State and charity for the victims who do not benefit from either of the two other hands. One of the main theorists of this regulation was John Maynard Keynes, the English economist. For this reason the term 'neo-Keynesian' is being used in the current context. To regulate the system means saving it and thus redefining the role of the public bodies (the State and the international institutions), so necessary for the replication of capital, a fact that neoliberalism seems to have forgotten since the 1970s (Ernesto Molina Molina, 2010, 25).

Nevertheless, there are various practical proposals. The G8, for example, proposed certain regulations of the world economic system, but of a minor and temporary nature. In contrast, the United Nations Commission on the Reform of the International Financial and Monetary System

⁴ In 2010, the 500 largest fortunes in France saw their assets grow by 25 per cent, from 194 billion euros to 241 billions, while the crisis was severely hitting other sectors of the population (Manila Bulletin, 8 July 2011)

(Joseph Stiglitz, 2010) presented a series of much more advanced regulations. Thus it was proposed to set up a UN Global Economic Coordination Council, at the same level as the Security Council, as well as an International Panel of Experts to monitor the world economic situation on a permanent basis. Other recommendations involved the abolition of tax havens and of bank secrecy, as well as greater requirements for bank reserves and a more stringent control of rating agencies. A far-reaching reform of the Bretton Woods institutions was included, and also the possibility of creating regional currencies, rather than having the US dollar as the world's only reserve currency. In the words of the Commission's report, all this would aim at promoting "new and robust growth". These were fairly strong measures in opposition to the current neoliberalism in vogue, but the United Nations conference that took place in June 2009 passed only a few cautious measures that were soon interpreted in a minimal way by the big Western powers.

Although the regulations proposed by the Stiglitz Commission to reconstruct the financial and monetary system made a few references to other aspects of the crisis, like climate, energy and food and, in spite of using the word 'sustainable' to qualify the growth to be restored, there was not enough in-depth consideration about the objectives. "Repairing the economic system": for whom? Was it to develop, as before, a model that destroys nature and is socially inequitable? It is very probable that the proposals of the Commission to reform the monetary and financial system would prove effective in extricating us from the financial crisis, and much more so than all that has been done so far – but ... is this enough to solve our contemporary global challenges? The solution is still being sought within capitalism, a system that is historically worn out, even though it possesses all kinds of ways of adapting itself. The transition to a system that is built on different bases evidently requires regulations, but not just any kind but rather in the sense of creating another situation, instead of adapting the system to new circumstances.

3.2.3 Seeking alternatives to the prevailing model

This is why a third approach seems necessary: one that questions the development model itself. All the crises that have become acute in recent times are the result of the same fundamental logic: 1) it conceives of development in a way that ignores 'externalities' (that is, environmental and social damage); 2) it is based on the idea of a planet with infinite resources; 3) it prioritizes exchange value over use value; and 4) it equates the economy with the rate of profitability and the accumulation of capital, creating enormous inequalities. This model, which is at the origin of a spectacular development of global wealth, has reached the end of its historical function, through the destruction it has wrought on nature and the social inequity that it has brought about. It cannot replicate itself or, in contemporary parlance, it is not sustainable. "The economic rationality of capitalism" comments Wim Dierckxsens, "not only tends to deprive large majorities of the world population of their lives, but it destroys the natural life that surrounds us" (2011).

The Argentinean economist Jorge Beinstein states that in the last four decades capitalism has become decadent on a world scale (a drop in the productive sector) which has only been disguised for a while by the artificial development of the financial sector and huge military expenditure (J.Beinstein, 2009, 13). For this reason therefore, let it be clear that we cannot only talk about regulation: it is necessary to think of alternatives. These should not be the result of purely theoretical reflections, but must necessarily lead to practical policies with long-term objectives, as well as for the short and medium-term.

To talk about alternatives to the capitalist economic model that today prevails in all fields through its globalization and its social, political and cultural dimensions means reviewing the fundamental paradigm on which the collective life of humanity on the planet is based, such as it was defined by the logic of capitalism. This paradigm is composed of four elements that we can call the fundamental ones, because they form part of the vital needs of all societies, from the oldest to the contemporary ones. Let us recapitulate them: 1) the relationship with nature; 2) the production of the material basis of life – physical, cultural and spiritual; 3) social and political collective organization; and 4) the interpretation of reality and the self-involvement of the actors in constructing it, that is, culture. Each society has to achieve this.

The current paradigm, that guides the construction of the contemporary world, can be summed up in one word: modernity. This was the result of a profound transformation of European society and culture that for centuries has defined its own paradigm. Undeniably, it represented an advance (Bolivar Echevarria, 2001). However, modernity was not a social abstraction that happened by chance or came out of nowhere. It concerned a collective way of life on the planet, with its material and social bases and its production of ideas. It became well established in history while, at the same time, through a dialectical process, manifesting its contradictions. The emancipation of the individual, human rights, the idea of democracy, the progress of science and its technological applications are some of its products. However, the hegemony of the capitalist market and the imposition of its laws reduced most of these advances to class privileges and colonial relationships that were brutally maintained for five centuries. A number of social struggles enabled some subordinate groups to share in the advantages of modernity, but without changing the paradigm. Now the latter, through its contradictions, has endangered the four fundamental elements for the collective life of humanity on the earth. Because of the distance that had developed between humans and nature, the modernity paradigm led to the over-exploitation of nature: in other words, to the devastation of the source of life (Mother Earth). It gave birth to the capitalist market economy that, by its logic, invaded all aspects of life. In the political field the highly centralized Jacobin State resulted from this vision. In the cultural field, unbridled individualism was developed as an ethical necessity, together with the concept of the unlimited progress of humanity, living on an inexhaustible planet and capable of resolving its contradictions through science and technology. This model oriented the development model, including that of the socialist societies of the XX century.

The global dominance of this project became apparent early on, through the destruction, absorption or submission of all pre-capitalist modes of production, through the various colonial adventures, through the establishment of unequal exchange between the centres and the peripheries, and through what has recently been called ‘globalization’, which finally brings together the concepts of growth and Westernization, that is to say, the spread throughout the universe of the latest forms and dominance of capital.

There was a reaction against this model, expressed in ‘post-modernism’. However, this mode of thinking, which developed in the second half of the twentieth century, also incorporated a particularly ambiguous critique of modernity, which was generally limited to the cultural and political fields (M. Maffesoli, 1990). The idea of history as something constructed here and now by individual actors, the refusal to acknowledge the existence of structures and the denial of reality by systems defined exclusively in vertical terms, as well as the explicit desire not to accept theories in human sciences, have turned this current of thinking into the illegitimate child of modernity itself, so that people have become depoliticized. Post-modernism has transmuted itself into

an ideology that is pretty convenient for neoliberalism. At a time when capitalism was building the new material basis of its existence as a ‘world-system’, as Immanuel Wallerstein has termed it, the denial of the very existence of systems is most useful for the advocates of the ‘Washington Consensus’. It is important to criticize modernity, but with a historical and dialectical approach (actors interacting, who have different degrees of power) and with the desire to recover the emancipatory nature that characterized one moment of European history. It is not possible to identify modernity with capitalism, but neither can one talk of modernity without including capitalism.

