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**Four-way Path of Democracy as Evolutionary Synthesis.**

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### **1. Contra mediocrity**

It is a truism that politics is about finding the "golden mean" between extreme positions but this easily becomes a cliché. Where exactly, for instance, is the golden mean to be found between, say, the complete rejection of gene technology and its uncritical acceptance? This is not so easy to determine. Or, for a more fundamental example, where is the mean in the immigration problem between nationalism and a currently popular multi-culturalism, which seems to imply the dissolution of all national identities? I have tried to characterize this tendency as "hospitality of the cultures"(Heinrichs 1994). Golden means, in a deeper, more serious sense, do not represent anything mediocre or schematically flattening, rather they are qualitatively higher syntheses of principles. They have so little to do with a merely quantitative balancing that the geometrical image of the mean becomes questionable as soon as one associates it with more than the task of a creative synthesis instead of an either/or alternative. "Overcoming such fixed, tired oppositions is the sole interest of reason."(Hegel). Once more: a creative, not a schematic interest!

### **2. Reason in democracy?**

Whoever speaks of democracy these days certainly does not have reason in mind, rather the irrational arrangement of diverse unreason. Still, the task facing the present remains what it has always been: to rethink democracy. What are we to make of the basic idea of democracy as a unity of rulers and ruled? The ideas promoted on this question come from the time of the discovery of the steam engine and the French revolution, but they are no longer sufficient. Indeed, where is it possible today to find a lively interest in the fact that democracy is an intellectual adventure and a challenge of development? It can be said that those original ideas are as far from the current state of democracy as perhaps the computer is from the steam engine. We encounter such awareness among our contemporary politicians, and even among constitutional lawyers, very seldom.

### **3. Some theory on social action**

To stay with the technical metaphor, human societies are quasi-cybernetic systems composed of human actions. From this position there follow structures which have to be respected exactly like the physical and biological laws of nature. An action systems theory is based on a typology of social behaviour with the following main subdivisions:

1. physical activity, instrumental activity or exchange of goods
2. one-sided, strategic, goal-oriented activity
3. communicative activity requiring mutuality
4. metacommunicative activity

The hierarchic (or, to use the term of Arthur Koestler and Ken Wilber, holarchic) principle on which this division is made is one of pragmatic social reflection, i.e. the intentional orientation on the actions of others. Action, and especially social action, is a reflection process. It is for this reason that the scale of inner (not only external, additional) reflexivity forms the basis for differentiations of the action levels. I am talking here of the reflection principle, the meaning of which cannot be overestimated for everything which happens in human consciousness and behaviour. The reflection systems theory I have in mind is more of a highly developed kind of game within action systems theory. The four-way path is ultimately a law of human and interhuman reflection.

#### 4. The state: transition from actions to systems

The mutually oppositional nature of reflection - the mutual crossing of the intentionality of the agents - constitutes the principle of the transition from actions or behaviours to a systems of a quasi-cybernetic type, something which was lacking in social theory (Habermas-Luhmann debate since the end of the seventies). Cybernetic feedback represents a physical analogy of reflection.

The behaviour levels defined above form themselves in a modern constitutional state into (more or less clearly differentiated) subsystems. Further subdivisions are given here for clarity, they will not be discussed here.

