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Posted Date: 22 October 2026

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Article

Manifesto: Mysticism and (R)evolution: Silence, Word, Dialectics, and the Earth Constitution

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Abstract

In this essay, I try to describe the most fundamental dimensions of our human situation, encompassed as it is by astonishing depths and absolute mysteries. Five primary aspects of this situation can be symbolized under the key terms “mysticism,” “holism,” “logos,” “freedom,” and “hope.” I try to indicate how these dimensions, along with the dialectics of critical social theory, demand that human beings unite under the Constitution for the Federation of Earth. Both critical social theory and mysticism share something in common that is absolutely fundamental—they open human beings to their utopian horizon.

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Overview

In this essay, I try to describe the most fundamental dimensions of our human situation, encompassed as it is by astonishing depths and absolute mysteries. Five primary aspects of this situation can be symbolized under the key terms “mysticism,” “holism,” “logos,” “freedom,” and “hope.” I try to indicate how these dimensions, along with the dialectics of critical social theory, demand that human beings unite under the *Constitution for the Federation of Earth*. Both critical social theory and mysticism share something in common that is absolutely fundamental—they open human beings to their utopian horizon.

The Earth Constitution recognizes humanity as a community within which every participant has dignity, that is, in political terms, *universal human rights*. And this community with its dignity are possible because the depths of the whole appear in every part. “Being” is not a thing or some quality that all things share. It is a symbol of the depths in which the many and the One arise together in indivisible communion. Critical social theory (and its contemporary prodigy World Systems Theory) in turn, makes clear the how and why an evolutionary upsurge is not rapidly occurring with humanity as a whole, why human awareness resists becoming Cosmic. Critical social theory fosters system change, based on dignity. This dual (r)evolutionary approach unblocks and empowers our emergent human destiny.

Yet “Being” (the Cosmos) has evolved as *human* being. Something new has entered the Cosmos in the form of freedom and self-aware reflection that appears fundamental to the evolutionary upsurge of cosmic being. Philosopher Hans Jonas intuits the implications of the emergence of human freedom: “With the appearance of man, transcendence awakened to itself and henceforth accompanies his doings with the bated breath of suspense, hoping and beckoning, rejoicing and grieving, approving and frowning—and, I daresay, making itself felt to him even while not intervening in the dynamics of his worldly scene” (1996, 27).

Human beings occupy an utterly unique position in the Cosmos that has evolved us. The Cosmos has created a creature of freedom with whom it does not and cannot interfere, and yet it appears that the very destiny of the Cosmos is linked to the fulfillment (or abuse) of this human freedom. In an utterly mysterious way, each of us is both universal and particular. Philosopher Paul Ricoeur observes that there is a dimension of our humanity, our “transcendence,” within which “we must

speak of infinitude as much as human finitude" (1986, 4). To think of my body as simply representing finitude, he writes, is to miss the fact that the body mediates my openness to the world and that "the world is primarily not the boundary of my experience but its correlate" (ibid., 20). Self and world are necessary to one another as dynamic "correlates" of one, evolving reality. The "is" and the "ought," the finite and the infinite—deeply intertwined, separate yet inseparable. The mystery of humanity dawns upon the world of the 21st century and demands that we unite under the principle of unity in diversity.

The modes of human transcendence intimated by these thinkers means that each person lives as a microcosm of all persons. We are one humanity living together on the Earth and our future depends on our realization and embrace of these truths. Ricoeur describes the fundamental implications of this deeper human "lifeworld" by declaring that the openness of my purposes involves my fundamental accessibility to all values of all men in all cultures: "My field of motivation is open to the whole range of the human. This is the meaning of the famous statement: 'Nothing human is foreign to me.' I am capable of every virtue and every vice; no sign of man is radically incomprehensible, no language is radically untranslatable, no work of art to which my taste cannot spread. My humanity is my essential community with all that is human outside myself; that community makes every man my like" (ibid., 60-61).

The oneness of humanity is complemented by the Oneness of our planetary ecosystem and the oneness of the Cosmos giving rise to the realization, emphasized by Swimme and Berry, that "Depth Communication of primordial existence is the reality at the foundation of all being.... The inner depths of each being in the universe are activated by the surrounding universe" (2011, 41). We are embedded with both one another and the whole, and activated in our depths by this integration. This essay strives for "depth communication of primordial existence," toward a solidarity manifest in the drive for a planetary community of law, justice, and freedom.

As social beings we have always lived within communities with shared "lifeworlds" that included assumptions about the world, life, meaning, good and evil, our community, the Cosmos, etc. I argue in this essay that it is high-time for humanity to unite under a generic lifeworld that embraces our unity in diversity, sharing a common set of assumptions such as that we are all human, that we are all socially constituted beings, that we are all linguistic beings, that we live within an emergent (r)evolutionary cosmic context, and that we share a common freedom of thought and action that makes us morally responsible beings and reveals an *unfathomable dignity* (despite some obvious differences about details of these things).

Our common human lifeworld also needs to be aware of the unsayable immediacy and intensity of existence that can be termed "the mystical dimension," which embraces our lifeworlds, that constitutes our dignity, and contributes to awareness of genuine hope for the future. But this is not all. As I have argued in many books and articles since publication of *Millennium Dawn: The Philosophy of Planetary Crisis and Human Liberation* (2005), our planetary crisis requires activation across three dimensions. We need to expand critical social theory, we need to seek spiritual growth toward compassion and love, and we need nonviolent, direct dialectical action for ratification of the Earth Constitution. This essay will explore all three of these dimensions.

Such transformative action is not the case within the present world system, nor with the fragmented and distorted lifeworlds around our planet. The nations are largely not founded on human dignity but upon *contingent historical circumstances* as well as arbitrary wealth and power divisions. And the dominant global economic system that commodifies all human beings in the service of wealth extraction, mindless competition, and endless consumption again alienates humanity from our deeper possibilities that can only begin to be actualized through a unified planetary civilization premised on universal human dignity, on our common humanity, on what Karl Marx called our "species-being." But we are already jumping to the conclusions emerging from our fundamental human situation. Let us retread by examining a few fundamental features of this situation.

Lifeworld and system

“Lifeworld” can mean the shared horizon of meaning and “sensibility” through which groups of people live everyday lives in communities of various sizes. The idea was made famous by Edmund Husserl who attempted to “suspend” everyday assumptions (on which even science was based) and ground human awareness on a more primordial level that he called the lifeworld (*lebenswelt*). The concept was expanded by a number of social thinkers, including Jürgen Habermas, to include the shared set of linguistically mediated assumptions, patterns of thought and action, and cultural frameworks that constitute human communities of various dimensions.

Habermas (1984) argues that the lifeworld of modern humanity, as reflected in our governmental and bureaucratic systems, has been “colonized” by an instrumental and technological rationality that has dire consequences for human beings, including capitalistic commodification, mechanization of life through systems of domination and control, endless wars, and environmental destruction. Out of the rise of science in the 17th century, culminating in Newton’s *Principia Mathematica* of 1687, there developed a world-view concerning nature, reasoning, and human purposes that more or less consciously became imposed upon (or integrated into) the lifeworlds of modern people. Many thinkers have summed up these assumptions under the heading of “technocratic and/or instrumental rationality.”

Two giant systems deriving from these “modernist” assumptions served to colonize the lifeworlds of persons and communities around our planet: the system of autonomous, militarized nation-states (often referred to as “the Westphalian system”) and the system of capitalism that proceeded to commodify every dimension of human existence. The sociology known as “World Systems Theory,” born as a specific discipline during the 1970s and 80s, studies the evolution of world systems composed of these two interrelated dimensions that culminated in today’s dominant world system. For example, a major work of World Systems Theory (with which I agree in many ways), is *Global Formation: Structures of World Economy* (1995) by Christopher Chase-Dunn.

Chase-Dunn observes that “the system of unequally powerful and competing nation states is part of the competitive struggle of capitalism, and thus wars and geopolitics are a systematic part of capitalist dynamics” (61). He understands that a way to transcend the instrumental rationality of capitalism is to foster the “collective rationality” arising from our common humanity. He identifies this collective rationality with “socialism” in which “investment decisions and exchange terms are democratically determined using a calculus of social need” (34). Socialism has failed in particular states because “the ability of any single national society to construct collective rationality is limited by its interaction within the larger system” (36).

Max Weber famously mounted a major critique of the “rationalization” process that began in Europe with the Renaissance and ended, Weber said, in an “iron cage” of late capitalism that involved both a “loss of freedom” and a “loss of meaning.” Karl Marx had also promoted a version of this process identifying the economic system of capitalism as the main dimension that served to block, distort, and alienate persons from actualizing a world premised on our common human potential for living, producing, and exchanging from our “species-being,” that is, from our common humanity. We have in these thinkers the tradition of “critical social theory” understanding that the current world system negatively impacts our capacity to actualize our common human potential in a variety of ways. The important rise of so-called “Integral Theory” since the 1960s, associated with Ken Wilber and others that focuses on the *evolution of consciousness* and society, needs to interface with dialectical social thought, especially world systems theory, if we truly desire a credible future for our human project.

