AVOIDING
SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL
DISASTER

THE POLITICS OF
WORLD TRANSFORMATION

An Inquiry
into the
Foundations of
Spiritual and Ecological
Politics

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Revised, abridged edition
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Edited by Palden Jenkins

GATEWAY BOOKS, BATH
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An Outline of the Theses of the Book

Our civilisation has created and is rooted in what Lewis Mumford has
called the Megamachine. This machine, in whose actions we all partici-
pate, and whose basic goals of more, faster and bigger are rooted in our
souls, feeds on and is hostile to the natural order, which it is destroying
at an accelerating rate. We are approaching a precipice of self-
annihilation which will result from the degradation of the natural order,
to the point where it can no longer support the Megamachine. This is
the Apocalypse.

The Apocalypse is not fore-ordained, but if it is to be avoided we
must stop the Megamachine and then dismantle it, building in its place
a new civilisation which respects the supporting capacity of the earth’s
biosphere and is compatible with a healthy and thriving natural order.

The recognition that the Megamachine, or ‘treadmill of production’,
is destroying the biosphere has been with us for some time, and was one of
the main reasons for forming the Green Party. But the first (1982)
political attempt in West Germany to stop the Megamachine and turn
things around failed, because people were not willing to countenance
and accept the fundamental life-style changes entailed.

And the changes needed are indeed sweeping. Bahro documents the
way in which humans and their artifacts in West Germany are now
impacting the natural environment, by the extraction of raw materials
and the throwing back of wastes, at a rate which is ten times higher than
it was 100 years ago – the time at which the rate of extermination of
species began to increase exponentially. Today a species is vanishing
every day, and by the year 2000, if Megamachine growth continues at
its present rate, a species every hour. Thus, if the apocalypse is to be
avoided we must almost at once reduce our impact on the natural
environment to what it was 100 years ago. This entails the acceptance of
a material standard of living which is only one tenth of that which we
now enjoy. Not surprisingly, therefore, essential proposals to make
such radical changes in policy were dismissed as being economically
and politically unacceptable, and the Green Party was co-opted into
the political mainstream, with its restrictions.

So now, Bahro tells us (writing in 1987), we are five years nearer the
precipice. The time has come to make a new attempt, digging deeper
and recognizing that it is the basic psychological structure of Western humanity which blocks the way to an ecological politics, and that this structure must change before the necessary practical policies will have any chance of acceptance.

The first section of the book is concerned with economic and industrial growth as the main danger. Free-market liberalism, socialist state planning, and the plan-market economy of Japan are the same in that they all aim to maximize Megamachine growth. Only early Gandhi-Mao agrarian-type movements show any promise of being able to live within ecological constraints, and they are being joined by ecological splinter movements originating in conservative and socialist camps, in particular the ‘Ordooliberal’ of Kurt Biedenkopf and the ‘fundamentalist’ wing of the Greens. These are examined in detail. Collectively they might be able to form a ‘rainbow coalition’ for an ecologically responsible politics.

The second section of the book examines the ‘logic’ of self-extinction; of the unremitting and ever-accelerating growth of the industrial system. This is traced back to its roots in Western philosophy and psychology, and is seen as rooted in the human genotype itself and in a series of structures arising from it: patriarchy, the European cosmology, the dynamics of capitalism, and the Megamachine; all leading to exterminism – which culminates in disaster or in human transformation. A separate sub-section is devoted to each of these structures. The industrial system cannot be managed or controlled for its undesirable side-effects; it must be removed completely and replaced by something different, resting on a new psychosocial foundation.

The third section is concerned with the ‘logic of salvation’ and demands a thorough reconstruction of the foundations of human subjectivity. Dangers here are the pessimistic conviction that nothing can really be changed, and addiction to the status quo. We have reached the point where the most important political discipline is the seeking out of truth about ourselves. This means inner work of a kind to which we are largely not accustomed. What is needed is an ‘anthropological revolution’, a jump in the evolution of the human spirit, the grounding anew of society on the basis of powers of consciousness which up to now are not revealed or unfolded.

‘Exterminism’, is a deformity of the human soul; a set of attitudes which, while normal at their time of inception, have grown pathogenic by lasting too long. Our civilization now brutally opposes three of its peripheries; the dispossessed outsiders, the natural environment, and our own internal nature (especially its feminine side). The Western psyche has become so injured and tender that it cannot stand much interaction with others. Money and the power it brings comes to the rescue, making possible the security of today’s ‘free but solitary’ individualism. Since the demand for security is insatiable, money and power constitute one merged expansionistic syndrome, a major driving force of the Megamachine. Magic and megalomania have been with money from the start, and its pathological effects will only vanish when the human being heals him/herself from within.

