# THE CLASSIC TRILEMMA
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# POLIS-ETHNOS-COSMOS

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## ABSTRACT

The vital problem of world affairs is how to resolve the contradictions between political order and cosmic chaos, thus establishing a peaceful coexistence between widely opposing cultures and ideologies. This problem was first conceptualized by the ancient Greeks who discussed and proposed various solutions which have yet to be surpassed. Although, the miniature world of the city-state (**polis**), instead of nation-state (**ethnos**), ultimately succumbed to the external forces of the world at large (**cosmos**); its ideas and actions are still relevant. The significant correspondence between the Hellenic era and the present makes these particular thoughts of general interest because they may help us understand and resolve our own problems.

This study attributes the classic Hellenic malaise to the agonistic pathology of its people, reflected in the classic trichotomy of:

-political power: separating citizen and foreigner, native and alien;

-economic wealth: distinguishing rich and poor, free and slave;

-biosocial culture: dichotomizing Greeks and barbarians, civil and wild.

The resulting **trilemma** therefore became how to combine patriotism, nationalism and humanism. The main ideas proposed fall into a Political thesis, Pan-Hellenic antithesis, and Cosmopolitan synthesis.

The hypothesis of this study asserts that the Polis-Ethnos-Cosmos triptych remains a perennial trilemma of the human condition. Thus juxtaposed, the three fundamental identity values (patriotism, nationalism, humanism) can neither be maximized nor extinguished, as many have and still try to do in turbulent periods of global change.

Our present transition from modern to post-modern world is just as dynamic and dangerous as that from the Hellenic to Hellenistic era.

Looking how the Greeks recognized but did not resolve their problems in the past could then contribute to our search for better world in the future. This study does so by reminding us of the ancient wisdom in the everlasting search for local-regional-global coexistence.

## Introduction

The macropolitical picture of our post-modern world presents many problems and paradoxes at the turn of this millennium.

On the one hand, we see the growing trend for economic interdependence of the global system, yet on the other hand, we witness the growing demand for political independence of many nations. While multiplying network of transportation and communication channels integrate the planet into a global village, local cultures and old languages revive to disintegrate the world into a tribal multitude. As the United Nations is shaping an EGO with planetary norms, international laws, and common policies; there is more religious intolerance, political terrorism, ethnic cleansing, and ideological extremism of all sorts.

One may well wonder what is the world coming to? To answer that question, a scholar must go back into history to see if something that ever happened before. If it did, what lessons can we learn from that experience? Although, every era is unique in some respects, and ours is certainly unique in many, there is a continuity in history and a similarity in humanity, so that it is possible to compare different periods and draw general conclusions from particular ideas and events.

This is what we intend to do here in a comparative study of classical theory and modern reality. On the basis of a long research, we have discovered a significant correspondence between the Hellenic era of twenty-five centuries ago and the contemporary world. Although, there are many important quantitative differences, the Greek world and ours share qualitative similarities which make a comparison not only possible, but desirable.

More specifically, we want to see how the Greeks reacted to the dramatic events of their world, as well as how their thinkers understood what was going on and how they proposed to solve their problems. Perhaps their suggestions can help us with ours. Looking at the Greek polis and its exopolitics, we will try to see how the city-state system was thought of and how it corresponds with our thinking of the contemporary nation-state system in a global perspective.

Critics of classical studies contend that the ancient world has nothing to say to the modern, especially in the field of world affairs. Contemporary politics, they say, require breadth of vision in a global scale, whereas ancient concepts are both parochial and anachronistic.

Yet, what was Greece but a world in miniature. If one substitutes nation-states for city-states the politics of Greece become surprisingly contemporary. With the least imagination one can see that the problems of Greece are not only not outdated, but have now engulfed the whole world.

The highly developed consciousness of political space in Greek thought, like today, was a direct reflection of the actual political conditions of the world: a world in which a multitude of sovereign states, driven by the dynamics of power, class struggles, population pressures, and socioeconomic disequilibria, impinged upon each other and found it impossible to act in any way without colliding.

In such an interdependent world, the sense of being hemmed-in was written large in Greek, as in modern politics and is reflected in all the attempts to ease the

pressures and to resolve the conflicts inherent in the system. In a political universe of over two hundred interacting units, the classical Greek, like modern man, was involved in the same controversies of war and peace, conflict resolution, peaceful settlement of disputes, intergovernmental organization, and political integration.