Habermas analyzed the presuppositions of the very possibility of language in works such as *On the Pragmatics of Communication* (1998), arriving at the insight that our lifeworlds (all of which are informed by language) embody a dimension of “communicative rationality” that is more primordial than, and in many ways fundamentally opposed to, the technological rationality that has colonized the lifeworlds of modern persons. We can therefore critique and overcome the apparent dead end for humanity identified by Max Weber by bringing forward the immense potential of our primordial human lifeworld informed by communicative rationality. This can provide a grounding for human

liberation from the technocratic bureaucratization of nation-states and the destructive commodification and wars of the capitalist system. This will give us both authentic democracy and a world system predicated on genuine moral relations among human beings, rather than a world predicted on power, wealth, and pervasive dehumanization.

The result of this understanding of the primordial nature of communicative action is that human languages can and should include a “dialogue directed toward mutual understanding,” in which people can transcend their cultural, religious, and narrow set of seemingly incommensurable differentiations from others and arrive at a mutual understanding that brings them ever closer to a shared human lifeworld. Communicative action has the potential to actualize our understanding of ourselves on this planet as a *common humanity*, sharing not only a generic common human lifeworld but also (I am adding in this essay) the realization that our lifeworlds arise from common “mystical” groundless-ground, from the depths of the Cosmos.

Habermas, who claims no religious allegiances, affirms this unity of self and others. “What raises us out of nature” and makes us human, he declares, is language, and this would not have been possible unless “universal and unconstrained consensus” was posited as it’s *a priori*. The “I” and the “thou” are equally primordial, and our “ego identities” are always “reciprocally constituted” (1972, 314). He maintains that “the utopian perspective of reconciliation and freedom is ingrained in the conditions for communicative sociation of individuals; it is built into the linguistic mechanism of the reproduction of the species” (1984, 398). At the heart of *language* itself lies a “utopian” potential, and we will see below that at the heart of human *freedom* there lies this same potential, and, finally, within the *mystical context* of all human life, we experience yet another dimension of our astonishing utopian potential—all truly grounds for hope, and all grounds for an active (r)evolutionary life.

In a work of great brilliance titled in English *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1995), Habermas traces the failure of thinkers to intelligibly comprehend our modern situation from the assumptions, first made by Descartes in the 17th century, that subject and object are independent realities and that we begin, as human thinkers and actors, first and foremost from our own consciousness with its technocratic quest for certainty and its assumption of determinism regarding the realm of matter—what Descartes called “Extended Substance.” Rather, subject and object belong together in a primordial way that establishes the very possibility of our possessing consciousness of ourselves as independent egos, all this following from the intrinsically social nature of language and its communicative presuppositions. As a result of the onslaught of technocratic rationality, we remain colonized by instrumental and bureaucratic systems that impose “system imperatives” on humanity, such as endless wars, the accumulation of planetary wealth in fewer and fewer hands, the destruction of our planetary ecosystem, and widespread moral corruption (Cf. 2003).

Nevertheless, I have critiqued Habermas for failing to deal with the larger world of human “spirituality,” with religion in any truly perceptive way, or with the whole question of the “limits of language” and its meaning for human life. One essay in which I undertake this is titled: “Habermas and the Awareness of What is Missing: Secular Reason Draws a Blank” (2017). Habermas fails in some ways to grapple properly with these aspects of our human situation. His work continued, in my view, to operate within the post-Kantian orientation that repudiates “metaphysics” (all talk about the ultimate nature of things and our human place within that context), which he also apparently associated with the discourse of most religions. However, I hope to show below that repudiation of dogmatic metaphysics does not prevent our engaging with a *symbolic dimension* connected with spirituality and with the whole question of “the mystical” or direct insight into the depths (the groundless-ground) of existence.

In at least five of my books (and dozens of essays), from the time of *Ascent to Freedom: Practical and Philosophical Foundations of Democratic World Law* (2008) to my recent *Human Dignity and World Order: The Holistic Foundations of Global Democracy* (2024), I have articulated the ways in which the world system, as a dynamic interface of militarized, autonomous nation-states integrated with a global capitalist economic system, has dominated the world as a war-system and decimated our planet as a viable ecosystem (cf. Martin, 2021). These dual assumptions (sovereign nation-states and

capitalism) are destroying our world and the future of humanity. They have colonized our lifeworlds to the point where people take their absurdities as a “normal” and “natural” part of human life. My books have analyzed this broken world system and have laid the dialectical foundations for democratic world law under a Constitution for the Federation of Earth.

Habermas was not against “systems,” which he held to be necessary in all large complex societies such as we have around the world today. But systems can be premised on the holism of our common humanity and on a common good recognizing the fundamentally social nature of all persons and the commonality of our needs for food, clothing, housing, health-care, education, meaningful leisure, a healthy environment, and a world in which war has been abolished. In *The Postnational Constellation* (2001), he explicitly declares that the phenomenon of “globalization” has called the “constellation of sovereign nation-states” into question and has opened us for new world system possibilities.

Yet we face immense difficulties because the nation-state has become an idolatrous sacred icon for most of the peoples of Earth. Today, Swimme and Berry point out, “National boundaries are sacred. To be born within this sacred territory is to be a citizen. The territory must be defended at whatever cost. This contraction of sacred territory from the entire range of the natural world goes with a contraction of the concept of species unity in the human order” (2011, 213). The very existence of absolutely “sovereign” nation-states violates our “unity in the human order.” It violates our species unity and our ecosystem unity. To become more fully human requires that we overcome this idolatry and discover the sanctity of our common humanity and the sanctity of our planetary ecosystem.

The world system envisioned by the *Constitution for the Federation of Earth* is able to abolish war, disarm the nations, protect universal human rights, establish reasonable economic equality among all peoples, and restore our global environment precisely because it is founded on our *common humanity and dignity*, and not on partial, fragmenting assumptions that we find in the system of sovereign states and in globalized economy based on competition for the accumulation of private and/or national wealth. The Earth Constitution offers a world system premised not only on our common humanity but one that opens the genuine possibility, for the first time in history, for governmental processes to be premised on communicative rationality, or what Chase-Dunn calls “collective rationality,” rather than on idolatrous privilege, race, religion, wealth, power, or other partial egoistic identifications.

Critical Social Theory, such as we find in the work of Habermas and others, offers humanity a very real dimension of hope. We understand that *reason* is not always in the service of passions, as David Hume claimed in the 18th century, and that reason is not limited to a technological rationality that dehumanizes, manipulates, and controls human beings in the service of wealth and power, as Herbert Marcuse showed, for example, in *One Dimensional Man* (1964), within a critical tradition enlarged by the work of Habermas and many others since. Reason can be understood as a cosmic gift (Errol E. Harris, 1992), as premised on “collective rationality” (Chase-Dunn, 1998), or as the “ideal speech situation” presupposed by all communication (Habermas, 1998) that has dimensions far beyond its narrow technological aspect. As such, it is a source of genuine hope, especially when linked to a vibrant spirituality living with openness to the depths of our cosmic existence.

The awareness of what is missing: secular reason draws a blank

This subsection is titled with the name of my 2017 article posted on Academia.edu because it mounts a fundamental critique of Habermas’s work, the anti-metaphysical stance of which fails to address the larger context of our human situation. It is not that we should return to classical dogmatic metaphysics (which, Habermas agrees, would be impossible in the light of our present widespread sophistication concerning hermeneutics, conceptual horizons, and epistemological limitations). Rather, the very critique of metaphysics from Kant onward, in concert with our growing understanding of hermeneutics, the role of conceptual horizons, and the limits of epistemology, has opened up for us vast dimensions of human awareness that modernity has buried, obscured, or often dismissed as “nonsense.” The opening of this dimension offers us immense hope.

Millennium Dawn distinguishes between “unitive mysticism” and what it calls “integrative mysticism.” Many writers about mysticism, such as Walter Stace in his book, *Teachings of the Mystics* (1960), argue that “introvertive mysticism” (in which subject and object were gone from awareness and there remained only “oneness”) was a higher spiritual form than “extrovertive mysticism,” in which some duality in awareness of the world remained within the unitive experience, for example, in moments of inner peace, personal exaltation, or a sense of the sacred. I argued in *Millennium Dawn* that the reverse is the case—that our subject-object awareness was not an inferior form of awareness but remains crucial to a full spirituality of human existence. I still maintain this distinction today and will try to explain why it is so important with respect to the future and to hope.