At this point Bahro’s thesis rests heavily on the ‘psycho-historical’ work of the Swiss mystic and cultural philosopher, Jean Gebser (1905-1971) who set forth his ideas in *The Ever Present Origin* (Ursprung und Gegenwart, 2 vols, 1949, 1953). Gebser argues that the history of civilisation is the unfolding of consciousness, a process which proceeds by mutational leaps, each leap ushering in a new consciousness structure. He documents five structures of consciousness:

The first of these is the Archaic, in which the human consciousness has not yet differentiated from the rest of nature, and there is no sense of separateness and no sense of time.

Secondly comes the Magic period which emerged about 100,000 years ago. This was the period of the hunter-gatherer, during which language was evolving. During this time a sense of our separateness from the rest of nature achieved an insecure existence. Life was still driven by emotion and instinct, the sense of time being little more than an awareness of the passing present.

The third, or Mythic, period emerged perhaps 20,000 years ago, and was made possible by the maturation of language, the telling of stories, and the ability to organize larger societies around ideas set forth in myths. Thus emerged the earliest towns and agricultural systems. Language made possible the conceptualization of past and future, giving us a cyclical time sense modeled on the recurring seasons. The Great Mother was the main mythical figure of these apparently peaceful civilizations of the Mythic period.

The fourth, or Mental period emerged during the last two millennia B.C., and brought with it an intensification of the human determination to transcend nature. It was male-dominated and warlike, at war not only with neighboring states and empires, but also with nature, with the feminine, and with the life of inner impulse. This period saw the birth of the major world religions, teaching that life should be lived according to religious and ethical principle rather than inner impulse. It developed a linear time sense, time having both a beginning and an end. For many centuries it was dominated by the monastic ideals of prayer, intellectual effort, work, and mortification of the flesh. After the Renaissance this transformed itself into the asceticism of scientific research and
the Protestant ethic; the continuing insensitivity toward nature permitting the building of the industrial system. At the end of the period the deep frustrations resulting from the denials of body, nature, and feminine led to the violence and cruelty of concentration camps and two world wars.

The fifth or Integral structure is emerging today and is characterised by a relinquishing of the rigid hold of rationality and linear time, and a re-assimilation of the feminine, the natural and the impulsive. It permits the recovery of awareness of earlier consciousness-structures and of the Origin, and has a new form of time-awareness in which past and future are contained in a timeless present, the achievement of which brings serenity and freedom from driven-ness. This structure of consciousness is characterised by a preference for frugal and contemplative values and a concern for the health and integrity of all life.

These structures of consciousness, although unfolding in time, do not supersede each other but are all contemporary. Whether consciously or not, all structures are present and active in each one of us.

Accepting this scheme, Bahro argues that whether or not we are able to move from the logic of self-annihilation and embrace the logic of salvation depends on how rapidly a critical-mass of the population can achieve the integral structure of consciousness, for without this we will be unable to renounce our addictive attachment to the Megamachine. Although the emergence of the Integral structure of consciousness is a spontaneous occurrence, the process can be speeded by contemplative practices, the nature of which he discusses at length.

The fourth and last section of the book is concerned with how the political and economic transition is to be made, how we shall make the journey from politics-as-usual to an 'eco-politics', which puts the health of the biosphere at the top of its agenda and operates according to the principles and values of the Integral structure of consciousness.

The transition is likely to occur via the emergence of two 'great coalitions': the coalition of political and economic forces of inertia, and a new alternative coalition for a 'rainbow society' in which political tendencies of all kinds combine, unified by the spreading awareness of environmental threat and a gradual growth in understanding of the values of the emerging structure of consciousness. The interaction of the two will likely bring about a re-institutionalisation of society which, among other things, will establish the Integral mode of consciousness as the social norm and offer all members of society the opportunity to acquire the skills needed to reach this level.

David Clarke, Bellingham, WA.

I dedicate this book to the memory of Ulrike Meinhof, whom I have admired and in whose suicide I do not believe.

Her soul, torn this way and that between love and hate has, in a different form, been at my side whilst I wrote.

What I believe is: she would today have been able to write in this spirit were she still alive - and had achieved freedom.

Whoever dares not to know that the whole is the false, cannot for a moment argue with her.

Overcome the walls!