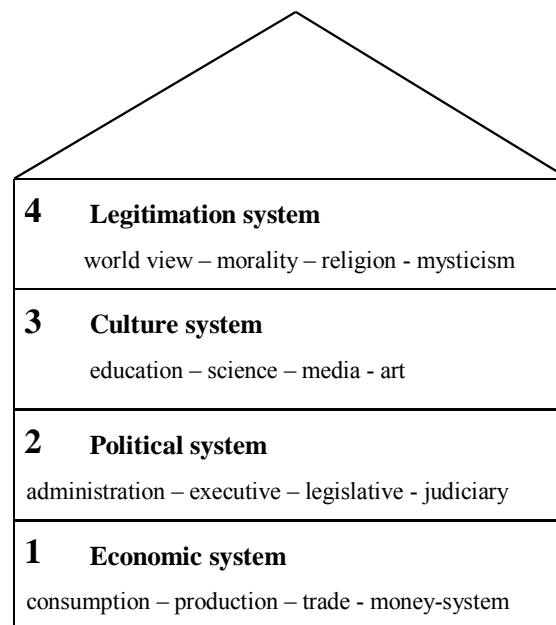


Figure 1. *Hierarchy of subsystems*

Each of these subsystems must be constantly viewed as a function of the whole (*integration principle*). However, in modern society, each also distinguishes itself, more or less consistently, effectively from the others (*differentiation principle*). Only through differentiation of the system levels is integration, collective freedom, possible under the modern conditions of the greatest possible individual freedom. The prevailing, apparently natural and organic determination of the social whole from below upwards, that is from the economy through politics into the "superstructure" of culture and basic values - a central problem of our time - derives from insufficient differentiation, the opposite situation to that in the past with the social whole justified through the grace of god.

## **5. Four-way path - layers of competence**

The four structural systems of society and state means then a set of consistent institutions which do justice to the clearly latent differentiation already available. The result then would be regulation from above oriented below based on reason, that is from the basic values through the cultural and political values all the way to the economic goals and means. This kind of hierarchic integration is completely different from all traditional forms of integralism. If each level is democratically determined and maintains the characteristics peculiar to its sphere of activity, then it has nothing to do with theocracy and legitimation by the grace of god.

Concretely: We need expert parliaments and executive organs, elected independently from each other for each system level. Specified parliaments are required. The economics parliament, which sets the framework (outlines of economic law, not in any sense like a planned economy). Then in the narrower sense a political parliament. Set over this, in terms of setting out frameworks of action, the culture parliament. Finally set over this, the basic values parliament.

## **6. Four-way path as intensified division of powers**

The issue here is nothing less than an extended concept of the division of power. The traditional division of power is unfortunately highly watered down in the current state of thinking on constitutional matters. Another problem is that it encompasses a conceptual development beyond the level of consciousness of the French Revolution, in that their status is determined according to the positioning of the respective power to the laws, an order based on the logic of reflection. This, clearly, is a new foundation with the following features.

1. the administrative executive, whose job is simply to apply existing laws; this one is clearly distinguished from the following executives;
2. political, which possesses decision-making power within the framework of the laws;
3. legislative, which debates laws and passes them;
- 4, judiciary, which has the task of scrutinising the procedures for processing laws and the correct application of the laws.

These traditional powers belong historically at first to the political system in the narrower sense of the power system. Now, the four branches or subsystems embody an essentially extended, namely intensified division of power, to the extent that the classical four (not just three!) powers multiply themselves in the state based on the four-way path of economic, political, cultural and basic value structures. On each of these levels are found administration, political executive, parliament and judiciary. Since the modern state is primarily founded in law (the concept of the state based on the rule of law, in contrast to the traditional, theocratic state (justified "by the grace of god"), this legal-political commonwealth called the state encompasses all four levels. In this extended sense the state-political level encompasses all disposition of power possible by means of law. In the narrower sense, the political level forms only the second subsystem of the administrative-legal organised whole, presumably with the systemic functions: security, legal, external and constitutional policies.