Statesmen, then as now, tried to defend their national interests and sought security through legal neutrality, military alliances, arms control and balance of power. In both eras the basic assumption of state sovereignty was hardly questioned. It was rather taken as a constant and all solutions had to adjust to it.

As we know, the city-state system was finally destroyed primarily as a result of its internal contradictions. Its decline and fall seems to have proceeded with the inevitability of a Greek tragedy. Will the analogy with the contemporary world be carried to the same end? Perhaps the failures of the Greeks can teach us as much as their successes.

The vital problems of ancient Greece of how to resolve the contradictions between political freedom and international order, and how to establish a peaceful coexistence between widely opposing ideologies and cultures, have hardly been solved in the three millennia of human history. It is with this in mind that both apologists and critics of classical studies, agree that many aspects of Greek thought are still relevant in our time.

The important issues debated then as now focus on the trilemma posed by political sovereignty, national unity and global security. The question is how did the Greeks proposed to solve the problems of increasing conflict and disorder in their world of independent states much like ours. Scholars have often asked why the Greeks did not unite politically to form a single nation-state and thus solve the twin specter of internal poliarchy and external anarchy. The answers blame the geographical configuration of Greece and the political parochialism of the city-states for the absence of a strong national consciousness. Herein, we try to see if this geopolitical diagnosis is correct.

The questions we pose here are: how the Greek intellectuals perceive the condition of the Greek world; how they reacted to it, and how they proposed to change it. Did these men realize where they were heading, did they do anything about it; and if so, where did they go wrong? What was the relation between political theory and historical praxis? Were the great thinkers of Greece blind to their political situation, or were their warnings ignored by the politicians and the public? Is the hypothesis that men have very little influence upon the forces of history true? Were the Greeks fully conscious of their course, but unable to change it? Can any of these generalizations be substantiated, or is our information insufficient for any definitive conclusions.

Our thesis here is that the PEC triptych is a perennial trilemma of the human condition which may be temporarily suppressed or locally accommodated but cannot be universally or ultimately resolved. PEC juxtaposes three fundamental human identity

values (patriotism, nationalism, humanism) which can neither be maximized nor extinguished. These levels of social attachment are innate attributes of exopolitics which are impossible to reduce into a single overriding value. In other words, the utility function of these three variables has no optimal singularity. At best, it may only be equilibrated in the zero-sum game of global macropolitics.

## The PEC Triptych

We begin our argument by ranging the elements of the PEC triptych along the following continuum:

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   MICRO                          MESO                          MACRO
   POLIS<------------------------------<ETHNOS>------------------------------>COSMOS
   STATE                          NATION                         WORLD
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This schematic representation puts polis and cosmos as the two polar opposites in our universe of discourse. The confrontation between these realities (state vs empire), also engendered the debate between their opposing ideologies (patriotism vs humanism). The ethnic position in the middle (nation), was supposed to effect a policy solution, as well as a theoretical synthesis of the two extremes.

In discussing the various aspects of this dialectical debate, we use the SET axiom to construct a two-dimensional space-time field. The spatial dimension contains the PEC continuum, while the temporal dimension follows the past-present-future progression. As to the existential third dimension, consisting of the personal-social-natural domains, it is held constant around the social domain because that is where macropolitics is focused.

This application coincides with the two-dimensional (vertical in time and horizontal in space) use of the dialectic method to form the following 3x3 Table:

## PEC-TAS-SET

| TIME \ SPACE | ACTUAL THESIS LOCAL | IDEAL ANTITHESIS REGIONAL | REAL SYNTHESIS GLOBAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Human** | | | |
| CLASSIC THESIS | **Polis** | Ethnos | Cosmos |
| MODERN ANTITHESIS | City | **Nation** | World |
| FUTURE SYNTHESIS | Urbanity | Continental | Planetary |
| | | | **Earth** |

It is evident that the matrix contains the main ingredients for our theory: i.e. static, dynamic and dialectic systems, in a spatial and temporal classification. In this scheme, the columns represent the increasing levels of ideological geopolitical aggregation, whereas the rows represent the arrow of time through macrohistory.

The first row explores the classic contradictions among the politic, ethnic and cosmic domains, as seen by the Greeks. The second row does the same among the national, regional and global aspects of our contemporary world. Finally, the third row attempts to forecast the probable tendencies of these dialectic confrontations into the 21st Century.