Rudolf Bahro
INTRODUCTION
A new social foundation

Two years after publishing *The Alternative* in 1977, and as a result of it, I landed in West Germany. Two years after publishing *Logik der Rettung* (the original German version of this book) in 1987, I became once again a citizen of East Germany, forgiven of my political sins, and made a speech, at the same time as the Berlin Wall collapsed, to the last party meeting of the Social Unity Party. I spoke for the entire half hour on a single theme, starting with the idea of 'state-aided cooperatives'. I spoke about the possibility of introducing a politics of the ecological turning-point in what then was still the German Democratic Republic.

Since the greatest part of the industry in GDR had been ruined by the world market, and since of the remainder three-quarters would not be worth the millions which conventional environmental protection would cost, there was bound to be immense unemployment by any reckoning.

"Good!!" I said, the question then is this. "What can we do to close the gap, in view of the shrinking and modernising of the remaining industry and the enormous need to catch up on infrastructure-maintenance arrears?" The need is not mainly for social policy or emergency help, but rather to turn the emergency into a virtue! What was needed was to create the starting conditions for an 'eco-social' sector of society. I am talking about *communitarian subsistence economy* as an alternative, not least to the disastrously nature-destroying agribusiness. This concept of subsistence has as its goal a style of life which withdraws itself from the capitalist market and interest mechanism.

If it really is clear to us that the name *Titanic* is suited to the ship in which we are travelling, then salvation is to be found, if at all, not in some sort of 'ecologising' on the boat, but rather in quite a different direction, which lies close at hand. This is to build new lifeboats, using the energies of the tourists and the materials of the lost luxury liner. It is not an agrarian-commune escapism, but a path which leads out of an economy driven by money-making and towards a subsistence economy.

The prolonged psychological and social crisis in the now-colonised ex-GDR paradoxically offers extremely favourable conditions for relevant experiments: an excess of liberated forces, people and materials.
The real question is whether this opportunity will be matched by a sufficient number of East Germans who find in themselves the spiritual readiness, courage, responsibility and creative power to exploit it.

Since after a time at least half of the population will either be unemployed or not meaningfully employed, even very fertile land will, acre by acre, fail to find access to the market, and thus lie fallow. Buildings, machines and tools of considerable value today have only scrap value to those who yesterday worked with them country-wide and made a living at it.

As often happens in ‘peripheralised’ regions, selective ‘redevelopment’ creates fewer work places than the number of previous living possibilities which fall away. Also, damage to the regional culture and inner peace resulting from the disappearance of no longer lucrative structures challenges us to look for an all-embracing alternative to the social order. Its kernel is contained in the formula: places for living instead of work places, or living-working-places. Developed on a larger scale, this would be something new.

Such an alternative, which has prospects only if comprehensively conceived, will most certainly not proceed from any colonialistic reversion to capitalistic circumstances, and it is just as unlikely to be created by state intervention. It can arise only when a large number of people associate together to do it. The recent East German situation makes room for precisely this need.

In the meantime, caring for the unemployed millions will become more expensive than anyone dared to think. Here the state must play a role, which it can fulfill only if the money is there. Could not at least a part of the billions used be used in such a way that support-costs are reduced, that an equivalent value is created, that culture is maintained, that support payments transform themselves into help toward helping oneself and towards self-reliance? In the best case, these funds could help the creation of self-sustaining new forms of living.

And now no lesser person than Kurt Biedenkopf, whose views I thoroughly examine in this book, and who is now Minister-President of the new state of Saxony, says: Yes. He and his co-workers are acting from wider-reaching motives: the project has become publicly plausible and thus politically an acceptable subject for discussion.

The situation is now this: provided enough people come together, who have thought the thing through and are willing to accept responsibility for making it ultimately self-supporting, the state government of Saxony will help to get it started. It will do this administratively and financially – and recent events have shown that the government is serious in its intentions. Wherever the will to develop a new lifestyle arises, there is a way forward. In view of this it is clear that transform-

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ation does not have to fail on account of material privation. If it does fail, it will be on account of inhibited self-confidence. Already, a great number of people are looking at this possibility practically, and some of them are ready to make a start.

The modern age has separated people from the earth and from work materials, so that the individual cannot secure a subsistence without the mediation of a ‘job’. This separation is among the driving causes of world destruction, and greatly increases the difficulty of taking over responsibility for our daily actions in the social work process. It must be overcome. People who possess neither land nor working materials, and who cannot and do not want to make a profit, must be enabled to choose anew their form of subsistence, under the protection of the political order. Today this is a need which is grounded in much more than social politics.