My account here is not primarily about the mysticism that is practiced by thousands of meditative groups and millions of persons in the movement sometimes known as “postmodern progressive spirituality” that today operates in the USA and around the globe, often drawing creatively on the Buddhist and Hindu traditions. This movement, led by spiritual writers, past and present, such as D.T. Suzuki, Alan Watts, Eckhart Tolle, Ken Wilber, Stanislov Groff, David Loy or Ervin Laszlo, validly explores the wonderful possibilities of meditation and spiritual practices. Rather, I want to emphasize the unsayable immediacy embracing every moment of existence, often pointed to in Zen Buddhism.

This cultural and spiritual movement by and large embraces the framework known as *Integral Philosophy* and the related world-view called *Spiral Dynamics*. In such books as *Integral Spirituality* (2007), Ken Wilber organizes integral philosophy through a four quadrant chart that he calls “AQAL” (all quadrants all levels). The claim is that evolution toward ever greater holism is happening in all four quadrants: in selfhood, culture, physical science, and human organizational systems. Yet Wilber himself and the many advocates of Integral Philosophy largely ignore the organizational systems quadrant and advocate for cultural and personal evolutionary development. I argue that this is a huge mistake, and that is why we absolutely need dialectical social philosophy as broadly sketched above in terms of the work of Habermas and others. The present structures within the organizational systems quadrant (capitalism and sovereign states) actively inhibit progress in the other three quadrants of the AQAL chart (cf. Martin 2024, sect. 8.6). We also need a different form of mysticism from the non-dual orientation that this movement emphasizes. It is this more immediate and holistic mysticism that I attempt to outline in this essay.

J. Krishnamurti, whose books such as *Think on These Things* I read as a young man, lived creatively within the embrace of the absolute mystery of existence that permeates our lives (but which cannot be said)—and this living (beyond all formal religion), he insisted, is what it means to be truly religious (1964, 43-4). Similarly, in *The Inward Morning*, philosopher H.G. Bugbee declared, “in wonder reality begins to sink in. It sets us to a questioning which can only find conclusive answer in terms of our deepening of our response to things, which is the deepening, and not the allaying, of wonder” (1976, 162). Bugbee’s philosophical journal uses the metaphor of human life as a “wilderness” to which we spiritually awaken and within which we practice a philosophical hermeneutics of growth, reverence, and insight, again, indicating a way of life that might be called “truly religious.”

Jewish philosopher Eric Gutkind declared that mysticism is not an escape from the I-Thou or subject-object relation into a Oneness beyond the world. He calls this escapism “reductive mysticism,” which is gone, a relic of the past. Today we need a “new unification” that he calls “integrative mysticism.” We need a new immediacy, more immediate than mere things. The body and existence become “transparent,” in an immediacy transcending such divisions (1969, 80ff). Nevertheless, I maintain that at the same time that we are immersed in absolute mystery, we are immersed in language, in meaning, in the gigantic power of the Logos. The two go together. The present essay attempts to explore relations between Silence and Word, and the role of the immense freedom (and corresponding hope) emerging from the cosmic process.

I want to affirm here that mysticism is not most basically an altered state of consciousness brought about through meditation, mindfulness, or psychedelics, although these can all reveal valid

dimensions of spirituality. Mysticism is, rather, awareness of the unspeakable depth within our everyday lives that is simply ignored by most people. So-called non-dual mysticism is a subsection of the vast world-embracing mysticism ("Integrative Mysticism") that confronts us at every turn, night and day. Our difficulty remains, as philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, put it, that "human beings are entangled all unknowing in the net of language." Language tends to make us think that what it has to say sums up the possibilities of human awareness. But our lifeworld need-not be entirely subsumed within language, culture, traditions, etc. The lifeworld can and should be immersed within, and expressive of, the absolute mystery of existence—the unsayable immediacy of existence.

Mysticism means that there is a dimension of all human experience that cannot be gotten into language. It is "apophatic" experience. It involves a direct realization of the ineffable, the unsayable. We can talk *about* mysticism, but all our talk cannot capture any "what" that can be attributed to mysticism. Language can point to the ineffable. It can symbolize the ineffable. "Being" can be used as a symbol but is not a "what" that can be described. Whole and part, the absolute mystery and the "what," intersect and interpenetrate in the unsayable dynamical and evolving communion of the whole.

Symbols, as Paul Tillich and Karl Jaspers taught us, may point beyond themselves to "depths" that cannot be named. These depths cannot be objectified. Our everyday language, our lifeworld, is full of such symbols as well as so-called "ordinary certainties" (cf. Wittgenstein, 1969). Symbols can embody our utopian human potential, our deeper understanding. Hans Jonas declares, "*This experience of the potential, mediated by symbols, is precisely what is meant by 'understanding'*" (2010, 249, italics his). For Tillich, "every assertion about being-itself is either metaphorical or symbolic" (1987, 185). Our ordinary certainties can therefore be infused with wonder, with astonishment, with the absolute mystery—and this has tremendous implications as I will try to indicate.

Dogmatic metaphysical idealism and materialism are both erroneous. No final articulation of the relation between mind and matter is any longer credible. Nevertheless, we recognize that the mind and the world arise together and are meant for one another. Jaspers affirms that "there is no separated duality of subjectivity and objectivity. Both are inseparably bound together. The presence of Being is in movement which grasps and permeates subject and object simultaneously" (1959, 23). He calls this "The encompassing" (*das Umgreifende*), but this is not a thing, for all language tends to mislead us into taking names and nouns as fixed essences rather than as dynamic processes.

Ernst Bloch expresses this point well: "The world-substance, mundane matter itself, is not yet finished and complete, but persists in a utopian-open state, i.e., a state in which its self-identity is not yet manifest" (1970, 96). The world (Jaspers uses the symbol "the Encompassing" and Tillich often uses the symbol "God" or sometimes "the God beyond God") is one dynamic dimension embracing many dualities embracing and intersecting our lifeworlds. As Jaspers puts our experience in relation to the Encompassing: "the situation in which we first authentically experience being *qua* being as something given to us incomprehensible, impenetrable, something that precedes all thinking and comes to meet us" (1971, 58).

What Tillich calls "symbols" Jaspers often terms "cyphers." The cypher involves what I am calling "Word," the dimension of language and meaning, but at the same time mysticism: direct awareness of unsayable absolute mystery to which the cipher points. For Jaspers, "The World and everything that occurs within it is a mystery." All superstition and "mania for mystery" end "where genuine astonishment begins. Philosophy illuminates the mystery and brings it completely into consciousness. It begins with astonishment and increases the astonishment" (1959, 37).

Symbols and ciphers, forming a large part of language, point beyond language to what Tillich calls "the dimension of depth." We must "be grasped by" that which is symbolized by this phrase. Tillich affirms that, "No one can experience depth without stopping and becoming aware of himself. Only if he has moments in which he does not care about what comes next can he experience the meaning of this moment here and now and ask himself about the meaning of his life" (1987, 3).

Symbols can grasp us, in moments of ultimate concern and openness, unveiling for us the “experience of depth” and hence the meaning of being human.

This experience (or set of experiences) can never be an “object” of knowledge. It is, indeed, nothing (no-thing) and therefore, as many Buddhist traditions proclaim, the encompassing ultimate can be symbolized as *Śūnyatā*, emptiness—beyond thought, language, and any possible conceptualization. However, I am not only talking about those rare persons who experience “mystical rapture” and are caught up in union with the One beyond a subject-object dualism. These are only a tiny fragment of something that is totally present to all our states of consciousness, a “groundless-ground” that is self-evidently at the very foundations of our everyday awareness. *Śūnyatā* is everywhere and nowhere, here and now. That is where the “ocean of mysticism” lies. We are like fish that swim in that ocean.

Both Western and Eastern mystics testify that the unsayable is “experienced” immediately and directly in a manner prior to language and thought. It is therefore a kind of “knowing” that is an “unknowing.” As Nicolas of Cusa in the 15th century put it in the title of his famous book *De Docta Ignorantia* (*On Learned Ignorance*), the more we awaken to the absolute mystery, the more we know that we do not know. If knowing, or experiencing, or thinking requires a subject that comprehends an object, then the mystical awakening is *not* a knowing, experiencing, or thinking. It cannot be thought or spoken. Infinity permeates our everyday experience in all its dimensions as I will try to indicate.

Even “communicative reason,” insofar as it retains the dogma that it is “secular” (and may claim no need of religious symbols or the multiplicity of spiritual experiences associated with religion) will draw a blank here and fall silent. Indeed, it can fall silent through an openness that awakens us to the absolute mystery that is the context of all thought and reason, or it can fall silent because it refuses to consider that anything might lie beyond the purview of language and rationality. The latter response (by Habermas and others) who want to minimize the powerful “irrational” tendencies of the human mind, leads to this dogma. They do not realize that the non-rational (the apophatic) is not irrational, nor in the slightest opposed to reason. For even reason (the famous Logos of Western thought) is encompassed by the mystery. To limit our lifeworld to language and its fundamental communicative rationality is to mutilate our human situation.