It should be noted that above and below the three sociosphere sectors are the egosphere of the individual human being and the ecosphere of the natural environment respectively, both of which are given as externalities in this model.

On this basis, we are now ready to elaborate on each of the Matrix rows and columns, as representative of the theory and praxis of the three chronological periods as well as their topological ideals.

## Classic Foundations

As we saw, since synoecism is the basis of community life, the requirements for a viable city-state came to be: economic sufficiency, political security and cultural amenity. Out of them evolved the two dimensions of state sovereignty: i.e. vertical authority (*de jure*) and power (*de facto*), as well as horizontal jurisdiction (internal) and independence (external); which have always been concentrated either on city-states or capital-cities.

The classical polis did not differentiate between polity and society. The *demos* was also the *polis*, with little difference between public (politics) and private (economics) affairs. It was only later that Justinian's *corpus juris* reemphasized *Lex Regia* as absolute state sovereignty, whereas classical *jus naturale* was based on universal and eternal principles. Eventually, sovereign *auctoritas* descended from *dei gratia* to *vox populi*, thus confirming the reversion towards modern democracy.

However defined, sovereignty became the supreme authority to rule, tax, and draft people. As such, politics determines who gets what, when and how. In this context, Hellenic sociopolitical theory may be summarized by focusing on three intersecting dichotomies which reflect the traditional "we/they" distinction between insiders and outsiders in any society.

The first and foremost delimits the political domain by separating the citizen from the foreigner. This power distinction is based on the difference between natives and aliens in the polity. The former participate in sovereign policy-making, whereas the latter do not.

The second dichotomy concerns the economic sector and distinguishes the rich from the poor. This wealth distinction is based on the right to own property. On that basis, the free are those who may accumulate wealth, whereas the slaves are the commodities of somebody else's property.

Finally, the third division is that between Greeks and barbarians. This biocultural distinctions is based on the racial assumption of a superior civilization confronting other

either primitive or decadent cultures. Whether by birth or education, this dichotomy results in an international caste segregation between one ethnic group and all the others.

The combination of these three inclusion-exclusion criteria explains the different behavioral, moral, and legal codes of social groups in a comparative perspective. Thus a Greek who identifies himself as the free citizen of a polis, relates with his political state, cultural nation, and economic world in a diminishing degree of attachment.

It is evident that classical theory and praxis was caught in a terrible trilemma which ultimately proved insoluble: i.e. how to combine patriotism, nationalism and humanism. Although they saw the danger of political divisiveness, the Greeks could not find a formula which optimized the advantages of national unity and local autonomy, at the same time as they struggled to survive within the larger cosmic environment. Their failure typified the protean Greek tragedy of marching to one's doom in full knowledge of the outcome.

In dialectic terms, the political thesis was both the actual reality of Greece as well as the ideal theory of Plato and Aristotle. Politicians and philosophers alike defended the polis as the *sine qua non* of a civilized life worthy of an advanced civilization. The former tried repeatedly to find a balance of power which permitted all of them to coexist in the same tight space with the minimum of elbow room maneuverability. The latter also tried unsuccessfully to propose reforms by which the polis could minimize its external contacts and thereby raise the threshold of interstate frictions and conflicts.

The antithesis to political independence was promoted by the Panhellenists who were prepared to sacrifice state sovereignty on the altar of national survival. Seeing the barbarians knocking at the gates, the nationalists pushed for political integration into at least a loose confederation of the Greek world. Alas, they too failed more miserably than their political opponents.

Ironically, the synthesis of the opposing conservative and integrative positions came from an unexpected direction: first from the north by Macedonian hegemony and then from the west by Roman conquest. But both kingdom and empire, were precisely the forms of government that the Greeks were trying to avoid because they considered them apolitical and barbaric regimes, hence not a fair exchange for their beloved city-state. So when they eventually succumbed to them, they did so out of seer exhaustion, rather than selection.

It seems that in their conflict between reason and emotion, the Greeks were unable to make the necessary compromise which could create a viable nation-state. Instead, they were relegated to live as serfs in an imperial province of secondary rank. Was their failure inevitable in the global scheme of things or could they have prevented their fateful demise, thereby changing the history of the world?

This academic question has often been asked but rarely answered. According to our thesis here, although history could certainly have turned out differently, the eventual decline of Hellenism could not have been prevented. Every civilization, as all systems, has a certain life span which sooner or later must come to an end.