Clearly, the ecological crisis requires objective public support in favour of this reversed direction. Pragmatically, this amounts to levelling a path to subsistence by means of subsidy, and there are concrete models for this. For the reader of this book, it should be clear that the real meaning of such initiatives is perceptible only beyond the economic-ecological perspective in the narrower sense. It requires a social framework for the practise of a different set of beliefs, one which transcends original egotism. Its ultimate goal is the cultural capacity for giving society as a whole a new foundation.

What is Green Fundamentalism?

When I came over to West Germany in 1979 after two years’ imprisonment, the result of my criticism of Soviet and East German socialism, I turned at once (to others’ surprise) to a new party which was then coming into existence – the Greens. Carl Amery, one of the founders of political ecology in Germany, had indeed identified me as a ‘closet Green’ before I came: this was because the entire closing section of my book The Alternative, advocated that the East should abandon growth-competition with the West, stop confusing human emancipation with maximum satisfaction of material needs, and should unilaterally disarm, to compel the West to pursue a peaceful path. Both ideas expressed the tendencies, articulated in West Germany by the Greens, toward neutralisation and overcoming the bloc structure.

Owing to the sensational circumstances, far more copies of my The Alternative were bought than read. Many people who had heard on TV of my arrival in the West were disappointed: in spite of my collision with East German authoritarians, I did not fit into the East-West either or mould, believing that changes would be needed in both parts of Europe. Yet the reforms in Moscow since 1985 far exceeded anything
which I would then have considered practically possible, and filled me
with great hope for developments in many countries.

I left the Greens in the middle of 1985 because they had become a
different party from the one I personally had wanted. Although they
had remained loyal to the idea of ecopax (an alliance of forces for peace
and ecological awareness), the drive for reform and the sharing of power
led them to convert their original capital into the small change of daily
electoral politics.

I, too, am responsible for the Greens’ development. Among other
things I ought to have given a definitive outline of my fundamentalist
position earlier – which I intend to do now. Most of what I have said is
in scattered publications, and much has only been expressed verbally.
The theoretical context which I am about to elaborate is very hard to
bring within the framework of a party exposed to the need to amass
power, and to the associated need for pragmatic compromises.

I don’t deceive myself into thinking that I could have prevented the
Greens crystallising out as an adapted reformistic party of the Left,
exploiting environmental protection as a profile-building theme, exactly
as the other parties do. This development was clearly unavoidable: the
Greens could not escape the challenge of the threatening catastrophe,
and were well-attached to the metropolitan environment. Above all,
organisation into a party did not further the mission of the ecological
turning-point, but caused a turning-away from it.

I have continually used the term ‘fundamentalism’, even though I am
not particularly happy with it. This concept has unfortunately become
associated with superficial and demagogic debate about political
‘responsibility’ (to play the political game formalistically) or ‘refusal’
(not to play it), or with building coalitions or not building them. As a
consequence of this its real meaning has been altogether obscured.

What is fundamentalism? At the beginning of 1984 I would have
answered: in the outer sense, it puts ecology before economy, and long-
term matters before immediate and short-term ones. In the inner sense,
it must be a policy which has spiritual drive and makes moral claims. A
policy of radical change in the Metropolis – the nations of the ‘developed’
world – begins with a readiness for self-transformation, even self-
surrender, of the bourgeois individual.

Parliaments are not the place to decide whether fundamentalism can
ever prove to be constructive or destructive: fundamentalism refers to
attitudes. In other words, the dynamic of the industrial system can only be
stopped in external reality when its motivation has been broken up.
Fundamentalism in this sense was never a swing, and was hitherto never more
than an intermittent mood in the party. However, it touched every
single Green ‘reale’.

In the course of his research into world history, Arnold Toynbee
made generalisations concerning what happens when civilisations disin-
tegrate, and what mechanisms recur in the resulting crises. He spoke of
decay and disintegration in society and in the soul. On this he based his
characteristic and useful concept of the proletariat, which is different
from the Marxist one in use.

Toynbee argued as follows: when the leading minority in a society
stops being creative and is merely seen as leading (thereby forfeiting its
inherent right to lead), the entire non-leading majority feels and be-
comes progressively an ‘internal proletariat’. The true mark of a pro-
etariat is thus neither poverty nor humble birth, but rather its sense of
being robbed of its ancestral heritage and its full place of residence in a society
and the resulting feeling of resentment. A proletariat defined in this
very all-embracing way is compatible with the ownership of material
means.