Plato long ago (5th c. BCE) pointed out the significance of the *Logos* in human life (that is, “reason, word, form, language”). The object of thought (*dianoia*, *noesis*), for Plato, is form (*eidos*). The intelligibility of the world is found in its forms—from trees, clouds, and stars to what the Medievals later called “Transcendentals” like Truth, Beauty and Goodness. Nevertheless, ultimately, in *Republic* 509b, Plato places the Good, which is the ultimate source of being (*ousia*), “beyond being” (*hyperousia*). As Plato makes clear in the *Symposium* and other works, insofar as we can realize truth, beauty, or goodness in our lives, we are participating in “ultimate reality”—in an Absolute that permeates all existence.

We will see below that the Word (Logos), emerging from the silence of mysticism, can enhance and elaborate the absolute mystery as it issues forth into an open future, the direction for which we human beings have some responsibility and some influence. The Unsayable of mysticism and the Word of language together can permeate our lifeworlds and unveil the lineaments of our human situation. They do not supply mundane answers or new metaphysical certainties, but rather empower our creative engagement with one another and with the future without in the slightest mitigating the absolute mysteries of existence. As Karl Jaspers expresses this, “The finite world no longer appears closed upon itself but in all its boundaries opens into Transcendence. In the encounter with Transcendence reason fulfills itself” (1959, 11).

Nevertheless, the source of all things for Plato is “beyond being.” It is also the *Good*, the ultimate object of our longings, aspirations, and desires. Neoplatonists such as Plotinus (3rd c. CE) and Dionysius the Areopagite (5th c. CE), pursued this “beyond being” to the very depths of awareness. The One, the unsayable, unthinkable whole, for Plotinus, is “beyond being.” It is therefore, he declares, “a One without a second.” It is not opposed to “two,” nor to anything that can be spoken

about. Dionysius exclaims: "Concerning this Super-Essential Godhead we must not dare, as I have said, to speak, or even to form any conception Thereof" (1979, 53).

Meister Eckhart in the 14th c. CE declares: "You should love him as he is a non-God, a non-spirit, a nonperson, a nonimage, but as he is a pure, unmixed bright 'One,' separated from all duality; and in that One we should eternally sink down, out of 'something' into 'nothing'" (Sermon 83). Hence, for many mystics, the word "God" need not be used, as it is not generally used in Buddhism. This awareness of "nothing" is not a "nothing" that is the object of a subjective thought or feeling, for it is no-thing at all. Yet, perhaps the main point of most mystics is that direct awareness of this "nothing" is the most immediate and obvious experience that we could possibly have—our immediate participation in "existence" itself. This awareness is, at the same time, self-transforming and world-transforming. It embraces life within a holistic "fullness/emptiness" providing not only inner peace but direction and values often symbolized by the words "evolutionary holism."

Sheer existence, transcendental self, and the demand for Earth Federation

In the 18th century Immanuel Kant elaborated a main theme of his monumental *Critique of Pure Reason* (CPR, 1781) around the idea that "existence is not a predicate," that much of what we attribute to the world is supplied by the a priori structures of the mind, including the idea of existence. His famous example states: "A hundred real thalers [dollars] do not contain the least coin more than a hundred possible thalers." To say that a hundred real thalers "exists" is not to add anything to the concept of thalers (A 599=B 627). So it is with all things that "exist."

We can describe every detail of a tree that exists, every atom of its "whatness," but cannot say anything about its "thatness," its sheer existence that would distinguish the existing tree from the many concepts by which we have defined it. The difference between what we can say of things and their existence is *no conceptual or cognitive difference*: it cannot be said. The absolute mystery, the unsayable apophatic awareness, therefore, permeates our very being everywhere and nowhere. Sheer "existence" in itself is incomprehensible: it is nothing (no-thing)—an astonishing absolute mystery permeating our very being and every aspect of our lives. However, Kant did not draw this conclusion that the depths of reality permeate our lifeworlds, rather, he saw ultimate "reality" as forever hidden from reason in an "Intelligible ("Noumenal") World" severed from us by the conditioned nature of the human mind.

On the other hand Kant argued that our compelling connection with the unknowable (Noumenal) dimension of reality was through the "freedom" which breaks into the awareness of every normal person as an absolute command to "do what is right regardless of inclinations." What is right is to treat each person as an "end in themselves, never merely as a means." Persons have "dignity" precisely because they are moral creatures informed by the same freedom as all others. According to Kant, this absolute value (and command) comes from the depths of existence beyond the everyday empirical world. Tillich similarly puts sheer existence together with the "ought": "The unconditional demand ...confronts the power and impotence of being with justice, arising from the demand. And yet, the contrast is not absolute, for the ought is the fulfillment of the is. *Justice is the true power of being*. In it, the intention of the origin is fulfilled" (1987, 145).

In several of his late essays, Kant affirms that ultimate implication for humanity of this cosmic-divine command is to join with others in an "earth federation" that ends all war, thereby *making possible* a morally-informed existence for all persons (cf. Kant 1983). Only an earth federation can make this moral human community, this "Kingdom of Ends," possible, for the structure of independent sovereign nation-states, recognizing no enforceable laws above themselves, is inherently, Kant correctly maintained, a "war-system." Even when they are not at war, there is no protection against preemptive attacks and new wars, and hence, they really remain in a condition of war all the time. Therefore, morality, the command of justice (Tillich) or the command to respect human dignity (Kant), declares Earth Federation under enforceable law as an ultimate moral imperative. Mysticism does not give us this command directly, morality (human freedom) commands this. Is there a relation between our utterly mysterious existence and our equally mysterious freedom?

Kant identified human consciousness (a nexus of freedom and reason) as flowing from the “Transcendental Unity of Apperception” (CPR, A107-110 = B131-136). We could not be conscious of ourselves as “one selfhood” enduring throughout life, nor of the world as “one world” that is the object of all knowledge, science, and inquiry, without this “transcendental self-unity” that breaks into life, and defines self-aware human life—that makes experience and knowledge possible, yet is itself beyond space and time. (If our awareness was *entirely* part of the flow of time then we could not be aware of that flow.) The transcendental self, he pointed out, is not the empirical ego by which we usually identify ourselves. In the century following Kant, this self-awareness (awareness of oneself as aware), identified so clearly by Descartes and clarified by Kant’s transcendental unity of consciousness, inspired Hegel and others to observe that this self-aware freedom would not be possible if “Infinity” did not pervasively intersect our lives to make this mind-body duality and its freedom possible.

20th century thinkers such as Errol E. Harris emphasize the fact that this “transcendental ego” must be distinguished from the “empirical ego.” The empirical self is within space and time, subject to aging and death. It appears ephemeral, fleeting, and insignificant. A creative “personhood,” on the other hand, is possible that involves transformation of the empirical self into dynamic *cosmic awareness* identifying with the transcendental cosmic unity that animates our lives and manifests our dignity as microcosms of the macrocosm. This creative personhood, actively promoting the unity in diversity of humankind within an Earth Constitution, is animated by “rational love” (1988, 163). We become motivated by the non-attached love of existence, love of humanity, the goal of human unity in diversity, and the love of truth, beauty and goodness.

Many writers, such as Ken Wilber in *Finding Radical Wholeness* (2024) have pointed to the significance of this realization. Yet Wilber sees this awareness of transcendental selfhood (that he calls *turiya*) as a step on the way to full non-dual union (*turiyatita*). Such thinkers, following much of Buddhism, assert that the “self” and its apparent aspirations and values are “illusions.” This stance is incorrect and is damaging to the cosmic upsurge that finds self-awareness in us. Wilber’s AQAL chart, described in detail in *Integral Spirituality* (2007), reveals levels of human growth toward holism across its four quadrants. Yet it envisions a *passive* evolutionary growth process and largely omits the (r)evolutionary dimensions of human action directed toward the dynamic integration of humanity.

For Kant, Harris (and others), the transcendental ego, making possible all knowledge and rational comprehension, yet itself transcending space and time, appears as “the whole process” (the Cosmos) become conscious of itself in us. As Harris puts this in *The Reality of Time*: “Thus, our consciousness of ourselves is at the same time the consciousness of the world and the world’s consciousness of itself” (1988, 104). Swimme and Berry write that, “The mind that searches for contact with the Milky Way is the very mind of the Milky Way galaxy in search of its inner depths” (2011, 45) In *The Phenomenon of Man*, Teilhard de Chardin concurs: “Man discovers that he is nothing else than evolution become conscious of itself” (1959, 221).

In *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo observes that “the Universe....creates a self-conscious concentration of the All through which it can aspire” (1970, 45). With the advent of such “cosmic consciousness,” it begins to dawn on us that the Cosmos has given birth to us with a purpose (cf. McIntosh, 2012). We have a role within the (r)evolutionary meaning of existence itself. As theologian Ilia Delio expresses this, “the human person is therefore essential to the continuation of evolution because we are evolution on the level of self-reflective thought” (2023, 31).