This is the reason why it is imperative that we reconstruct a consistent, theoretical framework, benefiting from the contributions of various currents in human thought, including those of a philosophical nature, as well as the physical, biological and social sciences. It is important to situate each new initiative to create a new paradigm within the whole, thus giving coherence to what could seem a series of separate actions, without much connection with each other (empiricism). This is also valid for international politics.

As we have already said, the foundations of the collective life of humanity on the planet are fourfold: the relationship with nature; the production of the basics for living (the economy); collective organization, social and political; and interpretation or the symbolic expression of reality. It is the fulfilment of a new paradigm with its four elements that we would call the achievement of the Common Good of Humanity, that is, as we have already said, the production and reproduction of life. It is an objective that has to be continually pursued, but which cannot be defined once and for all because historical circumstances change the context. However, the current crisis requires a radical re-thinking, one that goes to the roots of the situation (István Mészáros, 2008, 86) and this means a complete reorientation of the paradigm compared to capitalism. The concept of the Common Good of Humanity has been expressed in many different ways, according to the traditions of thinking and the collective experiences of peoples - for example in the philosophies and religions of the East and of the indigenous peoples of the Americas (the *Sumak Kwasay*, or *buen vivir*), as also in the Marxist tradition of the system of universal needs and capacities (A. Salamanca Serrano, 2011, p. 46 and S. Mercier-Jesa, 1982).

4 THE NEW PARADIGM

Summing it up, we can say that the paradigm of human development expressed by modernity is indefinite material and scientific progress, on an inexhaustible planet at the exclusive disposal of human beings, so that they can benefit, with increasing liberty, from goods and services. This way of life is based on the effectiveness of a competitive economy (a particularly masculine characteristic) and it is now being exhausted because of all its social and ecological contradictions. Hence the need for a radical change to ensure the continuity of life on earth and of humanity in the long term.

The new paradigm proposes, as a fundamental option, a balanced social dynamic between individuals, genders and social groups in harmony with nature in order to promote life and ensure its reproduction. It is a question of ‘*vivir bien*’, achieving the ‘Common Good of Humanity’, which means, as a first step, respect for the wholeness of nature as the source of life (Mother Earth).

Its construction and applications in the fundamental elements of the collective life of humanity on the planet are processes: not just academic exercises, but something to be worked out in society, where thinking has an essential place, but so does practical experience, particularly with regard to social struggles. Each one of these corresponds to a failure in the achievement of the 'Common Good of Humanity' and a related search for solutions. As the destructive globalization of capitalism has exercised its supremacy in the economies, societies and cultures of the world – without however totally eliminating their specific characteristics – the reconstruction task belongs to us all, men and women, according to our social characteristics and historical experiences. No one should be excluded in this common effort to re-elaborate the necessary conditions for life.

In fact, this paradigm is not so new as it seems. In pre-capitalist societies all round the world there are references to it, that is, to a holistic vision of the human destiny on earth. In many cases this is expressed in religious terms and in traditions with a philosophical base (Taoism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam) as well as in the traditional religions of indigenous peoples. It is a question of rediscovering the appropriate visions and concrete practices in contemporary terms for the diverse societies of today

4.1 REDEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE: FROM EXPLOITATION TO RESPECT FOR IT AS THE SOURCE OF LIFE

Modern civilization with its strong control over nature, its high degree of urbanization, has made human beings forget that, at the last resort, they depend totally on nature for their lives. Climate change reminds us of this reality, sometimes in a very brutal way. This means therefore seeing nature not as a planet to be exploited, nor as natural resources that can be reduced to the status of saleable commodities, but as the source of all life. As such, its capacity to regenerate itself physically and biologically has to be respected. This obviously entails a radical philosophical change. Any relationship with nature that is exclusively utilitarian must be questioned. Capitalism considers ecological damage as 'collateral' and inevitable – though perhaps to be reduced as far as possible; or, even worse, ecological damages are considered as 'externalities', since they are ignored in market calculations and consequently in the accumulation of capital.

Some authors go much further, and question the anthropocentric bias of these perspectives, proposing new concepts like 'the right of nature', which the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff has defended in some of his writings. It was on this basis that the president of the UN General Assembly, Miguel D'Escoto, proposed, in his farewell speech in 2009, a Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth and of Mankind. The same Assembly had previously approved unanimously through the votes of 192 countries the adoption of a Mother Earth Day. It was rightly pointed out that the human being is a part of nature and that a dichotomy should not be set up between the two but rather a symbiosis. Different speakers, supporting this position, maintained that only a shallow anthropocentric attitude could consider the human being as the centre of the world, without taking into account other living beings, including the planet itself. This attitude is indeed having negative ecological effects that are becoming dramatically visible.

On the other hand, what we are calling the 'Common Good' of the Earth can only be tackled through the mediation of the human species. It is only human intervention that can allow the Earth to regenerate – or prevent it from doing so through our own predatory and destructive activities. This is why the Common Good of Humanity involves the survival of nature - that is,

of biodiversity. If we use the expression 'the rights of nature' (Eduardo Gudynas, 2009), this can be understood only in a secondary sense, since it is only the human species that can infringe or respect those rights. Neither the Earth nor the animals can claim respect for their rights.

It is human beings who are responsible for the destruction of the ecosystems. In this sense, according to the jurist Antonio Salamanca, using the legal categories of *droit titulaire* or *droit vicaire* (subsidiary or secondary law) the human community must act on behalf of the 'incapable' (animals, newly born babies, people with severe mental disabilities) who, for the reproduction of their lives require human mediation. Such a position is not anthropocentric, but *anthropo-responsabilisante*, i.e. making humans aware of their responsibilities. In this way, by broadening the concept of the juridical subject, one can talk of climate justice, without necessarily resorting to the personalization of the earth and its elements. At the same time, it cannot be ignored that there is a link between the relations that human beings have with nature and class relations. All social classes do not behave in the same way vis-à-vis the Earth. It is a case of power relations, put into practice by the logic of capitalism.

In any case, what is at issue is the principle that the planet should be sustainable - able, in other words, to conserve its biodiversity - so that it can renew itself in spite of human activity. We can also embellish nature, using its plant wealth to create new landscapes or gardens for more beauty. The Earth is also generous and can contribute, even with non-renewable elements, to the production and reproduction of life. But this is totally different from exploiting it to produce a higher rate of profit.