Toynbee showed that if the creative power of the ruling minority even
partially remains, it contributes a philosophy, and officials who have
been educated in it build up a universal state. In our case the universal
state is the entire organisation of the Western or Atlantic Metropolis,
with supra-national bureaucrats and businesspeople at the head. How-
ever, the internal proletariat creates a higher religion which often, as in
the case of the Christianity which arose in Rome, has its origin in a
different culture, and evolves into a universal church which strives for
transformation into a new culture.

From the point of view of the Englishman Toynbee, it is not surpris-
ing that so many people such as Native Americans and Tibetans are now
helping in the evolution of European and American spirituality – they
constitute his external proletariat. Naturally outside traditions, such as
the Native American, will flow into the new spiritual synthesis,
alongside sources within the culture – not least of all that of Christ freed
from ‘his’ church. Something quite new must come into existence,
because now, for the first time in history, we are really concerned with
the whole earth. At the same time patriarchy is decaying, so that a new
male monotheism, hostile to the senses, has become impossible.

The life-germ of the next social order is not economic, but spiritual.
The spiritual renaissance, in the end, will turn out to be a rise in
consciousness, and not a regression. I call it the ‘ecopax-formation’
(another possibility is the ‘rainbow society’). This renaissance is not yet
a river, but is already active in many streams and rivulets. The many
new sects (Christianity began as a sect!) are definite indicators – they
have much to do.

It would be difficult to explain why a new political party such as the
Greens had, from the beginning, a spiritual component – admittedly for
the most part bashfully disowned. The Greens were clearly a grouping on the far side of the anti-religious enlightenment, and were seen by the establishment as the most dangerous tendency, the root-cause of the fundamentalist tendencies within this enlightenment, and a movement about to overrun everything. In the ecopax movement the Greens cannot overrun everything, since spirituality is its essence.

**Putting a Stop to the Megamachine: The First Attempt**

At first glance everything seemed quite simple. We can no longer continue with over-large cities, over-size factories, chemical agriculture, concrete schools and vast hospitals, and the whole pentagon of power derived from money, computers, bureaucracy and the military, all over the earth. Yet we are so pitifully dependent on it all, and we tell ourselves so every day, and regard the situation as devoid of a way out. What else remains for us except to go ever more deeply into it? We have also noticed that environmental protection is also beside the point. The misery in the world is not made less by an 'Africa Day'.

Hoimar von Dohrn's book *Let Us Plant a Little Apple Tree: the Time Has Come* was a best-seller for two years. The author wanted to reconcile us to the fact that we must all die anyway. In the meantime the word got around the 'chattering classes': "anyway, everything is going down the tube". Or could we change our lives to such an extent that arming to death and destructive industrialising stop? We could indeed do this, but do we want to? Isn't it comfortable to have accountable officials whom we can accuse of not doing enough, even though we haven't authorised them to do anything decisive? For that, of course, would cut into our own flesh. We would rather carry on as usual: what else is possible?

If we really dared to want it, we could quite quickly have a government, or better, a social order, with which we could save ourselves, in spite of all hindrances. But we still lack the decisive precondition for salvation, the will to turn things around. How few of us were so bold, after Chernobyl, to demand the immediate closing down of nuclear power stations! This is why the existing mountain of proposals on the agendas of governments – every one of us has something to contribute – are deemed 'not feasible'.

In the early 1980s, carried along by the rise of the ecopax movement and the Greens in Germany, I still thought that irreversible progress toward the Turn-around could be made at the first attempt – if only the issue could be stated radically enough! I reprint here a few passages from a text for German radio which I wrote then and which, for me, still constitute a valid first statement of what I am now about to argue more closely. I had been asked at that time: *What is peace?*

It is, according to my reply,

that ideal state of affairs in which people avoid violence against each other even indirect and covert violence – in which each person can develop him or herself to the level which the time makes possible. This implies both freedom and justice. It also implies a balance in interpersonal relations.

At first glance this goes too far. Wouldn't it satisfy us just to know that we would not be killed by atom bombs or even 'normal' tank grenades? That the annual death rate by starvation of children in the southern hemisphere (14 million in 1981) would not exceed the annual casualty rate of World War II? That we will not run out of oxygen to breathe in the near future?

But can we avoid these things, if we just carry on as before? We have shown the whole world what and how much we like to have. How can there be a good outcome if ever more people on our finite earth follow our example of continually using, destroying and poisoning more per capita? We are bound to collide with each other and with nature.