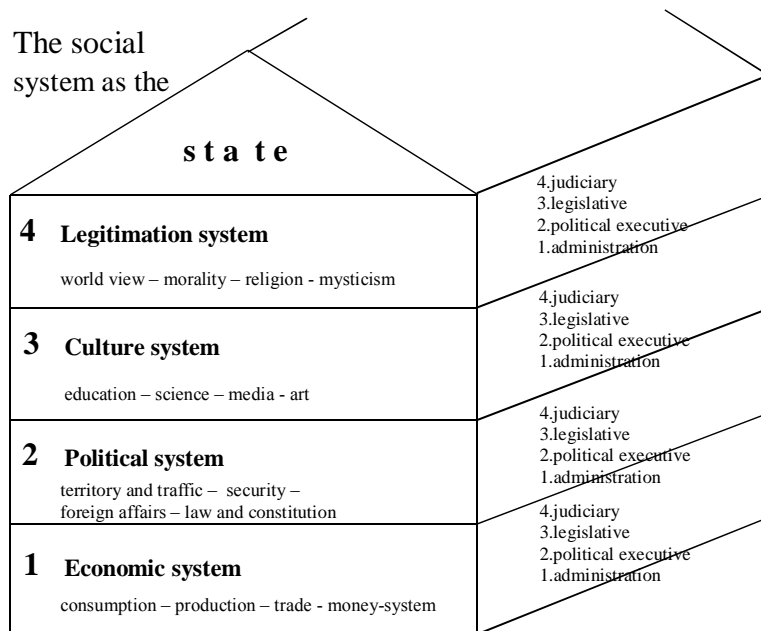
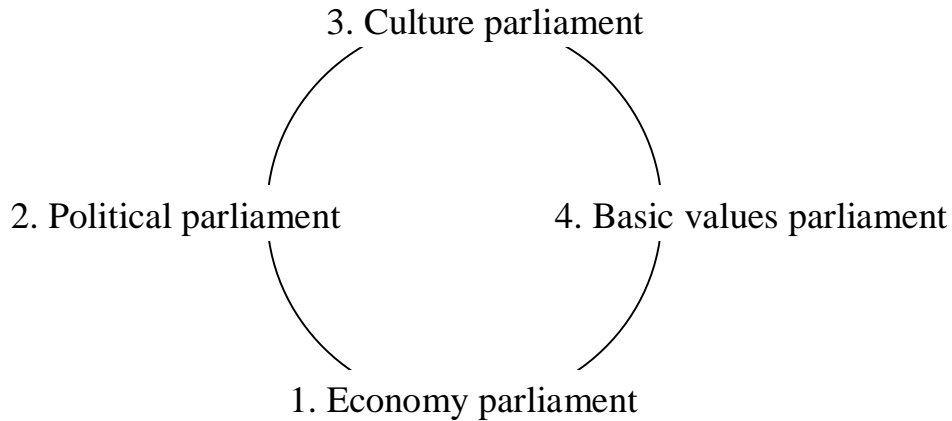


Figure 2. *The social system as the state with extended division of powers*

Instead of all four powers only the legislative will be considered in the following as standard example for all in the circle of subsystems. The metaphor of the circle is decisive: direct election of "experts" (in the best sense of really "experienced" women and men) by the electorate in general and thereby direct responsibility for these field-specific popular representatives to the people.



*Figure 3. The systematic circle of the social as a parliamentary system*

Up to now democracy knows only the apparently all-round politician, who is in charge of and responsible for everything and for nothing. Doubtless there is a certain acquisition of special knowledge forced on the parliamentarians in committees. But then it is precisely here that transparency is lacking. Direct election and responsibility of the affected representatives for their specific field is also lacking. Since there will be conflict between the levels of the parliamentary systems (e.g. over whether economic policy conforms to the basic values), several readings of bills and mediations should be expected as feedback.

Burkhard Wehner's concept of "Specified democracy", more clarified in the sense of the four-way path, shows how field-specific knowledge and closeness to the electorate can be extensively linked together: simply by more elections for each of the great fields, the system levels, and for the candidates to represent them. This is the potential for greater closeness to the reality in the field and to the electorate that could exist in our at best semidemocratic institutions.

## **7. Synthesis of direct and representative democracy**

Unfortunately, like everywhere else in the Western democracies, in Germany for instance, supported by the five-percent clause, the parties have developed into unbearable, indistinguishable power blocks, "pre-Flood" when set against the four-way path. These power blocks prevent any serious discussion of public matters from principle.

The principle of the four-way path is relating to the matter in question, whereas that of the all-round parties is disposing over undifferentiated power and thereby non-relating to the matter. The principle of the four-way path is about relating to the matter in question, whereas that of the all-round parties is the disposing over undifferentiated power, and therefore not actually relating to the matter in question at all.

As long as this system does not provide the specific economists, culture policy experts and basic value experts in their own roles as laid down in a new constitution, we have no other alternative but to work with the existing "political" all-rounders of the parties. We need however movements outside the parties, which commit themselves to this constructive reform concept. The movement for direct democracy appears to threaten the privileges of the parties laid down in the constitution. On the other hand, the crudely quantitative standpoint, which is the dominant principle in the case of referenda, is not sufficient. The real or imagined dangers are well known which proceed from a crudely quantitative analysis of the will of the majority (such as the death penalty). Democracy means the most quantitatively extended reach possible of the qualified participation of all legally mature citizens in the formation of the common weal. Qualification is required of the formation of the public view by means of the representative principle and the field-specific competence involved with that. Thus the justified claim to direct democracy must be brought to an internal synthesis with the representative principle: this synthesis can be achieved by the four-way path founded on systems theory, with its layered, feedback-looped systems of competence. Here it can be seen too as a "golden middle path," if that's not taken as a cliché.