In the great philosophical traditions of the East, the deep bond between the human being and nature is a central characteristic of their thought. Respect for all life, such as we find it in Hinduism and Buddhism, exemplifies this conviction, as does the belief in reincarnation as an expression of the unity of life and its continuance. The belief that man was created from clay (the earth), which we find in the Judeo-Christian tradition and subsequently taken up by Islam, expresses the same idea. The Bible represents man as the guardian of nature (Genesis 1, 26-28). Even if it affirms that nature is there to serve him, this obviously excludes its destruction. Creation myths in many cultures in Africa and the Americas contain similar beliefs.

For the indigenous peoples of the American continent, the concept of Mother Earth (*Pacha Mama*) is central. As a source of life she is seen as a real person, with anthropomorphic features. The natural elements are also alive with their own personalities and serve as the objects of Shamanistic rites. At the Climate Summit in Cochabamba in 2010, various texts (the preparatory document and also interventions by different groups and individuals) went beyond the metaphorical nature of the expression 'Mother Earth', attributing to her the characteristics of a living person, capable of listening, reacting and being loved – and for these reasons, with rights of her own. The final document called for a re-evaluation of popular wisdom and ancestral knowledge, inviting us to “recognize Mother Earth as a living being, with which we have an indivisible, interdependent, complementary and spiritual relationship.” This is a strong reminder of the link between nature and humanity, expressed in the framework of the cosmivision of the indigenous peoples who moreover, also stress the maternal (feminine) character of the relationship.

Nevertheless it has to be admitted that, when confronted by the logic of capitalism, by development and the advances of urbanization, as well as by the attractions of mindless consumption, the great oriental philosophies and the traditions of the first nations have difficulties in resisting

it. They are transforming themselves rapidly or even disappearing from the cultural scene, as has been the case with the 'Asian Tigers', in China and Vietnam, and also among the indigenous peoples of the American continent and the peoples of Africa. Neoliberalism is accentuating this phenomenon all over the world: it has been an individual and collective aspiration for many to participate in the values of the dominant culture. What happened among the subordinate classes of Europe and with Christianity – this being the first religion to be confronted with capitalism – is being repeated elsewhere. Ideological pollution is very real.

However, traditional concepts are now once again being invoked, as tools for historical memory, cultural reconstruction and affirmation of identity, all of which can be very useful when questioning capitalist logic. There is a certain pride in being able to refer to historical cultures and in using its concepts to contribute to a process of social reconstruction, although there is always some danger of falling into a paralyzing fundamentalism, more oriented to the past than to the present.

The references to *Pacha Mama* (Mother Earth) and the *Sumak Kawsay* (*buen vivir*) of the Quechua peoples and to the *Suma Gamaña* (living well together) of the Aymara peoples (Xavier Albó, 2010, 45-55) belong to these categories. These are two of the founding concepts of indigenous peoples which, in concrete historical conditions, signified a specific cosmivision and practices regarding respect for nature and for shared collective life. As such they can inspire contemporary thinking and social organization and can revitalize the symbol. However, success will depend on making the adjustments that will be necessary "in such a way", as Diana Quiroga Suarez writes, "that the transformation provides an opportunity to combine the best of ancestral and modern wisdom, with knowledge and technology working in step with nature's processes" (D. Quiroga Suarez, 2009, 107).

This, obviously, does not mean questioning the necessary harmony between nature and the human species, or swallowing the capitalist concept of the exploitation of nature as a necessary by-product of the kind of development conceived as just endless material growth. Nor is it to deny the need to revise the philosophy of the relationship with nature which ignores other living species and the capacity of nature to restore its balance. Nor should we undervalue or marginalize the cultures that can offer a healthy critique of humanity, both in its exploitation, brought about by the logic of capitalism, and in the rampant individualism of the consumption model and all the other kinds of behaviour that go with it. Nevertheless it has to be acknowledged that different cultures do exist. If we try to describe the necessary change only in terms of symbolic thinking, representing the symbol as reality, this will come into collision with the cultures that have an analytical approach, and which place the causality of all phenomena into their specific categories, whether physical or social.

At the present time the two cultures co-exist. The first comes with a wealth of expression that reflects the strength of the symbol and the importance of ideal, particularly as regards relations with nature. It brings with it truly practical elements, which can easily be translated into knowledge, behaviour and policies. But its cosmivision is difficult for an urban culture in any part of the world to assimilate. The second has clearly reduced itself to a mere practical rationality or even a pure 'superstructure' (the "cherry on the cake", as the French anthropologist Maurice Godelier puts it), thus reinforcing capitalist logic and contributing to extending it further, while also admittedly making possible a great advance in knowledge that is useful for resolving practical and political problems. It would be unwise, in fighting against the globalized capital-

ism that is leading humanity and the planet into disaster, to state one's case in only one cultural language. On the contrary, this is the moment to apply the principle of interculturalism in all its dimensions.

We have already referred to the contribution of Karl Marx. He considered that capitalism had provoked an artificial and mechanical separation between nature and the human being. The rupture in the metabolism, that is the material exchange between the earth and the satisfaction of the needs of human beings, such as defined by the capital accumulation process, has ended up in irrational practices, wastage and destruction (*Capital*, Vol. 1, 637-638, cited by Gian Delgado, 2011). For this reason, according to Marx, it is necessary to reduce the material energy flows in a way that is socially fair, so as to ameliorate the quality of life. According to him, only socialism can re-establish the metabolic balance and put an end to the destruction of nature.

Calling for a new concept of our relationship with nature brings with it many practical consequences. We shall cite some examples, grouping them into: necessary prohibitions and constraints; positive initiatives; and then discussing their implications for international policy.

First, we must outlaw the private ownership of what are called 'natural resources': i.e. minerals, fossil energies and forests. These are the common heritage of humanity, and cannot be appropriated by individuals and corporations, as happens now in the capitalist market economy – in other words, by private interests that ignore externalities and aim at maximizing profits. A first step in a transition, then, is for countries to recover sovereignty over their resources. Of course this does not necessarily ensure the desired result of a healthy relationship with nature: national enterprises often operate with the same capitalist logic, so that State sovereignty would not necessarily imply a philosophy of respect for nature rather than its exploitation. The internationalization of this sector would be the next step, but only on condition that the relevant institutions (like the United Nations and its agencies) are made really democratic: in many cases they are still under the influence of the dominant political and economic powers. The introduction of ecological costs of all human activities into economic calculations is also a necessity, making it possible to reduce these and to counter the utilitarian rationale that excludes "externalities": one of the reasons for the destructive nature of capitalism.

Another aspect of the necessary prohibitions and constraints is the need to forbid the commoditization of those elements necessary for reproducing life, such as water and seeds. These are common goods that must not be governed by commodity logic but should be handled in different ways - which does not necessarily mean by the State, but under collective control. In more concrete terms, this principle involves putting an end to the monocultures that are preparing 'the deserts of tomorrow', particularly those producing livestock feed and agrofuels. A tax on the kilometres covered during the exportation of industrial or agricultural products would make it possible to reduce both energy use and the contamination of the seas. Other such measures could be proposed.

