BEYOND GLOBALIZATION: REFLECTIONS ON GLOCALISM

FRED DALLMAYR
University of Notre Dame
fred.r.dallmayr.1@nd.edu

Abstract: The old adage states that humankind moves "one step forward" before it moves "two steps backward", suggesting that there is no such thing as a linear evolution. This is particularly true when applied to our present time, the "age of globalization". In the case of globalism, "two steps back" are needed in order to assess more soberly the present historical trajectory, and capture the "internal dialectic" of globalism. In fact, what we are witnessing today in many parts of the world is a backlash to globalism, manifest in an upsurge of traditional nationalism, if not chauvinism and ethnocentrism. The core issue is a difficult relation between nearness and distance, between the concretely singular and the general/universal which the term "globalism" seeks to capture but, of course, cannot explain. My reflections in the following seek to explore and shed some light on this relation. In a first step, I venture into philosophical (and theological) terrain in an effort to discern the meaning of human situatedness in a place, a space, or a "world". Next, I discuss the inevitable tensions or conflicts between nearness and distance, that is, the inner "dialectic" between the local and the global. Finally, I translate the local/global syndrome into the correlation of "earth and world", "roots and routes", familiar loyalties and unfamiliar peregrinations.

Keywords: globalization, glocalism, nationalism, ethnocentrism, humankind.

In memory of Zygmunt Bauman

An old adage about historical evolution says that humankind moves "one step forward" before it moves "two steps backward". Expressed in this manner the adage has a melancholy ring. It seems to indicate that human aspirations are ill-fated and, in the end, always come to naught. However, one can give the saying also a more hopeful meaning. In that case, the adage simply states that there is no such thing as a linear evolution and that every move forward quickly discloses unexpected costs or drawbacks – drawbacks which make it necessary to go back to the drawing board and to rethink more soberly the path one has chosen. This interpretation applies with particular force to our present time which is variously defined as the "secular age", the "nuclear age", or more broadly as the "age of globalization". Each of these labels harbors a dilemma which – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly

– has come to the fore. Thus, secularism promised an advance in human emancipation; but the result has often been a descent into shallow materialism and consumerism. While the release of nuclear energy signaled a stunning advance in science, the effects of unleashed nuclear power have been devastating. The same antinomy is evident in the process of globalization. While widely heralded as the rise of the "global village" and "spaceship earth", the process in actuality coincides largely with the triumph of financial capitalism, global elitism, and the shattering of traditional loyalties.

It is especially in the case of globalism that "two steps back" are needed in order to assess more soberly the present historical trajectory. What we are witnessing today in many parts of the world is a backlash to globalism, manifest in an upsurge of traditional nationalism, if not chauvinism and ethnocentrism. Whereas globalism had initially championed an unlimited openness to difference and the arrival of a "borderless" world, the backlash tends to put a premium on national or communal unity and the fortification of borders. Especially during the time of "post-modernism" (around the turn of the century), some leading intellectuals had celebrated the values of "deterritoriality" and global "nomadism", coupled with the ecstatic qualities of radical "otherness". What was missed here was the cost or what one may call the "internal dialectic" of globalism: the fact that "deterritoriality" and global vagrancy were indeed a growing reality – but only for an elite of financiers and corporate executives, while ordinary people (especially working class people) were increasingly impoverished and tied to obscure localities. There is no point or benefit in lambasting the present backlash to globalism, unless one is willing to recognize this internal dialectic or counterpoint. What this counterpoint requires is a serious rethinking of the entire process of globalization, seeking to bend it into an entirely new direction.

This means that there is a need – and the backlash inchoately perceives it – to start not from the top or "the global" but from the everyday local condition where ordinary people live and make their living. In this respect, it is good to remember the insightful words of Merleau-Ponty when he wrote that a society is not the temple of abstract principles, but its core resides "in the value it places upon man's relation to man", adding "to understand and judge a society, one has to penetrate its basic structure to the human bond upon which it is built; this undoubtedly depends upon

legal relations, but also [and perhaps primarily] upon forms of labor, ways of loving, living and dying" (Merleau-Ponty 1947: xiv)[1].

To be sure, for Merleau-Ponty, focusing on ordinary human relations did not mean opting for a narrowly confined "localism" (manifest in chauvinism or ethnocentrism). Rather, his words meant putting the accent on that place or locality where human beings first of all experience their freedom and practice concretely whatever aspirations or "virtues" they cherish. What emerges here is a difficult relation between nearness and distance, between the concretely singular and the general/universal which the term "globalism" seeks to capture but, of course, cannot explain. My reflections in the following seek to explore and shed some light on this relation. In a first step, I venture into philosophical (and theological) terrain in an effort to discern the meaning of human situatedness in a place, a space, or a "world". Next, I discuss the inevitable tensions or conflicts between nearness and distance, that is, the inner "dialectic" between the local and the global. Finally, I translate the local/global syndrome into the correlation of "earth and world", "roots and routes", familiar loyalties and unfamiliar peregrinations.