Moreover, even if Greece could unite in a single state, it would no longer be classical Greece, but some other entity. It is not possible to simply change one

parameter of a social system without affecting the others. A Greece without city-states would also be a Greece without the Hellenic culture which was based on the polis. So what purpose would such unity serve, if not cultural protection?

Some would answer: economic. Sacrificing one's quality of life to raise one's standard of living may be a worthy goal and could have assured Greek prosperity by exploiting the Mediterranean world. If Greece would have done what Italy did, it could have established its own *Pax Hellenica* and lasted another couple of centuries as the dominant empire of the region, something that Alexander tried to do. But inexorably, other forces would have risen at its center or periphery to bring it down eventually.

This conclusion is demonstrated by the rise and fall of all states, nations, or empires, throughout history. So there is no point in further "what if" musings.  What is more interesting is to compare then and now and contrast the similarities or differences which could help with our quandary. This after all is the main practical purpose of learning from history.

## Modern Transformations

In comparing the classic and modern eras, there are two significant differences. The first is quantitative, resulting from the geographic discoveries of the Renaissance explorations four hundred years ago. The second is qualitative, resulting from the technologic inventions of the Industrial Revolution two hundred years ago.

As to quantity, according to the UN definition of a city as merely an agglomeration of more than 20,000 people, there are tens of thousands of such entities in the world now. If we raise the threshold of urbanhood tenfold, so that we have something comparable to ancient Athens, then there are over 2,500 cities of 200,000 or more people in the world. Most of them are in North America and Asia (750 each), then Europe (600), Africa and Latin America (200 each), and finally Oceania (50). Of these, only 150 cities have over 1 million people, 100 have over 2 million, 50 over 5 million, 20 over 10 million and only 5 over 15 million.

Even large cities, of course, are not necessarily states. Only one -Singapore- in the 5 million range is a true modern city-state. Other present examples, Andorra, Monaco, Liechtenstein, San Marino, are much smaller and closer to the classical poleis. In any case, about a fifth of the UN membership are microstates of less than a million people each; so by no means are city-state equivalents absent from the modern world. If anything they are on the rise, since most of the recent additions to statehood fall in this category.

As to quality, cities, even if they are not states, are command-control-communication nodes of the world system. These urban foci of high social density and activity exchange matter (goods); energy (services); and information (news), thus forming centers of gravity or salient points of capital accumulation, resource allocation and policy determination.

As a result of the extraordinary economic development of the industrial world in less than two centuries, the class structure of cities has been changed significantly by the replacement of slavery with wage labor. Increased productivity raised higher standards of living and better quality of life for more and more people in the advanced countries of Western Europa, North America and Pacific Oceania.

Yet, most people in the rest of the world still live in conditions not that much better than ancient slaves. The infamous North-South gap of the modern world is just as deep and wide as the rich-poor or free-slave divide of the ancient world. Although slavery is no longer accepted in law, its existential reality has not changed that much. In this respect, our difference with the ancients is more legal and moral than actual and physical.

Similarly, although humanity is no longer divided between Greeks and barbarians, it is still divided in countless other ways on racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and other cultural criteria. So much so, that one may doubt the possibility of eradicating such divisions from the human condition. It would seem that culture abhors a continuum, as much as nature abhors a vacuum. Therefore, there will always be distinctive dichotomies from I/thou and we/they to whatever human ingenuity dreams up at various times and places.

Apart from the obvious technological or geographical differences and the economic or cultural similarities, the politics of the classic and modern worlds are striking comparable. In both cases, the macropolitical system is composed of approximately the same absolute number of players: i.e. almost two hundred; and their relative importance: i.e. a handful of protagonists and a multitude of supporting cast.

Most significant, like in Greece, the central conflict still rages among national sovereignty, transnational economy and international society. Where does domestic jurisdiction end and collective security begin? Does infranational legitimation negate supranational integration? Are transnational corporations compatible with nation-states?

The main difference between the ancient and modern debates is quantitative rather than qualitative, because our world is some orders of magnitude larger. Nevertheless, for all macropolitical purposes, Greece is an accurate microcosm of the modern world and we are the ancient world writ large. As such, we can continue with the same process used above to expose the modern dialectic contradiction.