The very possibility of our being a self-aware empirical ego stems from this silent, unsayable awareness of transcendental (cosmic) consciousness at the heart of all we say, think, or do. The Cosmos aspires through us. Our freedom stems directly from this self-awareness: including the command that we create a holistic, morally grounded world that embodies an Earth Federation, which Kant called a planetary “Kingdom of Ends,” that is, an Earth-community of “inter-dependence” in which we all respect one another’s dignity and live from our common humanity rather than from an illusory and fragmented egoism of nations, races, classes, genders, individual superiority, or other ideologies.

The transcendental self remains unsayable (it is the presupposition of all possible sayings, all language). Here again we experience the mystical. In the closing remarks of his 1921 book *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (sections 5, 6, and 7), philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein considers our existence as conscious beings. He declares that the “metaphysical subject” (i.e., Kant’s transcendental self) is outside space and time—it cannot be said, conceptualized, or comprehended. This transcendental self is a “point without extension.... at the limit of the world, and not part of it” (sections 5.64, 5.641).

It is “exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field,” Wittgenstein states. “The subject does not belong to the world,” just as the eye that sees does not belong to the visual field. “There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.” Human subjectivity (that is the Cosmos, as Harris declares, that has become conscious of itself in us), arises through the transcendental unity of consciousness that makes awareness of the entire world possible. This transcendental selfhood, which is inseparable from human freedom (that makes language and knowledge possible) is utterly unknowable and unsayable. “Ethics,” Wittgenstein declares in the *Tractatus*, “is transcendental,” for “the sense of the world must lie outside the world.”

In his conclusion to the *Tractatus* (section 6) Wittgenstein declares, “It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists.” He affirms: “There are indeed things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical.” Moreover, “The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies *outside* space and time.” And the very last line of this book (section 7) states, “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.” Like the unsayable subject that makes experience of the world possible for Wittgenstein (i.e., Kant’s transcendental unity), so the very fact that anything at all exists is utterly unsayable and unthinkable. Our entire lifeworld is embraced by these absolute mysteries.

In my 2024 book, *Human Dignity and World Order*, I tried to show this “outside space and time” in terms of the awareness of an *infinity* that permeates our human situation, an idea that is also urged by a number of 20th century thinkers such as Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur, Errol E. Harris, and Raimon Panikkar. Nicolas of Cusa himself had reflected deeply on the idea of “infinity” in order to reveal *de docta ignorantia*. In *Human Dignity*, I quote Harris’ 1973 book *Atheism and Theism*: “I could not be aware of myself as finite unless I were aware of an infinite, and I could not be aware of that unless it were immanent already in my thought. It is through immanence in consciousness of the absolute reality that consciousness is self-transcendent” (66). Hegel, of course, agreed, and based his entire dialectical vision of world-development on this understanding.

Language (and human understanding) can only objectify finite realities: such as people, trees, oceans, planets, stars, or even the space-time Cosmos. Infinity permeates our every waking moment (as Hegel understood). However, it can only be symbolized, never objectified. The emergent subject-object continuum that characterizes human beings remains permeated by infinity in every thought, action, or moment of our lives. We can symbolize it, but we cannot say it. We can describe finite things because they have a limited “what” that can be investigated at length. However, we can also live our lives with a direct, unsayable, awareness of the infinity that permeates all finitude. Subject and object inseparably belong together as dimensions of the whole—just as all human beings belong together as children of the Cosmos that is actively evolving through our common humanity.

The groundlessness of language and the ethical dimension

Wittgenstein’s subsequent writings no longer spoke about “the mystical.” He was true to his commitment not to speak of what must be passed over in silence. Nevertheless, his philosophical corpus, most of which was published after his death, was dedicated to showing what he calls “the groundlessness of language,” overcoming the false idea that the world has inherent essences that can be revealed (or not) by human language. He wanted to show that “the rules of grammar are not a deduction from the nature of reality” (*Lectures 1930-1932*, 104). In *Philosophical Grammar* (written in 1935), he declared that, “Human beings are entangled all unknowing in the net of language” (1978, 462).

Language often makes us think that it encompasses the entire world. And today, postmodern skepticism, that is making people aware of the “groundlessness” of language, is leading them to draw

false conclusions such as the absurd, self-contradictory conclusion that “there is no truth.” The idea that language is “not a deduction from the nature of reality,” has caught a large segment of the popular imagination making people think that we are “cut off” from something, that we float in a bubble of language in which all “truth” is relative.

But not only are “ordinary” truth and falsehood fully operative within our everyday linguistically mediated interactions. It is also important to understand, as Wittgenstein’s lifelong work indicated, that “meaning” (the presupposition of the very possibility of language) is prior to truth. Meaning must be there before you can even begin to talk about truth or falsehood. And we have seen that the world of meanings is full of symbols that point beyond themselves toward “the depths.” Truth, goodness and beauty, in addition to their everyday meanings, function as such symbols. We are “cut off” from nothing, for the unsayable fullness-emptiness of existence permeates our lives from start to finish. And there is no a priori reason why this awareness could not permeate the lifeworld of humanity as a whole within an ecstatic unity in diversity of love, justice, and freedom.

Philosopher Steve McIntosh in *The Presence of the Infinite*, 2015, describes the quest for these three ideals as fundamental to the evolutionary process (which he rightly contrasts with “nondual spirituality”). In his earlier book, *Evolution’s Purpose*, 2012, he brilliantly describes the ways in which purposes enter the evolutionary process with the advent of life and the way in which these purposes take on a “second order” function (contributing to the cosmic evolutionary process) with the advent of human life. Yet he appears to miss the unsayable immediacy at the heart of all dualism (the apophatic character of “existence” itself). He also appears largely oblivious of critical social theory as a necessary (r)evolutionary movement taking us beyond the current oppressive world system.

In Wittgenstein’s main work, the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), after a long discussion of the false inferences that philosophers tend to draw from their ideas about an inner, subjective reality, he writes: “What is your aim in philosophy?—To shew the fly the way out of the fly-bottle.” The fly is the pseudo-self, a set of false ideas about the ego and its relation to the world, freedom from which would bring us back to the mystical. To recognize “the limits of language” is not to be cut off from something but rather *to rejoin our connections with the whole*.

As much as we might have to say about psychology, consciousness, and cognitive levels (see, for example, Ken Wilber’s *Integral Psychology*, 2000), “Integral Theory” might well agree that much of this misses the main point that our very existence is inseparable from the One, the dynamic unity in diversity that is the absolute mystery of existence. Are there ethical implications to this “sense of the world that must lie outside the world”? In my own terms, will the imperative to Earth Federation help to “show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle”? I believe that it will. Human (r)evolutionary holism will help reveal (and incarnate) the unsayable mystical whole.

Wittgenstein’s mysticism was accompanied by a powerful sense of ethical obligation, which he saw informing our lives from the mysterious foundations of the Cosmos. In his 1929 “Lecture on Ethics,” he asserts that ethics is “enquiry into the meaning of life,” and that “if a man could write a book on Ethics which really was a book on Ethics, this book would, with an explosion, destroy all the other books in the world.” Ethics is nothing if not “supernatural,” he declares. As with Kant, it results in “absolute” obligations, in spite of the fact that nothing *within the world* is absolute.

In the same lecture, Wittgenstein gives some “personal” examples of his own experiences that help illuminate the idea of an “absolute good” that ethics is about. He relates first his own “*experience par excellence*,” that is: “I wonder at the existence of the world.... How extraordinary that anything should exist.” I want to suggest that Wittgenstein’s astonishment “that” the world exists *is not the same* as Martin Heidegger’s famous claim in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935), that the fundamental question of philosophy (as Leibniz had also told us) is: “Why is there something rather than nothing?”

For Wittgenstein, this is not an intellectual matter for reflection, but rather an astonishment. Ethics must be understood with respect to the absolute cosmic mystery that encompasses our lives that he had identified in the *Tractatus*: the sheer “thatness” of the world that is beyond thought and language. The “metaphysical self,” the “contentless point at the limit of the world and not part of it,”

is the source of ethics. In the *Tractatus*, he claimed that, “those who have found after a long period of doubt that the sense of life became clear to them have been unable to say what constituted that sense” (6.521).

In the opening lines of his 1952 book, *The World of Silence*, Max Picard writes: “Silence is nothing merely negative....It is a positive, a complete world in itself.... In no other phenomenon are distance and nearness, range and immediacy, the all-embracing and the particular, so united as they are in silence.... The mark of the Divine in things is preserved by their connection with the world of silence.” Like Wittgenstein’s metaphor of the “groundlessness of language” (as opposed to a grounding for language), and like Hegel’s opposition (going back to the Greeks) between Being and nonbeing, we find that our conventional linguistic opposition between “silence and sound” misses the profound Silence that embraces all life, thought, and existence. “Silence” is a symbol, pointing to the depths.