BEING-IN-THE-WORLD, PLACE AND NO-PLACE

The tension between nearness and distance has a long philosophical pedigree. In a way, it can be traced back all the way to Greek philosophy, especially to Aristotle. Dispute rages among scholars whether Aristotle placed the primary accent of his concern on contemplation or on ethical praxis. Revolving around the quest for intellectual "truth", contemplation can be said to have no borders and in this way is "universal" in scope. On the other hand, ethical praxis is necessarily performed by concrete people at a given time in a given place; to this extent, it prefers nearness to distance. Probably, the dispute is overdrawn. On a plausible interpretation, Aristotle can be viewed as a champion of both contemplation and praxis, a thinker holding both in tensional relation without reducing one to the other (especially without deducing praxis from universal principles)[2]. In this way, the well-known motto "think globally, act locally", can find its ancestry in Aristotle's work. With various modifications, the nearness-distance co-

nundrum preoccupied Western philosophy in the long course of its history – though only rarely recapturing Aristotle's admirable balance. An echo of the Greek legacy can be found in the philosophy of Hegel who built an elaborate system of ethical human life leading from the *oikos* to the *polis* and cosmopolis, that is, from everyday life in the family to the steadily diversifying life in society, the state, and finally universal history. The animating or sustaining cord that linked the different levels was relationality or mutual "recognition".

In recent philosophy the thinker who continued the Aristotelian impulse – though in a completely different metaphysical register – was Martin Heidegger. Among the innovative features of his work is his novel interpretation of place and space. As is well known, Heidegger defined human existence as "being-in-the-world", where the hyphens crucially matter. With this formulation, he launched a basic rebellion against a conception which had overshadowed Western modernity: the Cartesian conception of the "thinking substance" (*ego cogitans*) standing opposed to an external environment or world (*res extensa*). Conceived as an internal capacity, the Cartesian *cogito* was basically a mind without borders and thus potentially the universal overseer or master of the external world. This conception served as a major inspiration for the subsequent European Enlightenment and its various offshoots (especially the philosophy of "subjectivity"). At the same time, the externalization of the world served as the launching pad for the rise and prodigious development of modern science and empirical inquiry (especially positivism and experimentalism). To rebel against this dominant conception was no mean undertaking, and much of the misunderstanding or lopsided construal of Heidegger's work derives from the boldness of his venture (which at some time he described as a "*Kehre*" or paradigm shift). As we read in *Being and Time*: the proper understanding of human being involves a task "with which philosophy has wrestled for a long time, but without ever reaching a satisfactory conclusion: namely, the formulation of a 'natural' [not cognitively constructed] notion of 'world'" (Heidegger 1967a: par. 11, p. 52)[3].

To make headway in this direction, Heidegger uses another expression designating human existence: "*Dasein*". Literally translated, the term means "being here or there", that is, being at a location, at a place somehow in the world. This is in turn means that

location or locality is not an accident or an external addition to human being but belongs to it in the sense of an ontological condition of possibility. In turn, the "Sein" in *Dasein* is not merely an empirical (or ontic) substance or occurrence, but a transempirical condition of possibility of world. As captured in the expressions "*Dasein*" and "being-in-the-world", human being is a manifestation of "Being" (*Sein*), which – as Heidegger insists – is not just an abstract concept but rather "transcendence as such" (the latter taken in the sense of a well-spring of all beings) (Heidegger 1967a: par. 7, p. 38)[4]. Seen in this light, the hyphens in the expression "being-in-the-world" designate an intimate co-constitution, a nexus which is missed when human existence is construed as pure "mind" or "subjectivity" and "world" as a material or empirical container. Rather, human existence is constitutively worldly, spatial or embodied. For Heidegger, the hyphens are also misconstrued when seen as a mere coupling or correlation. In his words: "Being-in-the-world" is not a "quality" which existence may or may not have. There is no "bare" existence which accidentally has a relation to world: "*Dasein* is not initially a detached (*seins-frei*) being which occasionally is disposed to relate to a world. Rather, assuming such a relation is possible only because *Dasein* is basically constituted as being-in-the-world" (Heidegger 1967a: par. 12, pp. 56-57)[5].

The nexus linking human beings with the world is not simply an abstract cognition based on "wanting to know", but an engagement based on "care" (*Sorge*) or careful attention – an attention which, in the case of encountered fellow beings, takes the mode of a caring "solicitude" (*Fürsorge*). In Heidegger's words: "Being-in-the-world as a mode of care is itself attracted (*benommen*) by the cared-for world". Taken in this sense, "world" (*Welt*) has an existential and experiential meaning; taken in a deeper sense, the term adumbrates the "ontological" notion of "worldliness" (*Weltlichkeit*), the latter signifying the condition of possibility of worldly encounters as such. As one should note, being-in-the-world as an existential encounter cannot be spatially pinpointed in terms of "here" or "there", nearness or distance, closeness or farness, thus rupturing the Cartesian concept of "space" as "extended matter" (*res extensa*). In a fascinating discussion of the "spatiality" (*Räumlichkeit*) of human existence, Heidegger develops a new conception of "space" (*Raum*). "Spatiality of *Dasein*",

he writes, "does not refer to a mere factual placement at a spot in the world […] Rather, *Dasein* is 'in' the world in the sense of a caring-familiar dealing with worldly encountered beings or phenomena". Seen from this angle, factually distant or remote beings can be encountered as close-by or familiar, just as factually close or familiar beings can be encountered as remote. In the first case, Heidegger employs the term (or word-play) "de-distantiation" (*Ent-fernung*) meaning a "bringing closer", adding that *Dasein* has a congenital bent toward "nearness" (*Nähe*). On the other hand, factual closeness can also be experienced as distance or farness, a primary example being the submergence of *Dasein* in an anonymous crowd or collectivity ("das Man") (Heidegger 1967a: par. 14, 23, 27, pp. 65, 104-105, 126)[6].