On the positive side, reserves that protect biodiversity should be extended over more territory. The promotion of organic agriculture would be part of this initiative, as would the improvement of peasant agriculture, which is in fact more efficient in the long run than capitalist productivist agriculture (O. de Schutter, 2011). Legislation requiring the extension of 'life expectancy' for all industrial products would make it possible to save primary materials and energy and reduce the production of greenhouse gases (Wim Dierckxsens, 2011).

Finally, in the field of international politics, the struggle against the basic orientations of the financial institutions, which contradict the principle of respect for nature, has to be fought on a number of fronts. There is the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the regional banks and also the private banks, that are so powerful at this time, when the world economy is being financialized. The policies of the WTO promoting the liberalization of the world economy also have ecological implications, since most of them are implemented without taking externalities into account. Member states of this international organization have a huge responsibility in this field; alliances between ecologically conscious nations could influence decision-making in this body.

The promotion of international conventions is another very important aspect. For example, there are the conventions on the climate (Cancún), biodiversity (Bonn and Nagoya), those on the protection of water (rivers and seas) and of fish, on waste (especially nuclear) among others. The extent of awareness of this dimension of the new paradigm will be the basis of the international effectiveness of progressive states, and should form part of their foreign policy.

The redefinition of the ‘Common Good of Humanity’ in terms of our relationship with nature is an essential task, considering the ecological damage already inflicted, with its harmful effects on the regenerating capacity of the planet and on climate stability. This is a new factor in the collective conscience, but it is far from being shared among all human groups. The socialist societies did not really incorporate this dimension in their planning, as is illustrated in the spectacular economic development of a country like China, which is being achieved without giving much attention, at least for the time being, to externalities. A socialism of the 21st century would tend to incorporate this as a central plank of its policies.

4.2 REDIRECTING PRODUCTION OF LIFE’S NECESSITIES, PRIORITIZING *USE* VALUE OVER *EXCHANGE* VALUE

The transformation of the paradigm as far as the economy is concerned lies in giving priority to *use* value, instead of *exchange* value as is the rule under capitalism. We talk of use value when a commodity or a service is useful for the life of someone, rather than being simply the object of a transaction. The characteristic of a market economy is to give priority to exchange value: for capitalism, the most developed form of market production, it is its *only* ‘value’. A good or a service that cannot be converted into merchandise has no value because it does not contribute to the accumulation of capital, which is the aim and engine of the economy (M. Godelier, 1982). According to this view, use value is secondary and, as István Mészáros says, “it can acquire the right to exist if it adjusts to the requirements of exchange value” (2008, 49). Any goods, which are not at all useful (the explosion in military expenditure, for example, or the white elephant projects of international development assistance), can be produced as long as they are paid for or, if artificial needs are created through advertising (Wim Dierckxsens, 2011), or if financial services are expanded through speculative bubbles. In contrast, putting the emphasis on use value makes the market serve human needs.

In fact, the concept of necessity is relative. It changes according to historical circumstances and the development of productive forces. The principle is that all human beings have the right to satisfy their basic necessities. This is emphatically affirmed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, this cannot be achieved in the abstract, but in well defined economic, social and political circumstances. But relativity cannot mean unfair inequalities, some having

more needs than others, according to their class, gender and ethnic origins. The satisfaction of needs must be defined by the human community at different levels through a democratic process and by competent bodies (national and international parliaments, representative assemblies). This is what could be called the establishment of a 'moral economy', which is subjected to ethical requirements that contradict the predominance of the exchange value, as a source of the accumulation of capital – the ultimate objective of the economy and therefore the only value.

It is not possible to achieve this without challenging the private ownership of the principal means of production, which is what places decision-making power in the hands of the holders of capital goods and subordinates labour to capital, both directly, through wages and indirectly, through other mechanisms like monetary policies, national debts and budget deficits, speculation on the price of food and energy, the privatization of public services etc.⁵ It is the exclusive control of capital over the production process that also lies behind the degradation of working conditions (Jorge Beinstein, 2009, 21) and the devaluation of women's work, which is so essential for the reproduction of life in all its dimensions. However, total State control as a counterweight to the total market is not a satisfactory solution, as past socialist experiences prove. There are many different forms of collective control, from cooperatives to citizens' associations.

Thus what we need is a totally different definition of the economy. It would no longer be a matter of producing aggregate value for the benefit of the owners of the means of production or of finance capital, but rather a collective activity aimed at ensuring basic needs for the physical, cultural and spiritual lives of all human beings on the planet. A national and world economy that is based on the exploitation of work to maximize profits is unacceptable, as is the production of goods and services destined for 20 per cent of the world population who have relatively high purchasing power, excluding the remaining 80 per cent because they do not produce any added value and have insufficient income. Redefining the economy thus means a fundamental change. Privileging use value - which still involves the development of productive forces – and presupposes the adoption of the first fundamental element, that of respect for nature, like those to which we shall be coming shortly: generalized democracy, and interculturalism. This does not exclude exchanges necessary also to satisfying the new use values, but on condition that they do not create imbalances in local access to use value and that they include externalities in the process.

'Growth' and 'development' are not the same thing: this is what neo-classical and neo-Keynesian economists seem to forget. As Jean-Philippe Peemans, professor at the Catholic University of Louvain, has said, "the logic of accumulation as the only development logic" is well entrenched. But a new approach is evolving, which takes various forms. One of them is to take up the concept of the indigenous peoples of Latin America, '*el buen vivir*' or 'living well' (*Sumak Kawsay*). This is a much broader notion, which not only implies the complete opposite of growth as an end in itself, but also harmonizes with nature (Diana Quiroga, 2009, 105). Already in the 1960s the Club of Rome had proposed zero growth as a solution for what, even

⁵ It is estimated that 70 per cent of the work in the world is informal, which makes it difficult for workers to organize. Nevertheless there are now various initiatives, like the Confederation of Self-Employed Workers (CTCP-FNT), which is affiliated with the National Federation of Nicaraguan Workers (FNT), and Streetnet International (Orlando Nuñez, 2011).

then, was felt to be a non-sustainable way of life. In the Soviet Union of the 1950s, Wolfgang Harsch wrote a highly original book entitled *Communism without Growth*.

The idea was taken up again, although this time much more radically, by Serge Latouche in France, who in the 1990s launched the concept of 'de-growth', inspiring a series of movements, mainly among the middle classes of Europe, to reduce consumption and to respect the natural environment. While the content is positive and it is important to denounce the myth that claims growth will solve all the problems, the underlying notion is rather Eurocentric and limited to the consuming classes. It would seem somewhat indecent to preach 'de-growth' to African peoples or even to the impoverished classes of industrialized societies. A concept like 'living well' or '*buen vivir*' has a broader and more positive connotation. In Bhutan, under the influence of Buddhism, they have the notion of happiness, which has been officially adopted as a political and social objective. These are perhaps small islands in the ocean of the world market, but they herald the development of a critical vision of the contemporary model, with a clearly holistic perspective.