Existence is unsayable, unthinkable; it is Silence. The “One without a second,” that is not opposed to the many, is the Silence that embraces all our lives and our speech. The Western tradition in particular has been animated by the concept of *Logos*. *Logos* means discourse, reason, and language (hence, not silence). Plato understood that the *Logos* was the divine in us, that our quest for truth, beauty, and goodness had a divine origin. Similarly, the Christian Gospel of St. John begins, “In the beginning was the Word (*Logos*), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” What would it look like if the Word (reason, language) were more fully incarnated in human existence?

The *Logos* is animated by the core values of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. This is not the place to enter into the vast dimensions of these values as they have animated every human civilization throughout the evolutionary development of humanity (cf. McIntosh, 2015). In all civilizations, of course, they emerge from the absolute mystery embracing every human life. They provide for humanity criteria in its quest for wholeness, integration, and ever greater fulfillment.

Would the *Logos* ever more fully incarnated in human civilization mean holistic Earth Federation uniting humanity as a single planetary reality? All human beings participate in the Word, just as all human beings are expressions of cosmic existence. No matter what our culture or language, we are all capable of “dialogue directed toward mutual understanding” that reveals, along with our common quest for Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, our pristine common humanity. There is only one Humanity characterized by unity in diversity, a community that itself is a microcosm of the whole (which itself appears as a dynamic, evolving, ever more encompassing series of wholes within wholes).

Our most fundamental problems of war, injustice, inequality, and climate destruction, all stem from fragmentation, division, including the outdated systems of capitalism intertwined with sovereign nation-states. Uniting under the Earth Constitution would immediately begin to mitigate that fragmentation of lifeworlds toward a holistic unity in diversity, and a resurrected universal lifeworld emerging from the absolute mystery of existence. Action taken on the basis of critical social theory is necessary to free humanity from the interconnected scourges of capitalism and sovereign nation-states and will pave the way for the cosmic consciousness indicated by the term “mysticism.”

Silence, dialectical holism, and the mystical life of humanity

The Word emerges from Silence. It is animated and made authentic by Silence. But the Word, which consists in the articulation of the world and the Cosmos through knowledge and understanding, is itself of divine origin. Truth, and the pursuit of Truth through language, is also divine. There is only one interrelational and interdimensional world, an interdimensionality that can be symbolized, for example, in Christian doctrine by the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all of which emerge, Meister Eckhart declares, from Silence (cf. Raimon Panikkar’s articulation of the Trinity in *The Rhythm of Being*, 2010).

There is no fixed, hidden “Noumenal” reality in some other dimension. The evolving present moment constitutes absolute mystery, full of unnamed possibilities—the groundless-ground stands revealed, embracing our lives. Kant’s hidden, noumenal “thing in itself,” now revealed. The Word, the Truth, and our ever-present human quest for Truth, emerge from this Silence. We must live from Silence, free of our “entanglement in the net of language.” That freedom includes a dynamic and

dialectical holism prior to thought and language. It also includes dialectical engagement with transforming our broken world-system.

“Dialectical,” here, does not indicate a simplistic triadic movement from thesis to antithesis to synthesis as the dictionary might have it. It involves the dynamism implicit in any and all differentiated wholes. As Harris demonstrates as length, the Cosmos appears as a temporalized differentiated whole and, as its holism extends to all parts of the Cosmos, each part in turn constitutes a lesser differentiated whole, a continuum in which the parts are always in “internal relations” with one another. Changes in one part affect other parts. Hence, (in what A. N. Whitehead called the “creative advance” of the universe, 1967, 179) apparent opposites move dialectically in relation to all other parts as the differentiated whole continues to evolve within space and time (Harris, 1987, Part III: Dialectic). Today, these parts are known as “holons,” each a whole encompassing other parts in a series of embracing fields comprising an evolving cosmic *holarchy*, within which emerging (synthetic) levels of human consciousness contribute an essential (r)evolutionary component.

The net of language can deceive, entangle, and seduce people from the Good. It can ensnare our lives to the point where we believe that reality is exhausted by what can be said, by the forms or “whatness” of all existence. Artificial Intelligence can reprogram human actions to efficiency in war and to universal mind-control of voting populations. To be faithful to the dialectical possibilities of the Word, that is, to be faithful to emergent Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, is to root them in the *unknowability* from which they emerge. AI can never know the human spiritual dimension from which all knowledge flows.

The light of language emerges from the silence of the transcendental self, the Self that is present in all we think, do, or say—an astonishment that no artificial intelligence can ever comprehend. The Word becomes authentic, revelatory, even ecstatic. Behold! Existence appears! Existence actualized as essence, and essence actualized as existence, within an evolving cosmic dynamism. Astonishment confronts the possibility of utopian dialectical movement, the possibility of the eschaton, the pleroma, fulfillment. Hope appears at our temporal horizon, not premised on language alone, but on the astonishing creative dialectic of an evolving universe in which we are central participants.

In *Mysticism and Spirituality* (2008), Raimon Panikkar calls mysticism “a constitutive element of the human being.” That is why it is not the preserve of a privileged few (called “mystics”) but is available to all human beings everywhere. He calls mysticism an “integral experience” that embraces all other dimensions of our human existence, including spirit, sensation, and reason. The Logos, therefore, is not opposed to the silence of mysticism, for the unsayable One embraces all of existence. We are manifestations of that One, microcosms of the macrocosm. Authentic speaking arises from this Silence.

Panikkar writes: “The mystic knows that the only thing that cannot be said is the only thing that is actually worth uttering in order to go in and out of the unknown land of the mystical dimension of reality” (239). “Silence,” he declares, “is the empty space in the intimacy of our being, the void that “makes space” for *theosis*, for divinization.... All our dignity and responsibility lie here” (78). “Mysticism should not be seen as the special province of the few but rather as one essential dimension of humankind” (114).

“The mystical life represents the apex of the life of Man” (116). He concludes: “I use the word ‘mysticism’ not only for the first (or the Ultimate) experience of Man, but also for the human consciousness that comprises them all” (117). If, indeed, as Panikkar declares, “all our dignity and responsibility lie here,” would promoting Earth Federation help awaken this “one essential dimension of humankind”? Would uniting humanity as a dynamic unity in diversity help reveal the unspeakable One?

This is fundamentally my theme in *Human Dignity and World Order*. Our dignity arises from the “Infinity” inherent in our existence, embracing our every encounter with truth, beauty, or goodness. However historically, human cultures have evolved apart from one another, and their differences have been inscribed into today’s system of sovereign nation states interfaced with a dehumanizing capitalism. None of these fragments are founded on our universal human dignity, the only alternative

to which is economic and political struggle for ascendancy. In other words, today's societies are premised on power struggles (trapped in technocratic and instrumental reasoning), rather than on universal human rights and dignity. Earth Federation does not defeat this system but rather transforms it through moving to a higher level of holistic existence.

But there is also the issue concerning the meaning of holism. The Cosmos appears as an unsayable absolute whole, the One of Plotinus, but *at the same time* as an *evolving whole*. Something mysterious, that does not yet exist, is evolving within the cosmic process. This holism has been pointed out repeatedly by physicists such as David Bohm in *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (2002) or by Jude Currivan in *The Cosmic Hologram* (2017). It has been theoretically explored by thinkers such as Jan Smuts in *Holism and Evolution* (1926), and has been applied to a spirituality of divine self-actualization by philosophers such as Teilhard de Chardin in *The Phenomenon of Man* (1959).

Emergent (r)evolutionary holism and the mystical one

Language derives its innumerable meanings from oppositions such as "high and low, good and evil, or whole and part." Science addresses the physical world in a highly sophisticated mathematical language to articulate things in terms of wholes and parts. Bohm speaks of a "matrix that subtends the world," and affirms that "relativity and quantum theory imply an undivided wholeness, in which analysis into distinct and well-defined parts is no longer relevant" (183). These are sophisticated and powerful approaches to the evolving whole-part distinction that carry great explanatory power and conceptual weight.

The holism of the Cosmos, its *cosmogensis*, dawns upon creatures self-aware of this process. Physicist Henry Stapp concludes that, "a beautiful, intricate, and rationally coherent mathematical machinery has been discovered that transforms the mechanistic mindless concepts of classical physics over to a highly tested, useful, and accurate mathematical picture of a nonlocal reality in which are streams of consciousness are naturally and efficaciously embedded" (2011, 200). Science has transformed our human status from the role of passive observers to agents of a cosmic *nisus*.