The terms closeness or nearness may convey a tendential egocentrism (or anthropocentrism). Heidegger is firm in rejecting this construal. Bringing closer does not mean closer to an "ego" because human *Dasein* is first of all a being-in-the-world. Moreover, Heidegger is adamant in rejecting the self-identification of *Dasein* with an "ego". "Perhaps when approached *Dasein* is inclined to proclaim always: 'It is I' and proclaim it most loudly when precisely it not 'I myself'". As a modality "Being", being-in-the-world has a self-transcending or ontological quality; in this sense, one can say that *Dasein* has also a congenital bent toward distance or farness. As one can see, "spatiality" in Heidegger's sense displays a necessary tension or interplay between nearness and distance (a corollary of what is called "ontological difference"). This aspect is illustrated particularly clearly in *Dasein's* encounter with other human beings thematized (as mentioned before) under the label of "solicitude" (*Fürsorge*). As a mode of caring attentiveness, solicitude involves a move attempting to bring the other closer or nearer – but with a twist. For, bringing closer can also mean an effort to assimilate, manipulate or manage the other, thus depriving the other of his/her ontological integrity. This is why Heidegger insists that, in interhuman encounters, solicitude should take the mode of a "liberating" attention, setting the other free for his/her own possibilities. This liberating attentiveness is at the heart of what Heidegger calls "letting be" (which is far removed from both indifference and control) (Heidegger 1967a: par. 25, 26, pp. 115, 121-122)[7].

Heidegger's comments on "world" and being-in-the-world are not limited to *Being and Time*. In subsequent years, several central features of that book were subjected to questioning and criticism – including the conception of "world". According to some readers, Heidegger's notion of "world" – especially when coupled with the accent on nearness and "de-distantiation" – meant the endorsement of a radical "immanentism" and the encapsulation of *Dasein* in a secular "this-worldliness". In line with traditional "two-world" theories, this encapsulation spiraled the rejection of "transcendence" in any form. To be sure, this misreading could easily have been avoided by a close look at Heidegger's argument: especially his emphasis on the "ekstatic" openness of *Dasein* and the congenital correlation of nearness and farness. Obviously piqued by the accusation, Heidegger chose to respond to the accusation twenty years after his *magnum opus*, in his famous "Letter on Humanism" (1946). As we read there: "The reference to 'being-in-the-world' as the basic trait of the 'humanitas' of human existence does not assert that *Dasein* is merely a 'worldly' creature in the [dualistic] Christian sense": thus a creature turned away from God and cut loose from "transcendence" or "the transcendent". As he adds emphatically: "In the term 'being-in-the-world', 'world' does not in any way denote earthly (*irdisch*) in contrast to heavenly being, nor the world-secular in contrast to the 'spiritual'. For us, world in that phrase does not at all signify beings or a realm of beings but rather the openness (*Offenheit*) of Being". In a sense, world here converges with "worldliness" (*Weltlichkeit*) mentioned before, viewed as the ontological condition of possibility of space or spatiality (Heidegger 1949: 35)[8].

What emerges here is an unusual notion of world, globality or globalism, a notion serving as the corollary of the "ek-static" or self-transcending quality of human existence. Clearly, globality here does not denote a vast spatial expanse (*res extensa*) or an abstract kind of universalism (as envisaged by some champions of modern Enlightenment). Above all it does not mean a "borderless" playground for global nomadism or an aimless drifting without bounds. Rather, world here is the horizon of a challenge or soliciting demand addressed to human existence seen as a responsive-responding agent (or in Heidegger's terms: as a "projected project", "*geworfener Entwurf*"). In his words: responsive to this challenge, human *Dasesin* "stands out into the openness of Being.

'World' here means the clearing of Being into which *Dasein* as 'projected' reaches out". Standing out "ek-statically" here does not signify a delirium or exotic mind-set; nor does it mean a self-induced intoxication or inebriation. Instead, it is simply the corollary of self-transcending care or solicitude. "Being-in-the-world", Heidegger adds, "denotes the quality of 'ek-sistence' in its orientation to a cleared dimension which sustains the 'ek' of existence". Viewed from a mundane-anthropological angle, "world is in away what transcends (*das Jenseitige*) of ordinary human being" (Heidegger 1949: 35)[9].