Prioritizing use value over exchange value also means rediscovering the territorial aspect. Globalization has made people forget the virtues of local proximity in favour of global interchanges, ignoring externalities and giving primacy to finance capital - the most globalized element of the economy because of its virtual character. Territorial space, as the site of economic activities but also of political responsibility and cultural exchanges, is the place to introduce another kind of rationale. It is not a matter of reducing the question to a microcosm, but rather to think in terms of multidimensionality, in which each dimension, from the local unit to the global sphere, has its function, without destroying the others. Hence the concepts of food sovereignty and energy sovereignty, by which trade is subordinated to a higher principle: the satisfaction of the requirements of the territory's dimensions (Jean-Philippe Peemans, 2010). In the capitalist perspective, the law of value imposes priority for commercialization, and hence it gives precedence to the export of crops over the production of food for local consumption. The concept of 'food security' is not adequate, because it can be ensured by trade that is based on the destruction of local economies, on the over-specialization of certain areas of the world, and on globalized transportation that is a voracious consumer of energy and polluter of the environment.

In the same line of thinking, the move towards regionalization of economies on a world scale is a positive step towards delinking from the capitalist centre that transforms the rest of the world into peripheries (even if emerging economies). It is also a positive step in relation to both to trade and the monetary system, as it allows to re-design the globalizing model.

This brings us to practical measures. They are numerous, and we can give only a few examples here. On the negative side, the predominance of finance capital cannot be accepted, and for this reason tax havens of all kinds must be abolished, as well as bank secrecy – two powerful instruments the dominant class uses in the class struggle. It is also necessary to establish a tax on international financial flows (the 'Tobin tax') to reduce the power of finance capital. 'Odious debts' must be denounced, after due audits, as has been done in Ecuador. Speculation on food and energy cannot be permitted. As said before, a tax on the kilometres consumed by industrial or agricultural goods would make it possible to reduce the ecological costs of transport and the abuse of 'comparative advantage'. Prolonging the 'life expectancy' of industrial products would allow to save raw materials and energy, and could diminish the artificial profits of capital resulting purely from the circulation of trade (Wim Dierckxsens, 2011).

From a positive viewpoint there are also many examples to be cited. The social economy is built on a logic that is quite different from that of capitalism. It is true that it is a marginal activity at present, compared with the immense concentration of oligopolistic capital, but it is possible to encourage it in various ways. The same goes for cooperatives and popular credit. They must be protected from being destroyed or absorbed by the dominant system. As for regional economic initiatives, they can be the means of a transformation out of economic logic, on the condition that they do not represent simply an adaptation of the system to new production techniques, thus serving as means to integrate national economies into a capitalist framework at a higher level. Restoring the common goods privatized by neoliberalism is a fundamental step to be taken in public services like water, energy, transport, communications, health, education and culture. This does not necessarily mean the State taking them over but rather setting up many different forms of public and citizen control over their production and distribution.

Redefining the ‘Common Good of Humanity’ in terms of a new definition of the economy is thus a necessary task to be undertaken, confronted as we are by the destruction of our common heritage as a result of forgetting the collective dimension of production for life-needs, and by the promotion of exclusive individualism.

4.3 REORGANIZING COLLECTIVE LIFE THROUGH THE GENERALIZATION OF DEMOCRACY IN SOCIAL RELATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

Our third central theme, in revising the paradigm of collective life and the Common Good of Humanity, is the generalizing of democracy, not only in the political field but also in the economic system, in relationships between men and women and in all institutions. In other words, the mere forms of democracy, which are often used to establish a fake equality and to perpetuate unacknowledged social inequalities, must be left behind. This involves a revision of the concept of the State and the reclamation of human rights in all their dimensions, individual and collective. It is a matter of treating every human being, with no distinction of race, sex, or class, as partners in the building of society, thus confirming their self-worth and participation (Franz Hinkelammert, 2005).

The concept of the State is absolutely central in this field. The model of the Jacobin centralized state of the French Revolution, erasing all differences in order to construct citizens who were in principle equal, is not enough to build a real democracy. Such a state was without doubt a step forward when compared to the political structures of the European *ancien régime*. But it is now necessary not only to take into account the existence of opposing classes, and to realize that any one class, or a coalition of them, can take possession of the State to ensure that their own interests dominate; but also to acknowledge the existence of all the various nationalities that live in a territory and who have the right to affirm their cultures, their territorial reference points and their social institutions. This is not a matter of falling into the kind of communitarianism that weakens the State, as has happened in certain European countries in the neoliberal era or of accepting the neo-anarchism of certain legitimate and massive protests. Neither is it a matter of retreating into nostalgia for a romantic past, like certain politico-religious movements, nor of falling into the clutches of powerful economic interests (transnational enterprises or international financial institutions) that prefer to negotiate with small-scale local bodies. The aim is to reach equilibrium between these different dimensions of collective life, international, regional and local, recognizing their existence and setting up mechanisms for participation.

The role of the State cannot be formulated without taking into account the situation of the most marginalized social groups: landless peasants, lower castes and the *dalits* (the former untouchables), who have been ignored for thousands of years, as well as the indigenous peoples of America and those of African descent who have been excluded for over 500 years and, within these groups, the women who are doubly marginalized. Juridical processes, even constitutional ones, are not enough to change the situation, as necessary as these are. Racism and prejudice will not rapidly disappear in any society. In this field the cultural factor is decisive and can be the subject of specific initiatives. Social policies protecting people against the aggression by the 'global market' and providing for the basic necessities constitute an important step in the transition process, as long as they are not considered as just a form of charity, detached from structural reform.

It is also important to look out for the use of vocabulary twisted from its original meaning. The Right is outstanding for making pronouncements in this vein. And now there are those who speak of 'green capitalism'. But even in countries that want change, traditional concepts such as *Sumak Kawsay* (*buen vivir*) must be analyzed in function of their real meaning, which could serve as elements of the transition to another way of collective life, or simply be an adaptation of the existing system. It is the general political context that will make it possible to understand the difference and evaluate it.