## **8. Basic values: Integration not value relativism**

This kind of hierarchic-circular integration means something completely different from integralism in the traditional sense, something completely different from a new theocracy and legitimation by the grace of god. State-church privileges form the opposite of democratic regulation of religious-ethical basic values. Neither should this be taken to mean majority voting on questions of religious truth, but rather the formation of a democratic consensus about the common basic values of our collective existence - based on religious and cultural pluralism - recognised by the great majority. This is much more than that demanded by fundamentalists and milder representatives of positions which claim to have the sole truth (who would like to dispose over basic values and their application in a medieval manner) on the one hand, or on the other hand more than the "postmodern" representatives of pluralism would like to acknowledge, those who claim that a modern society does not require commonly acknowledged basic values.

The opposite is the case. The irreducible dignity of man, respect for which, and the protection of which, is the responsibility of all state power (Art. 1,1 of the German "Grundgesetz"), itself represents a basic value, and indeed one founded on religion.

The right to work is one of the basic rights of personality. As part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, it is also a part of Germany's Grundgesetz, the constitution. The problem with this, along with the other rights of personality, is that these rights cannot be effectively implemented. The right to work means that human

beings have a priority over capital and machines when it comes to work. This and many other personality rights (e.g. globally, the right to sufficient food, to chemically unpolluted food and clean water) cannot be effectively implemented, because we, domestically and globally, have no democratically elected and responsible basic value parliament which would have the authority to provide the framework to the parliamentary and executive levels under it. The so-called decay of values derives not from a great lack of moral awareness of the great majority of the population, but rather from the insufficient implementation of basic values in democratic procedures, in an unreflected democracy which is not even halfway realised.

Throughout the ecological debate, which is no mere a question of survival for humanity but an issue of its customary self respect, religious ultimate values and basic values of the common organisation are linked with economic questions, just as in the right to work discussed above. Since basic values are involved, it cannot be the case that economic policy makers are in charge of this alone. This should rather be realised by the binding regulations of the basic value parliament. Then the issue would be clear, whether and with which economic order such basic values are capable of being realised.

The circular arrangement of the social subsystems in Fig. 3 well shows the immediate proximity of basic values and economy, just as on the other side that between economy and politics.

## **9. Freedom of conscience on cultural level**

To establish other basic values as legally binding would at first have "only" cultural consequences, in restrictions like the prohibition on gratuitous violence in the mass media or the effective eradication of child pornography in the internet. The point is the thorough implementation of effective freedom of science - that great, extremely expensive institution for a modern collective organism to which the pursuit of truth and dissemination of knowledge are fundamental - from religious, political and economic domination in its opaque, uncontrollable forms. The same management by means of a culture parliament and its executive organs is required for education, press and art. This has nothing to do with moving to a plan base for free social cultural life, and much less than currently under the conditions of culture management dominated by economic and political interests.

Culture politics is dependent on the proportions of the Christian confessions in the population just as much as on the universal parties and their apparently universally informed and competent representatives (selected from power political standpoints). Much could be said on the infiltration of power into science and education and the disastrous consequences for the evolution of human consciousness. Also on the progressive destruction of the medium of the national culture: the language, at least in The not English speaking countries.

The modern state must essentially be a culture state just as much as an economy state, in order to develop the transparent framework for the passing of laws to ensure the greatest possible cultural freedom for free social individual initiative. Without "freedom of the life of the spirit", which has been the demand of the anthroposophists

with their constitutional triad for more than seventy years (unfortunately, the necessary differentiation of the "life of the spirit" into religious-world view basic values and cultural values is missing) no satisfactory progressive development of democracy is possible.