We don't like to hear it when somebody says: "There have always been wars..." Nevertheless it is only too true. If World War III is to be avoided, if half of humanity is not to sink into absolute misery and a large number die of starvation, if the terminal collapse of the environment is to be averted, then we must lift ourselves above the hitherto-acknowledged laws of human history.

First we must learn – all of us, not just the military – that to seek for security is not the same thing as to seek for peace. Those who seek security mistrust others and take protective measures, which in turn feed the mistrust of others. It is obviously due to the politics of security that we are now sitting on a nuclear powder-keg. This is supposed to deter the other side. A politics of peace would take away the deterrent or minimise it, and trust that the threat would go, or at least be reduced. He who jumps together the politics of security and peace deceives his hearers. Up to now, the politics of security have been the politics of suicide.

But to refrain from building the newest rockets, or even to want to remove the whole structure of armaments so that they don't remove us, is no longer enough. Whoever wants that much and no more will not succeed. You can't conquer the Hydra by cutting off this or another head, as long as its inner forces continually produce new heads. If we want to rip open the belly of the monster so that it really dies, we must first of all know its name.

It is our industrial system and our industrial life-style. We have not achieved it by accident. It is our cleverness in altering nature to the ultimate limit which now discloses to us the clever hoof. Originally we had great success with the work of producing our own food supply. Since
then we have repeated the experience at ever higher levels according to the Olympian formula, "Higher, wider, faster, better!" And above all things, "More and more!"

Here in Europe we have found the non-plus-ultra, the style of economy with the sharpest drive and the most fruitful efficiency, and we are so proud of it...

This is so much at the root of all the growth curves (which since 1750 have no longer grown imperceptibly as they did earlier, but suddenly point sharply upwards) that there is little sense in referring to any particular arms production back to some particular profit interest. To do this is valid, of course, but there is much more at issue. Up to now people who wanted to solve everything by expropriation were in no way thinking of stopping the Megamachine. The relationship to capital is not the ultimate cause, but only the most recent means of expansion. It is simply the highest branch on the tree of human methods of production, and it will prove quite impossible for us to reject it twig by twig.

Peace demands that we begin our civilisation altogether anew, and that we stop the source of competition for scarce material goods. This we should do by referring back all material consumption and production to what is needed to achieve an approximately equal basic minimum satisfaction of natural needs. Goethe had his Faust say: "Our view of the Beyond is blocked: foolish is he who turns his squinting eyes in that direction... To the proficent, this world is not inscrutable". Thus he let him who would ascend the mountains drain the swamp. What now, since we have finished this task?

It seems the only prospect open is beyond, above, inward, and of course toward other people. We must, thus concentrate ourselves carefully to use our cleverness in this direction, because it is terminally dangerous to continue making so much change in the natural order, to heap up knowledge, and make fortunes doing it. Halt! No further! Every new capital expenditure, not just those in rockets, is at the same time both devilish and fatal. Peace begins when we take our hands away from the work which most of us daily perform. Admittedly we would be occupied for a time with demolition and reconstruction.

Do not the majority give up hope because they are afraid to exert the resistance of which they are easily capable? Afraid more of the everyday risk than the ultimate risk? Think of the days of the resistance against Hitler! How little would the citizens of this land have to risk, in order to achieve very essential changes! It is not even necessary to practise civil disobedience. He who won't risk anything at the present time either doesn't know or doesn't want to know that the coming of the apocalypse is extremely probable, unless we reckon with it in all earnestness and behave accordingly.

The task is still the same. Since everything is carrying on as usual, our
situations is now – supposing we don’t want to stop reckoning backwards from a foreseeable final bang – several years nearer the precipice. We conceal this from ourselves nowadays with ‘business as usual’ or new record statistical peaks.

I see things in a somewhat different way now, not factually but in a spiritual sense. In my earlier answers I talked then as if the victims would not awaken by themselves, but would have to be awakened. “It is always Gethsemane, always everyone is sleeping!” In the meanwhile the dangers are being noticed. But there is among the public a very great absence of earnest reflection on what we could do if disarmament negotiations and environmental campaigns fail us. There is also a lack of closer examination of what is insufficient, unable any more to support anything or save anything – and why.

Allegedly this leads to resignation. Yet first a proper despair concerning all attempts to cure symptoms (rather than causes), and concerning all proposals aiming at less than a cultural transformation, will awaken us from within.