Just as it does not merely constitute a vast expanse, world and its phenomena thus should not be seen as more human adjuncts or products. Although care and solicitude bring world and beings existentially near, nearness or closeness does not equate factual proximity. Above all, the character of nearness is completely missed when construed as a mode of self-centeredness: "Human existence is never simply immanent or 'this-worldly' located in a 'subject', whether the latter is treated as an 'ego' or a 'we'". In other passages of his Letter, Heidegger denounces all forms of "centrism" in addition to egocentrism: including anthropocentrism, nation-centrism, and even global-centrism or internationalism (insofar as the latter is merely an assemblage of nationalisms). "Every nationalism", he writes, "is metaphysically an anthropologism and as such a 'subjectivism' or egocentrism. Nationalism is not overcome by a mere globalism but only expanded and elevated into a system. It is just as little humanized and transcended by internationalism as individualism is by and a-historical collectivism". As one can see, nearness or "de-distantiation" has to be dislodged from any "centrism", that is, from any kind of complacent self-identity or self-affirmation. The uncanny and self-transcending quality of nearness for Heidegger is revealed very clearly in a story he recounts about Heraclitus and his encounter with a group of travelers or tourists. In visiting the philosopher, the tourists obviously wanted to experience an extraordinary sight; but they found him warming himself at an oven. Disappointed they were ready to leave; but Heraclitus motioned them to come closer saying: "For here too, gods are present". In Heidegger's interpretation: "The ordinary-familiar is [or can be] for *Dasein* an opening for the uncanny presence of gods" (Heidegger 1949: 28, 35, 39-41)[10].

THE ANTINOMY OF LOCALISM AND GLOBALISM

Still another passage in "Letter on Humanism" elaborates on the meaning of nearness or closeness. With specific reference to Hölderlin's elegy "Homecoming" (*Heimkunft*), Heidegger portrays "nearness to Being" as *Dasein's* "homeland" (*Heimat*) – the word taken in an ontological sense, that is, "not patriotically or nationalistically, but in terms of the history of Being". In this context, the word "*Heimat*" stands in contrast or as a foil to what is actually happening today: namely, the "homelessness" (*Heimatlosigkeit*) of modern human beings, their condition of being wrenched or torn away from the "nearness to Being". This modern cleavage or rupture is portrayed in the Letter also as the "abandonment of and by Being" (*Seinsverlassenheit*) which in turn is a sign of the "oblivion of Being" (*Seinsvergessenheit*). The latter is directly evident for Heidegger in positivism and shallow materialism, that is, the modern tendency to focus exclusively on empirical (ontic) facts or beings, while ignoring the meaning of Being. In a revealing addendum, Heidegger finds inklings of oblivion and homelessness in the Hegelian and Marxist notion of "alienation" (*Entfremdung*). "Because", he writes, "their experience of alienation reaches into a basic dimension of historical disclosure, Marx's [and Hegel's] conception of history is superior to usual historicism" – although they remain shy of a proper ontological breakthrough (Heidegger 1949: 25-27)[11].

As diagnosed and anticipated by Heidegger, homelessness and oblivion have indeed become a "world destiny" – manifest in rapid advances of faceless technology, global economic managerialism, and vast migratory movements. British sociologist Zymunt Bauman has summarized all these phenomena under the label of "liquid modernity", meaning that in modernity everything liquefies or disperses by losing contact, coherent meaning, and stability. As he writes, modernity today is fluid or on the run: "To be 'modern' now means to 'modernize' – compulsively, obsessively; not so much just 'to be,' let alone to keep identity intact, but forever 'becoming', avoiding completion, staying underdefined" (or undefined). For Bauman, the whole gist of modernity stands out from preceding epochs "by its compulsive and obsessive modernizing – which today means liquefaction, melting and smelting". In this situation, everything that is solid or stable is tolerated only in-

sofar as it promises to be easily "fusible" on demand. Taking issue
with the term "post-modernity" (suggesting a step beyond mo-
dernity as constant change), Bauman prefers "liquid modernity"
expressing the growing conviction "that change is *the only* per-
manence, and certainly the only certainty we have". Pursuing this
point to its underlying cause, he finds the latter in (what can be
called) "deregulation", that is, the separation of effective power or
the "powers that be" from actual human agency or design. "To
put it bluntly", he states, "under conditions of 'liquidity' every-
thing could happen yet nothing is or can be done with confidence
or certainty". The absence or stark erosion of agency, of the abil-
ity to lead a stable life, is demonstrated by the immense number of
"uprooted people": "migrants, refugees, exiles, asylum seekers –
people on the move and without permanent abode" (Bauman
2000: viii-xvii).

As Bauman acknowledges, liquidity is not experienced alike
by all people or all strata of the population; it is "anything but
globally synchronized". Worldwide there is a growing division be-
tween rich and poor, between "the well-off, sanguine and boister-
ous" and "the poor and prospectless" – that is, between those
who benefit from liquidity and those who are its victims. The
former are the "globalized" people or globe-trotters; the latter are
the local or "localized" people who are left behind. It is against
this background that Bauman addresses the issue of "globalism".
In a wide-ranging discussion with Italian intellectual Carlo Bor-
doni, he explores the dialectic and growing antimony between
global and local dimensions in contemporary life. As he notes, to-
day the traditional state and public institutions have been "expro-
priated of a large and growing part of their past genuine or im-
puted power (to get things done)"; the latter instead has been
"captured by the supra-state – global forces operating in a politi-
cally uncontrolled 'space of flows'". What differentiates the pre-
sent crisis from earlier crises, in his view, is that it is characterized
by the "divorce" or antimony between ruling forces ("power")
and meaningful human agency ("politics"); consequently, the
"awesome task" faced by humanity today is that of "raising 'poli-
tics' and its stakes to an entirely new and unprecedented height".
Corroborating this argument, Bordoni speaks of the "separation
between the two levels, between the global and the local, between
power and politics", adding that contemporary global power, by

wielding control over politics, can now "eagerly dominate society and prevent any resistance" (Bauman and Bordoni 2014: 11-13).