The generalization of democracy also applies to the dialogue between political entities and social movements. The organization of bodies for consultation and dialogue must be part of the same approach, respecting mutual autonomy. The project for a Council of Social Movements in the general structures of ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance of The Peoples of our America) is an original attempt in this direction. The concept of civil society, often used in relation to this issue, remains, however, ambiguous, because this too is a ground where class struggle takes place: in reality we do have a bottom-up civil society and a top-down one. The unqualified use of the term makes it possible to create confusion and present social solutions that overlook class differences.⁶ Forms of participatory democracy, as can be seen in various Latin American countries, also follow the same logic, that of generalized democracy. Real independence of the various executive, legislative and juridical powers is a guarantee that democracy is functioning normally. A democratic State must also be secular: that is to say, free from the intervention of religious institutions into the organs of power, whether they are majority religions or not. This is in fact the basis of religious freedom. This does not mean a State is so secular as not to acknowledge the public aspect of the religious factor (the social-ethical dimension of Liberation Theology, for example) or worse still, as was the case in the countries of 'real socialism', that it imposes atheism as a sort of state religion.

Other institutions should be guided by the same principles. Nothing is less democratic than the capitalist economic system, with the concentration of decision-making power in just a few hands. The same goes for the social communications media and is also applicable to all social, trade union, cultural, sport and religious institutions.

The notion of non-violence is obviously associated with generalized democracy. The conflicts in human societies, whether in the family or at the international level must be resolved by ap-

⁶ A few years ago, on a wall in a popular neighbourhood of Bogotá appeared the slogan: "We, too, have human rights!"

appropriate non-violent mechanisms, formal or informal. The German sociologist Max Weber's concept of 'legitimate violence' as a State monopoly is dangerous because it leads to an easy justification, for example, of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. However while non-violence is desirable and desired principle, the reality is that we live in a violent world.

Violence has nearly always been caused by the pursuit of economic and political hegemony. In modern history, the reproduction of capitalism as a system was a dominating factor in the exercise of violence, both for the accumulation of internal capital (the military-industrial complex in the United States, for example) or to ensure the predominance of one nation over another and finally to guarantee the control over natural resources (oil and strategic metals). The cultural and religious arguments have often been, consciously or unconsciously, the ideological legitimacy capable of motivating peoples and the masses to support conflicts that are economic and political. But such arguments have also served as the immaterial ammunition of oppressed groups fighting for justice.

In this way wars, like dictatorships, represent a failure of democracy and a rupture in the pursuit of the 'Common Good of Humanity'. Now, with the availability of technologies for killing there are no more just wars except for popular resistance when all democratic solutions have been excluded. But only a socio-political and historical analysis of all the (holistic) elements at resistance can pronounce on their ethical and political justification.

The organization of the struggle against racism or gender discrimination comes into this category. So does action to democratize mass communication media, for example, through prohibiting its ownership by finance capital. Rules ensuring democratic functioning (equality between men and women, alternating responsibilities, etc.) can be the conditions for public recognition (and, possibly, for subsidies) of non-State institutions, such as political parties, social organizations, NGOs and cultural and religious institutions.

As for international politics, there are many possibilities of applying the principle. An obvious one is the United Nations, whose various organs, starting with the Security Council, are hardly democratic. The same goes for the Bretton Woods institutions, particularly the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Supporting efforts in direction of democracy can be a priority for governments of the periphery. The meetings of the G8 or G20, although informal, carry real weight and should be challenged. Courts of justice to respect human rights, institutions that are desirable in themselves, should still be subjected to the same norms of democracy, as well as given new fields to deal with, such as economic crimes, 'odious debt' and ecological damage. All the new Latin American regional institutions, like the Banco del Sur, regional currency (the *sucre*) and ALBA, should be given special attention in this sense, as well as regional institutions on other continents.

The destruction of democracy by capitalism, especially in its neoliberal phase, has been so great that societies, at all levels, are now organized to serve the advantages of a minority, provoking a degree of inequality in the world that is without precedent in history. To re-establish democratic functioning as a universal paradigm thus constitutes a central pillar in the concept of the 'Common Good of Humanity'.

4.4 INSTITUTING INTERCULTURALISM WHILE BUILDING THE UNIVERSAL COMMON GOOD

The objective of the cultural dimension is to give to all forms of knowledge, cultures, philosophies and religions an equal chance of contributing to the Common Good of Humanity. This cannot be the exclusive role of Western culture, which in reality is totally identified with the concept of 'development', eliminating or marginalizing all other perspectives. Undertaking this, involves not only an understanding of reality or its anticipation, but also the necessary ethic for elaborating the Common Good, the affective dimension necessary for the self-motivation of the actors and aesthetic and practical expressions. Multiculturalism also obviously entails the adoption of the organizational principles of the three other themes: the relationship with nature, the production of life's basic needs and the organization of democracy on a broad scale. It is also important for the transmission of ideas and values within different peoples. To speak in everyone's language and to express oneself in culturally comprehensible terms is an essential requirement of democracy.

However, multiculturalism is not enough. Open interculturalism should also be promoted, with dialoguing between cultures and opportunity for exchanges. Cultures are not only objects in a museum, but the living elements of a society also. Internal and external migrations, linked to the development of the means of communication, have created many cultural changes, clearly not all of them desirable but which can be enriching. In order to exist, cultures must have material bases and means, like territorial reference points (in various forms) and educational and communications media, as well as various opportunities to express culture like fetes, pilgrimages, rituals, religious agents, buildings, etc.

This brings us to the practical aspects of designing the organization of a multicultural State. In countries like Bolivia and Ecuador, the concept has been specifically translated into constitutions by the establishment of multinational States, although not without difficulties when it comes to putting them into practice. The central idea is the obligation for the State to guarantee the basics of cultural activity for different peoples and, in particular, to defend them from the assaults of economic modernity and the dominant culture. For this purpose, bilingual education is an important instrument. However the notion of interculturalism must also have an influence on general education, like the teaching of history and the reshaping of an education philosophy at present guided by the logic of the market. The publication of inexpensive books, the organization of book fairs, artisanal centres, inter-active museums, etc. are useful tools. Communications media are important as they transmit not only information but also values, provided that they do not go against pluralism or democracy. This problem must be tackled as a whole, to promote local cultures, to counteract monopolies and to destroy the dominance of a handful of international agencies. Ethical bodies, such as associations for the defence of human rights, watchdog groups of various kinds, religious institutions, must also have the opportunity to express themselves.

Culture includes a spiritual dimension, which is a characteristic of human beings, raising them above the concerns of everyday life. This is a central theme in a period when civilization is in crisis. All over the world there is a search after meaning, for the need to redefine the very aims of life. Spirituality is the force that transcends the material world and gives it a meaning. The sources of spirituality are many and are always to be found within a social context: they cannot exist without a physical and biological base. The human being is indivisible: spirituality presup-

poses matter that, on the other hand, has no sense without the spirit. A culturalistic view of spirituality, ignoring the material aspects of a human being - which for an individual is their body and for society is the economic and political reality - is a conceptual aberration, leading to reductionism (culture as the single factor in change) or alienation (ignorance of social structures). Spirituality, with or without reference to a supernatural, gives sense to human life on the planet. How it may be expressed is conditioned by the social relations in each society, but it can also give a direction to these relations. A change of paradigm cannot be carried out without spirituality, which has many paths and multiple expressions.