The Aim of the Book
I am only secondarily interested in the things we could do, even though I shall once again elucidate, with necessary sharpening of definition, what the emergency demands: getting out of the large Megamachine and the small car, furthering unilateral military and industrial disarmament, and re-equipping to suit the needs of a heap of fairly independent eco-republics which look different to the Republic of Germany, the European Community, or NATO, but which nevertheless yield international authority for justice. If we don’t want to take a good hard look at all this, then we may as well say that we want to die.

However, when we speak of the environment, we are wanting to alter something external, to ascribe to the external the character of ultimate cause. This, however, is really within us. As if the bomb right from the beginning were not our own creation, and as if we didn’t know this just as well as Einstein, who finally said, after so much preoccupation with physics, that the real problem is the human heart.

At the present time the ecology/peace movement has again become an undercurrent. It will regenerate itself and radicalise by making contact with innumerable spiritual streamlets which came into existence independently of it. Many have taken up these spiritual paths because, earlier, they were despairing of purely political practice – fixed, as it was, on objects and enemies to be fought. The ecopax movement will all come back and then be much stronger, even politically, than on the previous occasion.

A reason for this is that it will spill over into the ranks of the scientific...
confusion of our spirits and hearts. More precisely, whatever the circumstances which may have caused this bewilderment, we must first of all not look at circumstances, but at ourselves as the root, as the decisive point of origin of all our vicious circles. How can we turn human energies away from all the false work in factories and offices, from all the suicidal daily activities?

When I speak of the logic of self-extermination and of salvation, I am first of all making the assumption that there is an 'implicit' or 'enfolded' Order, a body of natural law in the Cosmos and on our planet, and that this order extends into us as a basis of behaviour. We can therefore always know as much as is necessary in order to adapt ourselves. Words such as logic, logos or Tao (in harmony with the Great Order, in nature and society) refer to the possibility of human access to this ultimate ground or origin, to its unfolding and effectiveness. Our behaviour needs to conform itself to this awareness, even though it is inaccessible to reason. In this direction alone lies the balance we seek. Here lies the cyclical economy underlying evolution.

In the logic of self-extermination the arrow of evolution, conquest and expansion has torn itself loose from the cycle of eternal recurrence and turned itself more and more against the Origin. We don't preserve, but exploit as we proceed. "In the world you are afraid", it is written. The ego, especially the masculine ego, seeks to compensate for this by the pursuit of power and the politics of security. In this way, stage by stage, always internally and externally at the same time, we have created this suicidal civilisation, none more extreme than ours, the white man's Empire.

It is easy to underestimate its evil: putting the bad things in the garbage but the successes into storage, in order to hang on to them. Our civilisation is, however, wholly wrong, and thus the logic of salvation begins with the readiness to let go of everything - including our treasures, above all money-making and its techniques, and our particular form of competitive democracy - which is also part of the noose around our necks. And the logic of salvation ends with our giving up our highest treasure, the Doctor Faustus in us which is always ready to renew the pact with the Devil (Goethe's "Happiness of children of earth is still personhood"). We destroy the world to make ourselves a name, in order to take the path which "does not founder in aeons".

Between a beginning and an end of a logic of salvation lies the field of the politics of salvation, the field of a new-order politics, a politics of reform. The content it receives will depend on the atmosphere which forms itself in the pre- and trans-political sphere.

In view of the intention to combine spirituality and politics, my book has two interwoven strands, an inner and an outer line of approach to
INTRODUCTION

economy' would not really withstand the catastrophe, but if it were to
be consistently carried out more would be learnt from it than from any
other realpolitik.

It would come to grief. Any strategy which is limited to economics
and politics would come to grief. While the Megamachine quite ob-
viously cannot be stopped by public demonstrations of opposition, at
the same time neither can legal or governmental intervention, however
necessary they may be in the short run. We must withhold nourishment
from the Megamachine – human energy – rather than discipline it by
defensive battles from below and regulatory measures from above.

Yet what shall we do with social energies, which have hitherto been
channeled into changing the world by social action and the making of
things? Certainly we will need activity to set up a new order to adapt us
to the limited natural context of the earth. But very little activity can or
should be converted into production. So it is actually a far-reaching re-
dedication of the human energy-supply from deep within individuals,
on which we can still place hope. This has to happen from the ground
up, not just from those reservoirs of surplus energy which can no longer
find an outlet. It comes from the original tendency of life-energy itself,
which strives for a joyous expression.