For Bordoni, the frailty of society and local politics leads to two equally damaging results: apathy and populism. On the one hand, locked out from meaningful action, members of the traditional "citizenry" may opt out of politics altogether, preferring the delight (and amnesia) of consumerism. On the other hand, people still wedded to activism, may choose the perilous ventures of "populism and nationalism". In Bordoni's view, that choice often proves to be "the prelude to tyrannical and authoritarian regimes, as demonstrated by recent history". Populism, in particular, starts from the "rejection of ordinary politics", and through the exaltation of charismatic figures manages to justify "the dictatorship of the strong man – the only one who can take on the daunting task of putting things right". What triggers both apathy and populism (or populist nationalism) is the withering away of responsible democratic government under the onslaught of anonymous "forces that be" – what Bordoni calls global "governance" (what others have called "cellular globalism"). As he writes: "'Governance' has taken the place of a government bound by a relationship of trust with the public". Hidden behind a mass of "increasingly chaotic and impenetrable bureaucracy", governance manages the community that has "lost its state guardian". What has happened in our time is that public "power" is managed "by the markets, by financial groups, by supranational forces that evade democratic control", while "politics" is left behind as a "frayed" and ephemeral enterprise. Even when not totally eliminated, local politics is reduced to purely mechanical or routine functions bereft of any ability of "intervening in the impenetrability of 'governance'" (Bauman and Bordoni 2014: 13-15)[12].

Responding to Bordoni's observations, Bauman corroborates the argument of the effervescence of democratic agency. One of the chief effects of the so-called "neo-liberal revolution", he states, is the deepening split between governance and practical political engagement. This means that the traditions compact between government and politics has been sundered into "a power freed from all but rudimentary political control, and a politics suffering a permanent and growing deficit of power". Citing political theorist John Gray, Bauman points out that traditional governments are among the chief "casualties" of the present crisis, owing to the

feet that "the worst threats to humankind are global in nature". To put everything into a nutshell, he adds: "Our present crisis is first and foremost a crisis of [democratic] agency – though ultimately it is a crisis of territorial sovereignty" (as simply of "territoriality"). Under the pressure of global governance, some formally "sovereign" governments have been "demoted to the rank of local police precincts, entities struggling to secure a modicum of law and order" necessary for routine traffic problems. Pressured to do something, local governing bodies are bound to seek "local solutions for globally generated problems" – a task "far transcending the capacity of all except a handful" among them. To illustrate some of the global/local dilemmas besetting the world today, Bauman draws attention to the plight of European countries pressured and torn asunder by global forces: "Just like the rest of the planet, Europe is nowadays a dumping ground for globally generated problems and challenges". What makes Europe significant for Bauman, however, is the possibility or prospect of an alternative scenario, one exploring and experimenting with new global/local vistas: "The European Union stands a chance of performing the combined/blended tasks of making a reconnaissance sally forward, setting up a way-station and creating a frontier outpost" for humanity (Bauman and Bordoni 2014: 20-22, 25)[13].

Bauman and Bordoni are not alone in pondering the global/local conundrum or dilemma. In fact, the dilemma is a frequent topic in contemporary social science literature. Recently, in their book *The Politics of Virtue*, John Milbank and Adrian Pabst have reflected on the theme, again with special attention to the place of Europe in the global/local predicament. Clearly, the theme is bound to figure in a discussion of "virtue", given the fact that, despite its global significance, virtuous action is necessarily tied to concrete particular agents operating in a given time and place. Thus, the topic of their book is inevitably situated at the global/local cusp. As the authors argue, the arrogant pretense of imperialism and colonialism is fortunately no longer part of European (or British and French) self-understanding. But does this fact warrant a retreat into insular or local/Continental ethnocentrism, neglectful of deeper cultural traditions and vistas? Here, Milbank and Pabst make the bold proposal of a new global/local covenant: a "European Commonwealth" with possibly global extensions. Such a commonwealth, they write, could potentially offer "a genu-

ine alternative to states or super states on the one hand, and glob-
alized free trade zones on the other". Instead of celebrating big-
ness or a retreating into smallness, thinking in terms of common-
wealth "shifts the emphasis to intimate reciprocities in ever-
widening circles from the local street to the planet", thus fusing
economic, political and ecological purpose in the name of "the
flourishing of each and every person" (Milbank and Pabst 2016:
368-369).