Thinkers like Jan Smuts and Errol E. Harris in *Restitution of Metaphysics* (2000) see this "*nisus*" or "*telos*" toward holism inherent in the process of cosmic evolution that evolves toward ever deeper and more profound wholes, the epitome of which, both agree, is found in the wholeness of the human mind-body continuum. These thinkers, along with Buddhist thinker Masao Abe in *Zen and Western Thought* (1985), see the holism of humanity emerging out of the evolutionary process. As Abe puts it, "'Mankind' is a corporate entity with a single fate, one living, self-aware unity placed within the vastness of space" (250). And Smuts declares that, "in wholeness, in the creation of ever more perfect wholes, lies the inner meaning and trend of this universe" (106).

What, then, is the relation between the unity of mysticism and emergent (r)evolutionary holism? We have seen that the mystic experiences embrace by the utterly unspeakable oneness of existence of which he or she is a direct, living expression. Is there a relation between this mystical holism (integrative oneness) and the (r)evolutionary holism explicated by 20th and 21st century philosophers and scientists? What relations appear from our unsayable existence that embraces both world and freedom as it emerges from the Cosmic process? Does the Word require Silence?

Panikkar describes a connection between the mystical One and evolution: "The world is unfinished, and, in this sense, infinite. This infinitude accounts for freedom, and the unforeseeable movement of all that is. Existence is open, ongoing, a spontaneous unfolding of possibility" (56). Here we encounter hope, he affirms, through the transcendence of an abysmal status quo by "a spontaneous unfolding of possibility." I would add that we too, through our freedom and utopian purposes, create "a spontaneous unfolding of possibility." Hope flows into human (and Cosmic) existence through us, through our (r)evolutionary action, our deepening awareness, and our active engagement on behalf of the human project. Non-attached freedom premised on the Cosmic gift of hope lies at the very foundations of human transformative action.

If our human self-aware process (which, as Smuts writes, intrinsically emerges as a subject-object duality) is a manifestation of the Cosmos becoming aware of itself, then our conscious lives and purposes begin to look very different. The *telos* of the Cosmos actualizes toward ever greater wholes.

We realize, in the words of Swimme and Berry, that “things are bonded together in such a way that everything has a shared existence and a common destiny” (2011, 219). To date, this culminates in the human mind and in human freedom. In human freedom, Smuts declares: “purpose marks the liberation of Mind from the domination of circumstances.... Through purpose Mind finally escapes from the house of bondage into the free realm of its own sovereignty....It carries on the task of Evolution on somewhat new lines of its own.” (226 & 231).

Today, our human minds (often collectively termed the “Noosphere”) have no common purpose. The “domination of circumstances” that we face today includes all the global problems beyond the scope of nation-states: endless wars, nuclear weapons, human rights violations, genocides, global poverty, and planetary climate collapse. Can these crucial global problems be addressed through some coordination of approximately 194 militarized sovereign nation-states within a competitive global economic system recognizing no binding authority over itself or themselves? We need to deal with these global crises that portend the possibility of human extinction. Jonas declares: “The existence of mankind comes first.... It is the ever-transcendent *possibility*, obligatory in itself, which must be kept open by the continued existence. To preserve this possibility is a cosmic responsibility” (1985, 99).

Our common human purposes that include creating a planetary community of unity in diversity (flowing from Cosmic evolution) unite within the Earth Constitution, itself organized around six fundamental purposes: (1) Ending war and disarming the nations, (2) protecting universal human rights, (3), Establishing global social equity and eliminating poverty, (4) Regulating all global affairs that are beyond the nations, (5) Protecting and restoring our planetary environment, and (6) Addressing all other problems beyond the scope of nation-states. These six purposes, flowing from our fundamental human condition, articulate the concretization of the Cosmic Nisus for our time.

The absolute mystery that encompasses the human situation may well be a *multidimensional* mystery. It may be that science will never be able to uncover any cognizable physical laws about the “nisus” or “telos” that appears at the heart of the “undivided wholeness” that subtends the world. It is this sense of “mystery” that Paul Diel may be using in *The God Symbol* (1986) when he explains that we may call the cosmic origins of life an “unexplainable mystery,” “*provided that the word ‘mystery’ not be hypnotized and mistaken for the name of an actual entity existing outside the world*” (25, italics his). As soon as we start talking about actual entities we begin talking “nonsense,” says Wittgenstein, Diel, and others. The unsayable “That,” inseparable as it may be from the dialectically evolving “What,” is not itself a “What.” It is no-thing.

Nevertheless, the Infinite permeates the finite and gives rise to the personal dimension, a dimension of love, justice, and freedom flowing from the Cosmos. The Transcendental Unity of Apperception flows forth into the temporal dimension as an “enduring” sense of personhood that appears independent of the flux of existence. The Word flows forth through creative personality. We can envision the transformation of this world of injustice, corruption, and unfreedom. The *utopian imagination* recognizes real possibility inherent in the temporal flux, “the spontaneous unfolding of possibility” laying the opportunities for humanity to unite within an Earth Federation premised on unity, diversity, and our common dignity.

The very fact that we are outraged by injustice, war, and capitalist greed, reveals that an absolute command for justice flows into our lives. We would not be “scandalized” by corruption, dehumanization, and injustice, Habermas declares, if we did not also know that these things could be different (2003, 63). Bloch agrees: “This very alienation could not even be observed, let alone condemned, as that which deprives men of liberty and the world of soul, if there were no measure for its contrary—i.e., that possible becoming-itself and being-with-itself by which alienation can be judged” (1970, 77). And Jonas observes that “we should not know about the sanctity of life if we did not know about killing, and the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ had not brought this sanctity into focus; and just as we should not know the value of truth without being aware of lies, nor of freedom without the lack of it, and so forth—so also, in our search after an ethic of responsibility for distant

contingencies, it is an anticipated *distortion* that helps us detect that in the normative conception of man which is to be preserved from it" (1985, 26-27).

Our freedom embraces a "normative conception of man" precisely because a common humanity animates our lifeworld, just as does the unspeakable mystery of our existence. We cannot arbitrarily reject the ocean of unsayable immediacy embracing our lifeworld and proclaim that the demand for justice alone is sufficient. The Cosmos appears as nothing other than a vast evolving dynamism of wholes within wholes. We do not need metaphysics in the sense of an appeal to some God whose "existence" we seek to prove through argumentation. The demand for justice and dignity arises from freedom just as certainly as the fact that language presupposes our common humanity.

The mystics quoted above say something similar about their encounter with the unsayable depths of existence: Dionysios the Areopagite and Meister Eckhart are explicit that we need not call this "God," except in a symbolic sense, as if God were an existing "object" of some kind. The point is not to think the concept "God" but to be It: to "sink down," as Eckhart declares, "out of something into nothing." In India, the Upanishads proclaim *Tat Tvam Asi*: "That Thou art." This is not to repudiate the phenomenal world as "samsara," or "maya" (illusion) because we are already "That."

We don't need to meditate to find it: we are it. Several traditions say we must open the "third eye" to experience this unsayable presence. To a third eye that is open, it is simply self-evident. The Cosmos is both dual and non-dual, both one and many, both wisdom and love, as Christian theologian Ilia Delio elucidates in *From Teilhard to Omega* (2014) and other writings (cf. Griebel, *Both One and Many*, 2024).

We have the intuition, in the light of these reflections, that the mystical experience of integrative oneness is integrally linked to the emergent evolutionary holism of the Cosmos. "Thatness" is related to "whatness": existence flows forth inseparable from the evolution of essences. In *The Ideal of Human Unity* (1970) and other works, Sri Aurobindo attempted to show this "inevitability of the unification of the life of humanity." It is, after all, *the same Cosmos* whose "existence" is absolutely unutterable, and that is evolving, as Teilhard de Chardin puts it, on a clear principle of freedom and holism directed toward some mysterious, future "Omega Point."

Human freedom, every bit as unsayable and mysterious as human existence, appears as a central aspect of cosmic evolution. In the Western Biblical tradition, it is the great source of hope. Faith in God is most fundamentally not faith in the "existence" of some passive creator "substance" outside the world. It is faith in the power of historical transformation deriving from Human, Cosmic, and Divine freedom. The depths of this idea were deeply understood by Christian thinkers Jacob Boehme and Nicolas Berdyaev. Yet personal freedom is not necessarily exclusive to such Western thinkers. Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh declared that "freedom begins with mindfulness, concentration, and insight....We can change ourselves, we can change the world. Everything is the fruit of action" (in McIntosh, 2015,180). Is creation of an Earth Federation a step on the way to Omega—the fulfillment of the Cosmic telos? Is it "the fruit of action"—love incarnated as law and justice?