The vision of the world, the understanding and analysis of reality, the ethics of social and political construction and the aesthetic expression and self-motivation of the actors are essential elements when designing alternatives to the model of capitalist development and the civilization that it transmits. They form part of all the dimensions of the new paradigm: our relationship with nature; the production of life's basic needs; the redefinition of the economy; and finally the way in which we conceive the collective and political organization of societies. In all their diversity, these cultural elements can contribute to the change that is necessary for the survival of humanity and the planet.

5 THE COMMON GOOD OF HUMANITY AS A GLOBAL OBJECTIVE

It therefore follows that the 'Common Good of Humanity' will result from successfully achieving all these four goals, each of which is fundamental to the collective life of human beings on the planet. The goals defined by capitalism, guaranteed by political forces and transmitted by the dominant culture, are not sustainable, and so cannot ensure 'the Common Good of Humanity'. On the contrary, they work against the continuance of life (François Houtart, 2009). There has to be a change of paradigm, to permit a symbiosis between human beings and nature, access of all to goods and services, and the participation of every individual and every collective group in the social and political organizing processes, each having their own cultural and ethical expression: in other words to realize the Common Good of Humanity. This will be a generally long-term process, dialectic and not linear, and the result of many social struggles. The concept as used in this work goes well beyond the classical Greek conception of Common Good, taken up by the Renaissance (J. Sanchez Parga, 2005, 378-386), and beyond the social doctrine of the Catholic Church, based on the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.

It is for this reason that a complete theoretical rethinking is necessary, on the one hand dealing with all the elements that have led the world into a systemic crisis situation and with the wearing out of a historical model; and on the other hand, redefining the objectives of a new social construct that is respectful of nature and capable of ensuring human life as a shared endeavour. As Enrique Dussel (2006) has said, what must be ensured are the production, reproduction and development of the human life of each ethical subject (each human being). This is what the Common Good of Humanity means. The ultimate reference of any paradigm of human development is life in its concrete reality, including relations with nature, which is, in fact, negated by the logic of capitalism.

There may be objections that this is a fanciful utopia. The fact is that human beings need utopias, and capitalism has destroyed utopian thinking, announcing the end of history ('there are no alternatives'), so that the search for the Common Good of Humanity (as well as a harmonious

civilization, defined in the GHA last two books edited by Leo Semashko: 2009, 2012) is indeed a utopia, in the sense of a goal that does not exist today, but that could exist tomorrow. At the same time utopia also has a dynamic dimension: there will always be a tomorrow. All political and religious regimes that claim to embody utopia end up in catastrophe. Utopia is a call to advance.⁷ It is for this reason that it is not simply a 'harmless utopia' (Evelyn Pieiller, 2011, 27). The need for it is felt by hundreds of thousands of social movements, citizen organizations, political groups, all in their own way struggling for better relations with nature and for its protection, for peasant and organic agriculture, for a social economy, for the abolition of illicit debts, for the collective taking over of the means of production and for the primacy of work over capital, for the defence of human rights, for a participatory democracy and for the recognition of the value of different cultures. The World Social Forums have made it possible to visualize this reality, which is gradually creating a new global social consciousness.

However, it is a dynamic process that requires a coherent holistic vision as the basis for coming together in action, with the aim of building a force powerful enough to reverse the dominant contemporary system in all its dimensions, economic, social, cultural and political. This is precisely what the 'Common Good of Humanity' seeks to express: a coherent theoretical basis, enabling each movement and each social and political initiative to find its place in the edifice as a whole. Achieving this cannot be the work of just a few intellectuals who think on behalf of others, but a collective work, using ideas of the past, particularly that part of the socialist tradition more challenged by capitalism, and integrating new elements, as, for example, in the GHA, collectively creating a new, harmonious worldview, consciousness and thinking in the projects of global harmony (Leo Semashko, 2009, 2012). Nor can its dissemination be the exclusive responsibility of one social organization or one avant-garde party monopolizing the truth, but rather of many anti-systemic forces, fighting for the Common Good of Humanity. (The GHA tends to work such, uniting around the mission of the conscious building a harmonious civilization dozens of international organizations: Leo Semashko, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012). Of course, many theoretical and strategic issues remain to be studied, discussed and tried out including tetrasociological theory of global harmony and harmonious civilization of GHA.

The transition

We cannot go into detail in this text, but it is worthwhile introducing, in this moment of reflection, another notion, which is the concept of 'transition'. Karl Marx developed it apropos the shift from the feudal mode of production to capitalism in Europe. It is "the particular stage of a society that is having increasing difficulty in reproducing the economic and social system on which it was founded, and seeks to reorganize itself on the basis of another system, which becomes the general form of the new conditions of existence" (Maurice Godelier, 1982,1,165). Evidently it is a question of long, but not linear processes, more or less violent according to the resistance of the social groups involved. Many analysts believe that capitalism has reached the end of its historical role because, as Karl Marx already observed, it has become a system that destroys its own bases of existence: nature and work. And this is why Samir Amin talks of 'senile capitalism', why Immanuel Wallerstein published an article in the midst of the financial crisis, saying that we were seeing 'the end of capitalism' and why István Mészáros refers to its

⁷ Apropos of utopia, Eduardo Galeano wrote: "I go forward two steps and it moves away two steps. I go forward ten steps and the horizon withdraws by ten steps. I can always go forward and I shall never reach it. What is the use of utopia? Precisely that: it is to advance." (cited by Maurice Lemoine, 2010)

incapacity to ensure the maintenance of the ‘social metabolism of humanity’ (I. Mészáros, 2008, 84).

While one can accept the idea that we are living in a transition from the capitalist mode of production to another, and that the process can be precipitated by the climate crisis, we must not forget that such a change will be the result of a social process, and this cannot be achieved without struggles and a transformation in power relationships. In other words, capitalism will not fall by itself and the convergence of all social and political struggles is a prerequisite for this to happen. History teaches us that capitalism is capable of transforming its own contradictions into support for the accumulation process. Developing a theory of the concept of transition, within the historical context of the current system’s crisis, will enable us to work out the tools for evaluating the social and political experiences now under way. This is particularly the case for Latin America where regimes have embarked on a process of change, heralding the socialism of the twenty-first century. It can also be called a harmonious civilization of our century (Leo Semashko, 2009, 2012).