To be sure, as Milbank and Pabst realize, under present cir-
cumstances the road to a global/local "commonwealth" is arduous
and steep. Clearly, the vision cannot be imposed from above by a
global hegemon or super-Leviathan; it has to be pursued from the
ground up and laterally (or interculturally) through ethical cultiva-
tion and mutual engagement. As they write: In the face of the de-
fects and derailments of neo-liberal ideology, "the only pacifying
course can now be the rediscovery of the political [or political
agency] as the positive mutual quest for virtue, which can open up
a realistic prospect of a global order sustained by striving vision
and not constitutive antagonism". Seen again this background, the
gist of a "politics of virtue" is the endeavor to promote "individu-
al fulfilment and mutual flourishing [*eudaimonia*], though always
mediated, as it must be, by local inheritances and specification"
(Milbank and Pabst 2016: 372-373, 380). Prudently, the authors
do not offer a blueprint of their covenantal scenario, leaving de-
tails to the work of engaged and far-sighted participants. Proba-
bly, their proposal would involve a reform of the United Nations
and their affiliated agencies, a strengthening of regional organiza-
tions, a redesign of the existing British commonwealth and the
European Union – all this together with a re-invigoration of local
political competences and responsibilities.

TOWARD A GLOCAL PRAXIS

As can be gathered from the preceding, the global-local syn-
drome cannot fully be resolved through mere social engineering
or a more complex bureaucracy; nor is it sufficient to appeal to
abstract principles or maxims. Given the gravity of the situation,
nothing less is required than an existential awakening and ethical
reorientation, pretty much along the lines of the "politics of vir-

tue" mentioned before. Here we are back at the motto cited at the
beginning which stresses the primacy of "acting locally" – alt-
hough with attention to broader, possibly global implications. As
previously mentioned, this is the heart of the "virtue ethics" inau-
gurated by Aristotle, with his emphasis on contextual prudence
and situated action or praxis. In recent times, this perspective has
been revived and re-invigorated by a number of philosophers, es-
pecially by Hans-Georg Gadamer and Alasdair MacIntyre. As
Gadamer observes at one point: for Aristotle, "virtuous action
does not consist merely in [abstract] knowing, for the possibility
of knowing depends on what a person is like" as the latter is
formed "through his or her education and way of life" (Gadamer
1999: 28)[14]. In turn, MacIntyre is well known chiefly through his
book *After Virtue*, where "after" refers to a grim scenario (remi-
niscent of our own) where both the terminology and the practice
of virtue have been erased by a massive catastrophe (MacIntyre
1984: 1-5).

From a different angle, and with pertinence to the present
discussion, Martin Heidegger has elaborated on the difficult co-
nundrum of nearness and distance in some of his later writings.
Most explicitly the issue is discussed in his lectures on "The
Origin of the Work of Art" (1935/36). In these texts, the notion
of "world" – familiar from his earlier work – is placed in correla-
tion or rather counterpoint with what he terms "earth". As before,
"world" designates an open horizon of meaning disclosure and
purposive life pursuits; by contrast, "earth" now stands for a place
of reticent un-meaning and sheltered retreat. A prominent exam-
ple of the counterpoint, in the texts, is a Greek temple seen as a
cultural-religious art-work. Clearly, the temple does not portray or
copy anything else (as one might expect in representational art).
Rather, the temple houses the figure of a god and in its structure
opens up a "holy precinct". This precinct is not something amor-
phous, indefinite, or abstractly "universal"; it discloses a specific
meaning. The temple-work, Heidegger writes, "first fits together
and gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in
which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and defeat,
stability and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human be-
ings"; thus, it opens up "the 'world' of this [Greek] historical
people". At the same time, the structure of the temple stands on
"rocky ground", absorbing into itself "the obscurity of the rock's

bulky support". It is this supporting ground which guards the temple "against the storms raging above" and in the midst of different seasons. "We call this ground the *earth*" – a term which does not just designate an indistinct mass of matter; rather, "earth is that element into which arising disclosure (*das Aufgehen*) brings back and shelters disclosure as such. In all things that arise (*im Aufgehenden*), earth is the sheltering agent" (Heidegger 1963: 30-31)[15].

As one can see, earth and world stand in opposition; but more properly speaking, they are correlated in a complex counterpoint where each partner or element retains its own integral identity without fusion. Neither term can be derived from or reduced to something else. Above all, "world" is not an object (*vorhanden*) amenable to empirical analysis. By the same token, world is not the mere collection of "countable or uncountable, familiar or unfamiliar things"; even less is it a purely imagined framework superimposed on phenomena. Heidegger arrives here at one of his well-known "verbalizations", that is, the transformation of nouns into verbs. "Wherever", he states, "crucial historical decisions are made, wherever they are taken up or abandoned, ignored or rediscovered, there *the world worlds* (*die Welt weltet*)". By opening up a world, he adds, all things gain their rest and their speed, there farness and nearness, their horizon and limits. Thus, what is gathered in the temple's "worlding of the world" is that "spaciousness" (*Geräumigkeit*) out which the favor of the temple's god is granted or withheld. At the same time, the "earth" has its own integrity and intrinsic character. Earth is that "which shelters" – shelters its own presence and appearance. Heidegger distinguishes here between "setting up" (*aufstellen*) and "positioning" (*herstellen*): "In setting up or disclosing a world, the art-work also positions the earth". Differently put: the art-work moves the earth into the open region of the world – and keeps it there (as sheltered). Thus, the art-work "*lets the earth be earth*" (Heidegger 1963: 34-35)[16].