## **10. The boom in individualism as escapist ideology**

Fact: we are not talking here about some kind of middle path compromises, but rather of *a creative synthesis of the modern, individualistic understanding of freedom and social association*. Instead of effective implementation of basic values which could be accepted by consensus, we find ourselves today in a flourishing ideological ethics boom: in individual ethics for all life issues and job issues. The individual is burdened with what cannot be achieved by social structures. The neo-liberal financial system, with its devastating effects on the environment and social justice, is a principal example of this "ethical" escapist ideology. Contemporary capitalism represents a kind of religion substitute, even a pseudo-religion, and against its systemic omnipresence the ethical warnings and rules of behaviour are not only completely powerless for the individuals. The point is that now they have escapist functions.

The most important ethical postulate for the individual (without which certainly nothing gets anywhere) today is seeing through the great interconnections with an uncorrupted, thinking, and feeling love of truth. No religion and no ethical system is higher than the truth, on which certainly no one has an eternal monopoly, and for which everyone must pay very personally.

## **11. New paradigms of social movements**

The concept of democracy sketched above offers the chance - and one independent of any global financial collapse - to introduce with parliamentary means a money system which does better justice to nature and to human beings. Without democratic basic attitudes a financial market crash helps us as little as the two great wars of the twentieth century. The point is, not simply to concentrate on the important problems of the money system, but rather to ally oneself with all those groups which in their different ways aim at a well-thought-out and realistic, qualitative reform of our democratic commonwealth: whether it comes from a spiritual and ecological thinking, or in the name of the "freedom of the life of the spirit" and "educational freedom", or whether it is about new forms of direct democracy. Even the commitment to a "natural" economic order must be animated by thoughts of an essentially structural development of democracy, i.e. to a freer form of society, in order to have any success with many allies.

All these paths converge and could, indeed must, lead to success, whereas the exclusivity of a sole path can only lead into the abyss of failure. This happens because the enormity of the task is not appreciated. It's about the leap out of the vicious circle of a mindless, economic domination. Despite the enormous, fragmenting reduction of everything to science, we have a society poor in integrating ideas.



This multiple path can be seen, in constitutional terms, as a four-way bundling. That can be stated without dogmatism. The concept of the four-way path is not a sectarian political idea, but a central synthesis which is paramount now in the social sciences and of enormous evolutionary import.

## 12. Summary - the syntheses of a communicative society

The syntheses available to us, or if one prefers, the "golden means", some of which are given only briefly below, are as follows:

- liberal freedom and "theocratic" application of values
- individualistic and common-dialog freedom
- individual and social ethics
- idealist and materialist orientation
- value-conservative and structural-revolutionary attitudes
- national-language culture and cosmopolitan ethics
- state planning (framework specification) and free social activity
- direct and representative democracy: "structured democracy"
- quantity and quality of votes
- voter-closeness and field-specific competence of the representatives
- mandarin and social holism
- nuanced value communication and discursive concreteness

The last synthesis attempts to correct the currently popular talk of "discourse" (under the influence the so-called discourse theory of K.-O. and J. Habermas). Communication on and about values goes far beyond rational discourse, if discourse is understood as argumentative, concrete discussion. Democracy refers not to any mere discursive, but beyond that to a communicative society.

### *Other writings by the author on these topics*

Gastfreundschaft der Kulturen (hospitality of the cultures), Multikulturelle Gesellschaft in Europa und deutsche Identität, Essen 1994.

Sprung aus dem Teufelskreis (leap out of the vicious circle). Logik des Sozialen und Natürliche Wirtschaftslehre, Vienna 1997 (ISBN 3-901787-00-3).

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Die Demokratie der Zukunft (democracy of the future). Alternativen zum ideologischen Ethik-Boom and zum Versagen der Parteiendemokratie, in Ethik-Kodex 2000, ed. R.S. Tomek-M. Hosang, Cologne 2000, pp. 45-6.

In between two books on democracy appeared:

- Revolution der Demokratie, Berlin 2003 (ed. Maas), 444 p.
- Demokratiemanifest für die schweigende Mehrheit, München 2005 (ed. Steno), 120 p.

For further information see: [www.johannesheinrichs.de](http://www.johannesheinrichs.de) / [www.viergliederung.de](http://www.viergliederung.de)