On closer inspection this means spirituality (as opposed to material-
ism). It means a reorientation of our energies from predominantly outer
to predominantly inner activities, from material object to personal
subject, from construction to communion.

Without spiritual perspectives, the ecopax movement will be unable
to free itself from the logic of self-extirmination. Its heroes will lie dead
on the stage in the last act. This is not to say that all we have to do is
acustom ourselves to a little bit of euphoristic positive thinking, so that
everything will fall back spontaneously into its place. To develop the
logic of salvation, we need to recover access to the oldest human wisdom
– going back to the Old Stone Age, when people lived and celebrated
the basic circumstances of their existence and their place in the Cosmos,
still to a great extent free of the deforming ballast of later cultural
specialisation and alienation. Above all things, we must learn to direct
our awareness to ourselves, rather than to the world we have created.
We must also remain ongoingly conscious of the connection between
inside and outside, for everything is within us, and we are in every-
thing.

In the new age scene it is customary to reassure ourselves that we are
one with the clouds, the trees, the rocks and the animals. Correct, we
are all part of the trees and the trees are a part of us. But it is equally
important for us to recognise – according to the same logic! – that we are
also part of the Megamachine, and the Megamachine is part of us.

A NEW SOCIAL FOUNDATION

Today's adepts drive the Monte Verita in automobiles they identify with
more strongly than they do with trees.

A political attitude which could save us begins precisely at the point
where we clearly see our co-responsibility for self-destruction. It is
human social behaviour as a whole which makes the difference between
an act or omission which is harmful or furthering to life. The most
important political discipline is thus the seeking out of the truth about
ourselves.

The fall of the Wall

For a brief period of a few weeks in November and December 1989,
West German society had, across all its political camps, hoped that the
breakup in East Germany might bring about a transformation in the
whole of Germany. This meant that deep in its unconscious it is
altogether clear that capitalism, which euphemistically calls itself the
'market economy', is not the solution, but one of the most obvious
aspects of an absolutely insoluble problem, which one could call the
dilemma of the modern world.

And meanwhile, this society is sleeping more soundly than ever.
Before the mirror that the East German demand for symbols of afflu-
ence held before its eyes – from Japanese entertainment electronics to
Mercedes cars – it could have been horrified by the prospect latent in
the hope that our insane standard of living could be available for
everybody. Instead of this it allowed itself once again to be deadened by
Pyrrhic victory, believing the message that the Western World was the
best of all possible worlds.

What is the cause of this inclination to sleep? The Berlin novelist
Theodor Fontane once wrote that the modern world is founded on the
ego, and will founder on it as well. The western post-war world is a
golden nut constructed around the material needs of this ego-centre,
and is hollow inside – or rather, as the Gulf War has once again shown,
it is much worse than merely hollow, for its kernel is as black as Hell.
Is it not easy to recognise that the hellish machine which the westerners
turned loose on the Iraqis was planned, built and set going in Hell?

For this reason it is also high time for the perception that the healthy-
healthy talk and the esoteric new age advice channelled ever more
expansively from the 'other world' is all nothing much more than empty
chatter and is anything but illuminating. 'Totally relaxed in the here-
and-now' is a motto misunderstood as permissiveness toward lazy self-
satisfaction and pleasure in the beloved ego, and is not comprehended
as a challenge to unilateral personal disarmament and the relaxing of
our vain defence works called 'personal identity'.

The entire therapy and meditation business is reducing itself to just
one more late-Roman luxury, if it does not emphasise the responsibilities and obligations for a comprehensive new foundation of society. So I will close by placing nakedly in space a sort of Islamic proposition—borrowed from Fichte and concealed in this book—in order to explain the essential starting-point for a politics of salvation: God alone is, and outside God is nothing.

NOTES


(3) Realos: the ‘realos’ were the contrasting wing to the ‘fundis’ in the Green party, advocating realpolitik. Realpolitik is the pursuit of pragmatic realities and material needs, rather than ideals and morals.

(4) I refer here to Jonas Cohn’s introduction to Toynbee’s Gang der Weltgeschichte.

(5) An external proletariat lives outside the economic system (for example, ‘barbarians’ or colonised peoples), while an internal proletariat lives under it (for example, internal less-privileged classes).

(6) So lässt uns denn ein Apfelbäumchen pflanzen. Es ist so weit.


(8) Blaise Pascal, Geist und Herz, eine Auswahl aus dem Gesamtwerk (Berlin, 1964).

(9) Goethe in Westöstlicher Dichter, Buch Suleika.

(10) Goethe in the last act of Faust II.