As one should note, the complex relation between earth and world is captured by Heidegger in the phrase "letting be" – a phrase which expresses both their mutuality or mutual dependence and their distinctive difference or independence. Heidegger arrives here at the notion of an intimate struggle or loving contest. As he writes: World is the open meaning horizon of the "broad

paths" and basic decisions of historical people; earth, on the other hands, is the presence of that which is "continually self-secluding" and thus sheltering and concealing. In this way, world and earth are "essentially different from each other" and yet "never separated". What is important to realize is that the relation does not dissolve into an "empty unity" or fusion; nor does it wither into mutual indifference or reciprocal "unconcern". Putting the accent on difference, Heidegger states: "The opposition of world and earth is a strife (*Streit*)", but adds immediately that strife must not be confused with "discord" or "enmity" (*Hader*). In genuine strife, opponents challenge and lift each other to the highest point of their capability; they certainly do not seek to diminish or eliminate each other: "In strife, each opponent carries the other beyond itself" – to the utmost of his/her possibility. What emerges at the high point of strife is what Heidegger calls "the simplicity of intimacy" of the partners (Heidegger 1963: 37-38)[17].

In his Art-Work lectures, Heidegger does not explore more concretely the implications of the earth-world correlation – apart from making some brief comments on the fortunes and misfortunes involved in the founding of political regimes (*staatsgründende Tat*). However, it is not very difficult to extrapolate from his argument some broader connotations. What Heidegger calls the "worlding of the world" is today often translated, or rather mistranslated, as "globalization". The chief engines of this globalization are usually found in the expansion of markets, media networks, and the proliferation of military armaments. It is this process that Bauman has accurately portrayed as "liquefaction" or "liquid modernity", that is, the steady dismantling and dissolution of stable connections, commitments, and loyalties. Among devotees of this process, globalization has often unleashed a giddy euphoria of progress and emancipation aiming at radical "deterritorialization" and, in fact, the abolition of space and time. To be sure, the euphoria is purchased at a price. As Bauman has shown, the freedom of the global elite is contrasted to the unfreedom and lack of meaningful agency among "local" populations. In our present time, the contrast between globalism and local aspirations seems stretched to the breaking point: a situation manifest in the radical aloofness and irresponsibility of global financial and corporate elites, on the one hand, and the counter-pull of radical

populism, fundamentalism, and self-enclosure of local ethnic and/or religious communities.

As can be seen, the sketched scenario is far removed from Heidegger's texts. As indicated, there is indeed a tension or counterpoint in his presentation: between "world" and "earth" or, more precisely, between the "worlding of the world" and the "letting be of earth". Again, world here means the continuous search for and disclosure of meaning horizons or possibilities; on the other hand, earth signifies the reticence of un-meaning, of the sheltering quality of immemorial traditions or customs, usually associated with some kind of local rootedness and identity. What his presentation guards against is the descent of counterpoint into "brute rupture" (*Kluft*) or "strife" – which, given contemporary weapons technology, could be disastrous. What Heidegger recommends instead is the cultivation of mutual attentiveness and solicitude – nurtured by care – which can foster a reconciliation of the pulls and counter-pulls, leading to the "simplicity of intimacy" (*Einfaches der Innigkeit*) or the "intimacy of strife" (*Innigkeit des Streites*). Such intimacy is illustrated in great art-works, such as the Greek temple resting on solid rock. But it might also be illustrated in genuinely creative praxis in other areas, such as community life and public-political engagements attentive to both local and global demands.

From a different angle and in a different idiom, Heidegger's correlation of earth and world has been translated by Indian social thinker Ananta Giri into the counterpoint of "roots" and "routes". Seconding Bauman, Giri perceives modernity as a process involving steady innovation, a searching of "new paths of future development", a search which can easily derail into a quest for abstract universalism and detached aloofness. As a check on these aspirations, however, he also acknowledges a countervailing process: namely, what T. K. Ommen has called "ethnification" and Alain Touraine a "strengthening of ethnic communities". What is significant in Giri's approach is his unwillingness – partly inspired by Heidegger – to allow the counterpoint of orientations to decay into antithesis or strife, a point clearly evident in the title of his study *Cross-Fertilizing Roots and Routes*. Regarding the meaning of "roots", his study invokes the beautiful comments of Simone Weil in her book *Need for Roots*:

> To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. […] A human being has roots by virtue of his/her real, active and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves [shelters] in living shape certain particular measures of the past and certain expectations of the future.

As Giri makes clear right away (entirely in Weil's spirit), rootedness has nothing in common with ethnocentrism, exclusionary patriotism and (what Weil herself called) "self-idolatry". Unfortunately, he complains, too often ethnic or national patriotism reproduces today "a logic of self-idolatry" (Giri: forthcoming)[18].