The concept can also be applied to particular processes within a general evolution. Without losing the radicalism of the objectives, it is a matter of identifying actions that can lead to the desired result (i.e. another mode of human development), bearing in mind both the concrete circumstances of material development and the existing power relations in the socio-economic and political fields. A typical example is that of the extraction-based economies which, in spite of the ecological and social destruction that they cause and although very much dominated by the interests of capital, cannot be brought to a sudden halt in the progressive countries. This is because, among other things, they provide the financial backing for new policies, as is the case of Venezuela and Bolivia. The transition phase would consist of 1) introducing a long- and medium-term economic policy based on the needs of the internal market; 2) promulgating stricter ecological and social laws to counteract damage in the economic sector; 3) making users pay the costs; and 4) promoting international legislation to avoid the phenomenon of ‘comparative advantage’ that favours those whose legislation is less restrictive. In other countries that are less involved in these activities, like Ecuador, a moratorium of some months or years could be proposed, in order to negotiate a transition process with the various social movements.

Using this conceptual instrument cannot serve as a pretext for making political and ideological concessions of the social-democrat variety - in other words accepting that the development of the forces of production cannot happen without the adoption of the principles, tools and formulas of capitalism. That would mean reinforcing the power of those social classes most opposed to a change in the model, as has been the case in Brazil – in spite of advances in other fields; or, as in the socialist countries, establishing new social differences that will inevitably lengthen the transition process, as in China and in Vietnam. All this does indeed pose a more fundamental problem: how to develop productive forces with a socialist perspective, that is to say, in terms of the Common Good of Humanity? And what forces should be developed first? It is a problem that the socialist countries and progressive regimes that came into power after the Second World War, were unable to resolve; and it was the origin of their failures, as well as of the present neoliberal orientation of most of them. As Maurice Godelier said in his courses at the Catholic University of Louvain: “The drama of socialism is that it had to learn to walk with the feet of capitalism”. The idea of developing organic peasant agriculture, as was proposed in an Asian seminar at the University of Renmin in Beijing in 2010, instead of promoting the monocultures of an agro-exporting agriculture; the idea of reorganizing the local railway network in Latin

America, instead of adopting the projects of IIRSA (Initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America). These are some of the examples that could be proposed. Many others could also be worked out in order to promote a genuine transition and not just an adaptation to the prevailing system.

6 TOWARDS A UNIVERSAL DECLARATION ON THE COMMON GOOD OF HUMANITY

Another function of the concept of the Common Good of Humanity would be to prepare a Universal Declaration, within the framework of the United Nations. Obviously a simple declaration is not going to change the world, but it could serve to organize the forces for change around a project that would continue to be fleshed out. It could also serve as a useful pedagogical tool for promoting the theoretical work necessary to mobilize social movements. It would be at the same level as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This was the result of a long cultural and political process that started in the Enlightenment and at the beginning of ‘modernity’, and signified the emancipation of individuals and the recognition of their rights. It was developed by the French and US Declarations at the end of the 18th century. We know that it is not perfect. It was drawn up in a context that was heavily influenced by the social vision of the Western bourgeoisie, and it has provoked responses like the African Charter of Human Rights of the OAU and a similar initiative in the Arab world. It is used by the Western powers to establish their hegemony over the world. However, it exists: it has saved the freedom, even the lives, of lots of people, and has guided many useful decisions for the well-being of humankind. It has been improved over time, adding second and third generation rights. Nonetheless, to deal with the dangers that the planet and the human species are facing, a new equilibrium is necessary, demanding not only a broadening of human rights, but also a redefinition of the Common Good of Humanity on the basis of a new paradigm. This redefinition may be, for example, on the base of paradigm of global social harmony (Leo Semashko, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012). From this viewpoint, the Common Good of Humanity is a global social harmony, and it – is the absolute Common Good of Humanity.

The preparation of a new Universal Declaration can thus be an instrument for social and political mobilization, creating a new consciousness and serving as a basis for the convergence of social and political movements at the international level. Clearly it is a long-term task, but it needs to be started. Not only can the coming together of social movements like the World Social Forum and political parties like the Forum of São Paulo contribute by promoting such a Declaration, individual countries can also do so through their representatives in international organizations like Unesco and the Organisation of the United Nations itself. There will be a political struggle, but it is worth doing and can be seen as one of the symbolical elements of the revolution necessary for redefining the paradigm of the collective life of humanity on the planet. The symbol of such a paradigm may be "The ABC of Harmony" (Leo Semashko, 2012).

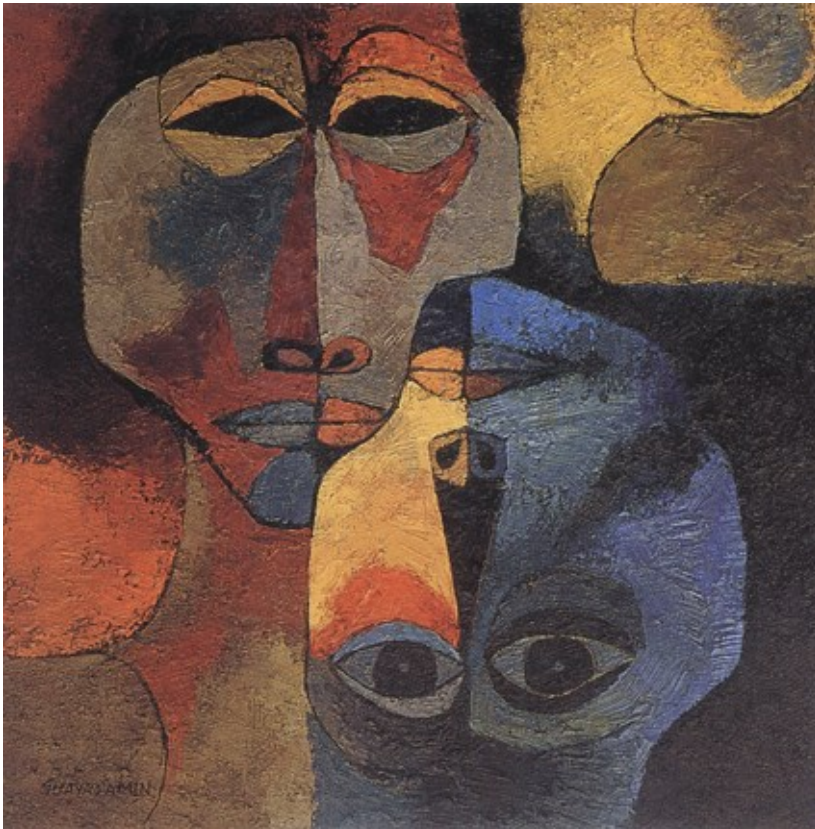
It is very important to make the links between defending ‘common goods’ like water, re-establishing the priority of a ‘Common Good’ and the vision of a new construction of the ‘Common Good of Humanity’. On the one hand, because the holistic vision embodied in the latter concept requires practical implementation - as in common goods for example - if it is to emerge from the abstract and be translated into action. On the other hand, because specific struggles must take their place in the overall plan too, in order to characterise the role they are

playing, not simply as mitigating the deficiencies of a system (thus prolonging its existence), but rather as contributing to a profound transformation - one that requires the coming together of the forces for change in order to establish the bases for the survival of humanity and the planet.

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