For Smuts, as for Kant and Wittgenstein, the cosmos "makes freedom an inherent character of the universe." From this freedom, he writes, there emerges "Holistic Ideals or Absolute Values" such as "Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, which lay the foundations of a new order in the universe" (85, 107). I argue that this "new order in the universe" includes Earth Federation, just as Kant and Harris explicitly understood. Taking a hint from Kant's, Wittgenstein's, and Smuts' sense of a cosmically grounded ethical obligation, we should recognize an *ethical imperative* for harmony, (r)evolutionary holism, and creative integration, one dimension of which is Earth Federation. (R)evolutionary holism appears as a telos for free, creative growth for humanity premised on the common implicit goals of transpersonal worldcentric and cosmocentric levels of awareness. *Gigantic hope* then permeates our existence.

Hope and our utopian horizon

Apart from the transcendental unity of consciousness that (like the eye in relation to the field of vision that makes knowing possible but does not appear within the field of the known), human beings live in and through time. We live in a dynamic present that remembers the past and critically

evaluates that past as lacking something, for example, justice, fulfillment, happiness, peace, freedom, equality, or dignity. In this dynamical present we act on purposes projected into the future. We want economic sufficiency, to be sure, but all normal people also want peace, justice, freedom, and respect for their dignity. McIntosh declares: “Our imagination is part of our inherent creative freedom, and the influence of future potentials is something we all feel regularly” (2012, 140). This projection into the future, within which the future could not only be better than the past, but fulfilled, consummated, constitutes our *utopian horizon*.

The trajectory of this “better future” culminates in our imagining a fullness of these qualities, such as justice, freedom, equality, or dignity (Martin, 2024, Chap. 11). Theologian Jürgen Moltmann observes that, “the power of the future affects people in such a way that they are liberated from the compulsion to repeat the past and from bondage to the givenness of what is already there” (2007, 106). Paul Tillich declares that we are confronted by “a demand for something that does not yet exist but should exist.... Through the demand humanity is directed to what ought to be.... For the human person is not only an individual, a self, but also has knowledge about himself or herself, and thereby the possibility of transcending what is found within the self and around the self. This is human freedom” (1987, 143). This utopian horizon, characteristic of all self-aware creatures, infuses our lives with great hope—things don’t have to be this way and we can contribute in our lives to making things better—to “progress” with respect to our utopian horizon. The meaning of life becomes clear, even though language fails us when we try to describe this.

This means that there is an ongoing (r)evolution in human consciousness that is an extension of the evolutionary holism of the Cosmos itself since the Big Bang. The gift of freedom has a *telos*, a reason and an energy that we can realize in our lives. With the evolution of human beings (or other self-aware creatures such as ourselves) *genuine value* emerges in the Cosmos, as Whitehead has already pointed out (1960, 97ff). The cosmos leaps forward with respect to the creation of intrinsic value. The temporality of the universe operates within a scope of billions of years, while the temporality of humanity thus far is perhaps only a few hundred thousand years, and the temporality of each person only a few decades. Yet within these few decades, the evolutionary process becomes (r)evolutionary.

Dialectic operates at all levels, that is, creative movement, synthesis, the opening of possibilities. The universe has produced in us creatures who can accelerate and contribute to the process of emergent (r)evolution. We can stand for justice and unity in diversity, and in doing so find that great hope informs our consciousness and our actions. Critical social theory in the tradition of Marx, Georg Lukàcs, Ernst Bloch, Paulo Freire, Enrique Dussel, Herbert Marcuse, Habermas, and others reveals the concrete human actions aimed at transforming our world into a place of justice, freedom, and unity in diversity. This is complemented by the dynamics of (r)evolutionary spiritual awakening. To advocate for the Earth Constitution opens fundamental possibilities for humanity in both dimensions.

Not only do we participate directly in contributing to Cosmic goals of value-creation. As part of this contribution, we are capable of solving our own horrific human problems of war, fragmentation, climate destruction, and global poverty. We are gifted with a utopian imagination and therefore *gigantic hope*. We all know that it does not have to be this way. Our very outrage is a function of this insight. Evolution, history, and human freedom direct us toward planetary harmony, integration, and unity in diversity. Oscar Wilde famously declared: “A map of the world that does not include utopia is not even worth glancing at.”

These ideals are also recognized by Haris, Teilhard, Abe, and others mentioned above. They appear inherent in both mysticism and in the dimension of ethical freedom. Here we have a major step in the right direction, but it may not go far enough. In *Marx and the Bible*, José Miranda is more explicit when he argues that the “transcendence” of God in the Bible is not ontological but something more fundamental that is inherent in human freedom: “Transcendence does not mean only an unimaginable and inconceivable God, but a God is who is accessible only in the act of justice” (1974, 48). Word flows from Silence in any act of justice. The ultimate is “inconceivable” but nearly all people

experience the demand of justice—a call from our utopian horizon. In the act of justice we encounter the ultimate meaning of the Universe. The Bible, Miranda declares, tells us that God is accessible in no other way. Kant had, less dramatically, declared something similar.

The “Now” of freedom is the command of justice, a freedom emerging through an absolute present of the transcendental self (appearing simultaneously within a temporalized human personal and historical existence, that is, a psychophysical personal self). We encounter the absolute commands of morality, like “a Book that would explode all the other books in the world.” The transcendental self breaks into the temporalized world generating what I have emphasized, here and elsewhere, as our “Utopian Horizon” (Martin, 2024, Chap. 11). We realize how important it is not to fall victim to what John F. Haught calls “a metaphysics of the eternal present” (In Delio, 2014, 16) through a form of spirituality believing that the real meaning of life exists in penetrating the flux of phenomena to an eternal oneness. This option by itself serves as a form of escapism.

We live under a demand to transform our broken world into one of peace, justice, freedom, and love. *Gigantic hope* flows directly into human temporal existence. The “endangered global environment,” Jonas writes, flings an ultimate challenge in the face of mankind: “A common guilt binds us, a common interest unites us, a common fate awaits us, a common responsibility calls us. In the blinding light of this new opening horizon” we can now appeal to an “awesome commonality never apparent before” (1996, 201).

Earth Federation beckons to us from our Utopian Horizon (Martin, 2024, Chap. 12). In the Earth Constitution we encounter a concrete set of objectives that elicit our allegiance and action. The first and foremost task is to unite humanity under the universal rule of democratically legislated laws. This is not the end point. It will not initiate an immediate “Kingdom of God,” nor Kant’s “Kingdom of ends-in-themselves,” but it represents the next essential dialectical step grounded in our universal humanity and dignity.

We have seen this ethical imperative within the context described above linked with the demand that human beings unite under a single *Earth Constitution*. The *Constitution for the Federation of Earth*, since it is founded on human dignity (intrinsic to our common humanity), ends the fragmentation of sovereign nation-states as well as the fragmentation of capitalist greed and class struggles. It does not abolish these parts (the nations or corporations) but dialectically embraces them as a unity in diversity in which our fundamental problems are not so much solved, but (as Einstein, Carl Jung, and others declared) “dissolved” through moving to a higher level. Nor does it abolish “free enterprise,” but rather frames this to actualize the common good rather than, as now, the extreme personal wealth and power of a planetary ruling class. Critical Social Theory provides an essential tool for transforming our broken world-system.

Since there appears to be a fundamental link between the holism of (r)evolution and the unsayable holism of mysticism, it is safe to predict that uniting humanity under the first form of holism will inspire and make possible the process of mystical awakening for the whole of humanity. The *Earth Constitution* appears as a fundamental step on the path toward Omega, toward divinization. It organizes and embodies the Logos on behalf of humanity. As we saw above, mysticism is not simply the spiritual luxury of the few: it is the human condition itself. The unsayable gives birth to the sayable, which in turn gives birth to human unity in diversity. This emergent process engenders *gigantic hope*.

We exist. Like fish in the ocean, we are immersed in the unsayable experience of existence, of sheer “thatness.” Not only are we immersed: *we ourselves are such existence*. Each of us (and all of us) exists as a direct unsayable manifestation of the Cosmic One. In *Christianity and Evolution*, Teilhard declares: “And I tell you, in all truth, that before the human mass sets out tomorrow on the great adventure from which its fulfillment is to emerge, it must gather itself together, as one whole, and once and for all investigate the value of the drive which is urging it ahead” (1971, 111). And humanist philosopher Ernst Bloch affirms: “For the sake of the human race, Africa and Asia join in the polyphonic chorus of a polyrhythmic advance of progress towards this unity....a better Earth for all

men." "Only thus," he writes," can hundreds of cultures flow into the unity of the human race" (1970, 141). Our utopian expectation guides the direction of our action.

Infinity permeates our lives demanding human unification in pursuit of cosmic (r)evolutionary purposes of creatively bringing forth truth, beauty, and goodness in the world. Our utopian horizons call us toward a transformed future. The unification of humanity under the *Earth Constitution* constitutes a major path toward the spiritual awakening of humanity, toward realizing the cosmic purposes of our existence, and toward empowering humanity to take charge of our endangered destiny on planet Earth. It is both an immediate obligation of our moral freedom and a necessary step in the process of human liberation toward awareness (and incarnation) of the mystical whole. *We need to become (r)evolutionaries.*

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