The danger of the derailment of counterpoint into violent confrontation is immense in our time. In the Indian context, Giri points especially to the dismal conditions in Assam where "ethnic groups are at each other's throat", with the result that, even beyond its borders, the whole North-East of India has become "a cauldron of ethnic violence and annihilation". As in other similar situations, the remedy here is not the forced imposition of political unity from above, but the resort to "crossroads", to attempts at "cross-fertilizing" roots and routes. In Giri's words: the widespread experience of violence highlights the need "to create a culture, space and politics of dignity and respect, one of hospitality" (rather than hostage-taking) (Giri: forthcoming)[19]. The resources for remedial conduct derive in part from available political teachings and examples. In India, a prominent example of cross-fertilizing action was Gandhi's role during the struggle for independence. In addition, there are important philosophical, ethical and religious resources. For Giri, Heidegger's example of the Greek temple is probably not very relevant or persuasive. But as an Indian, he is surely familiar with temples – in fact, with the whole immense panoply of temples spread out over the entire Indian subcontinent. As is well known, this entire network of temples, "rooted" in different localities, is connected by popular and frequently traveled "routes" of pilgrimage. If anywhere in the world, the counterpoint of roots and routes is vibrantly preserved in this multitude of sacred places. From this angle, one can surely see that there is not only a sacred history (or salvation history) pointing forward, but a sacred geography of venerated sites linking the future with past memories and recorded events. From a still different perspective, one might say that time and space are

not abstract concepts but correlated and interactive features constitutive of human life.

NOTES

[1] As Merleau-Ponty continued, somewhat provocatively at the onset of the Cold War: "Any serious discussion of communism [socialism] must therefore pose the problems in communist [socialism] terms, that is to say, not on the ground of principles but on the ground of human relations. It will not brandish liberal principles in order to topple communism; it will examine whether it is doing anything to resolve the problem rightly raised by communism, namely, to establish among people relations that are human" (Merleau-Ponty 1947: xv). As the translator O'Neill explains: "In 1947 there was still a chance, at least in the mind of a non-Communist left intellectual like Merleau-Ponty, that France and Europe would not become a satellite either to America or the Soviet Union" (Merleau-Ponty 1947: viii).

[2] As is well known, Aristotle defined human being in two ways: as a "*zoon logon echon*" (a being endowed with *logos*/reason) and a "*zoon politikon*" (a being capable of public agency).

[3] In the above and subsequent passages I use my own translation. In English see also (Heidegger 1962: 76).

[4] In English (Heidegger 1962: 62).

[5] In English (Heidegger 1962: 82-83).

[6] In English (Heidegger 1962: 93, 137-139, 163).

[7] In English, (Heidegger 1962: 150-151, 158-159).

[8] In the above and subsequent citations I have slightly altered the English translation for the sake of clarity. In English see also (Heidegger 1977a: 228).

[9] In English (Heidegger 1977a: 229).

[10] In English (Heidegger 1977a: 221, 229, 233-234).

[11] In English (Heidegger 1977a: 217-219). As Heidegger adds: "The essence of [Marxist] materialism does not consist in the assertion that everything is simply matter, but rather in a metaphysical [ontological] determination according to which every being appears as the material of labor [or production]. [...] The essence of materialism is concealed in the nature of technology, about which much has been written but little has been thought" (Heidegger 1949: 27) (Heidegger 1977: 220). On the nature of technology see M. Heidegger (1962), *Die Technik und die Kehre*, 2nd ed. (Pfullingen: Neske); (1967b) *Die Frage nach der Technik*, in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 3rd ed., part I (Pfullingen: Neske), pp. 5-36; *The Question Concerning Technology*, in D. F. Krell (1977), *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: Harper & Row), pp. 287-317.

[12] In Bordoni's presentation, "governance" is closely linked with the ideology of "neoliberalism": "Neoliberalism removes the responsibility of the state, makes it relinquish its traditional prerogative and moves toward their gradual privatization" (Bauman and Bordoni 2014: 17). He also cites Wendy Brown to the effect that, by contrast to classical liberalism, neoliberalism tends to empower citizens to make entrepreneurs of themselves and therefore to establish an unprecedented ethic of "economic calculation". See Brown 2005: 45-59.

[13] Beyond Europe, Bauman here (p. 25) points to a larger, global vista invoking "Kant's two-centuries old dream of the *allgemeine Vereinigung der Menschheit*", adding: "Why does the world have to be a kill-or-be-killed gladiatorial amphitheater rather than, say, a highly cooperative beehive or anthill?" See also J. Gray (2009), *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (London: Granta Books).

[14] Compare also his "Aristotle and Imperative Ethics" (Gadamer 1999: 142-161).

[15] In the above and subsequent citations I have slightly altered the translation for purposes of clarity. In English (Heidegger 1977b: 168-169).

[16] In English (Heidegger 1977c: 170-171).

[17] In English (Heidegger 1977c: 172-173).

[18] See also (Weil 1952: 99), (Ommen 1997), (Touraine 2007).

[19] For a fuller discussion see my "Earth and World: Ananta Giri's 'Roots and Routes'", in my *Against Apocalypse: Recovering Humanity's Wholeness* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), pp. 113-116.

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