The thesis now as then is state sovereignty whose supremacy does not recognize any higher authority. The nationalist thesis now, as the political thesis then, sees sovereignty as the necessary attribute of ethnic survival and fulfillment. Therefore, every national community must also enjoy political sovereignty.

The modern notion of sovereignty now rests on the image of a common fate reflected in the psychological loyalty of patriotism and the physical power of nationalism. This dual basis led to the modern Hobbesian realism of national sovereign absolutism which contrasts with the Grotian idealism of natural confederal relativism. Moreover, the gap between legal sovereignty and political reality reflects the discrepancy between state independence and market interdependence. Thus, on the one hand there is state jurisdiction and interstate organization (regional or global); whereas on the other, there is individual responsibility (transnational) and collective loyalty (national).

The antithesis to nationalism in this respect is federalism which insists in the transfer of at least some national sovereignty to higher confederal bodies. In its most specific example, the debate between these two positions takes place in the European Union, where its member states have to balance their individual national interest with

their common economic prosperity, political security and cultural integrity in a threatening global environment.

What was claimed for the city-state then is also demanded for the nation-state now. The contradiction pitting the polis versus the nation there, is translated to the nation versus the region here. That is why the analogy between the states of classical Greece and the nations of modern Europe is so apt. As the poleis resisted a pan-Hellenic amphictiony, so states resist a European Union.

Just like classical Greece, contemporary Europe is searching for a way to resolve the conflicts between parochialism, continentalism, and globalism. The three exclusive domains for both situations are similar, having merely shifted up one level: from polis-ethnos-cosmos to nation-region-world, as our Matrix illustrates. In both cases, sovereignty resides in the lowest level, whether it is city-state or nation-state.

From the Boeotian Confederacy to the United Nations, many cities and states have tried to form intergovernmental organizations in order to resolve their common problems. Beyond a certain point, what began as an interstate organization becomes a supranational confederation. Thus, the many sovereign city-states of ancient Hellas are now urban centers within the single state of modern Greece. Similarly, many sovereign states of Western Europe are presently uniting to form a single confederal community. Beyond that, the United Nations is moving in the same direction of a World Government, though it still has a long way to go towards that end.

At the same time as this integrating process is going on, ethnic groups and local authorities are clamoring for greater self-determination. This clash between powerful centripetal and centrifugal forces is reflected in the dilemma between local desires and global necessities. Most likely, some form of federalism can resolve this impasse, because it recognizes the right of local authorities to engage in world affairs. Thus it is most suitable to handle complex global interdependence by supplementing high diplomacy with low technocracy, thereby blurring the differences between foreign and domestic affairs.

Although, we know the historical outcome of the classical struggle, the final synthesis of the modern dialectic has not yet been achieved. The two main contenders are global internationalism embodied by the United Nations and cosmopolitan transnationalism promoted by multinational corporations. The regional synthesis of nationalism and supra-nationalism in a continental scale is so far a limited solution which still leaves our global problematic intact.

## Future Anticipations

At the turn of the millennium, our transition from the modern to the post-modern world is just as dynamic and dangerous as the transition from the Hellenic to the Hellenistic era. In both periods, powerful forces created contradictory stresses and strains which deformed the social fabric by destroying cultural traditions, threatening political institutions, and upsetting economic activities. Moreover, growing environmental problems (our third neglected dimension) pit the natural ecosystem against the human egosystem as well as the global sociosystem.

Following the Agricultural Revolution which produced the classical world and the Industrial Revolution which resulted in the modern; the Technological Revolution going on presently opens up the post-industrial world of the third millennium. In this brave new world, emerging out of Toffler's Third Wave, a plethora of artificial slaves make manual and increasingly mental labor unnecessary. Thus most of humanity is not even worth enslaving or exploiting any more and becomes excluded or expendable.

In its stead, the extensive exploitation of the environment accelerates natural entropy to the point of planetary ecosystem collapse. The carrying capacity of the biosphere is now challenged by a population explosion which is befouling its own nest. Thus, urban culture, of which the Greek civilization was so justifiably proud, is getting out of control and threatens to implode in high density megalopolitan black holes.

From these ecologic and economic developments emerge growing political and cultural contradictions stemming from the perennial opposition between centripetal and centrifugal forces. Every social system is always susceptible to being pulled apart by its units, as well as pushed together by larger environmental pressures. Poleis then were threatened by their internal tribal factionalism and external pan-Hellenic nationalism; just as states now are squeezed in the middle by both their internal ethnic infranationalism and external economic supranationalism.

The present nation-state thesis is therefore challenged by two directly opposite forces: subnational urbanism and transnational continentalism. The former tendency decentralized state sovereignty downwards to its municipalities, whereas the latter integrates it upwards to intergovernmental organizations. So nation-states are increasingly pressured to share their jurisdiction with smaller and larger entities: i.e. cities and regions.

In order to explain this contradictory phenomenon, Naisbitt's Global Paradox affirms that the larger the system, the more numerous, stronger and smaller its components. Since the bigger the system, the more efficient and effective must be its parts; as the system grows and develops, its parts shrink and consolidate.

This global trend towards greater political independence along with greater economic interdependence is due to technology and telecommunications which increase community participation and enhance collective action, thereby strengthening tribal assertiveness. So people can think locally and act globally, as well as *vice versa*. Consequently, representative institutions may be declining and direct democracy may be reemerging from its birthplace in Greece to spread around the world.

With the increase of global interdependence and the rapid dissolution of national boundaries, the position and role of cities and regions will increase proportionately. Urban dynamics have composite variables based on the comparative advantage of cities. As the world impinges increasingly upon cities, they react directly to protect and promote their distinct interests. As long as municipal authorities feel the need, as well as have the opportunity and resources to affect their environment on their own, they will do so with alacrity and impunity.

Already, there is a marked development and empowerment of megacities in the new transurban phenomenon reflected in a global network of semi-sovereign metropolitan centers. These neopoles are the centers of power where all important

political, economic and cultural activities take place. These proto-city-states are developing their own transnational relations according to their municipal foreign policies, almost independently of their nation-states. Indeed, what we see emerging is a transurban network of international cities as part of the emerging global order in which national state borders are of decreasing significance.

It is this planetary network that characterizes to a large extent the global system dynamics in what has been called the New International Cities Era. In this view, it is incontestable that the world is not only urbanizing, but rapidly trans-urbanizing. Presently, its growing urban population -almost half of humanity- is becoming increasingly inter connective and interactive.

The conditions of peace and detente which prevail today increase the margin of maneuver of subnational units and projects them to the inter-national arena. World-cities are increasingly unhooked from their nation-state; their destiny is determined more by foreign factors than domestic. Such cities are colonized by international capital which is highly mobile and volatile because it is not under the control of any particular state.

There is very little national governments can do to shield their cities from these extra territorial forces which do not respect national boundaries. Cities are therefore forced to resort to their own devices for protection and projection. As such, urban politics will become more important, at the same time as world politics become more significant. The loser in both cases will be the intermediate nation-state.

The next step is to devolve more political power to the local level, thus remaking urban citizenship a real decision-making avocation. Only such evolution will effectively combat the widespread anomie and apathy resulting from modern urban life styles. For this to happen, cities will have to improve themselves physically (economically), psychologically (culturally), and politically (cyberneticaly), thereby raise their capacity to face their multiple challenges.

## Conclusion

We can now conclude this short essay by reiterating that as the ancient Greeks discovered the "polis" and the modern Europeans developed the "state" in order to solve the problems of their times, the contemporary world is groping to discover a way of synthesizing these two concepts in a "cosmic" combination. In that search consists the classic trilemma of our times, whose vanguard perhaps is to be found in the European "Union" experiment going on right now.

The more humanity acquires the means to affect all life, the more decisions are spread out to be taken collectively at various levels. Already, the technology exists to reestablish direct democracy, so there is no longer need for distant governments, even if they try to be representative. Interactive telecommunications via the information highway make it possible for every citizen to participate in public policy-making just like in the Greek polis.

An emerging telecommunitary democracy can create a virtual agora in which everyone can get involved to some degree. In that case teledemocracy will transform the global village into a cosmopolis in which decision-making power will most likely be

shared by a condominium of international organizations and transnational corporations, as well as infranational regions and megalopolitan centers, in addition to the traditional states.

The hypothesis that the importance of the nation-state decreases as its numbers increase is confirmed by the exploding UN membership along with increasing member impotence and irrelevance. The 50 members of the UN in 1950, doubled in 1960, tripled by 1980 and probably quadruple to reach 200 by the year 2000, most of which are quite small by any standard.

If the recent trends of large state breakdown into smaller ethnic components continues unabated, then the present hundreds of states will multiply into thousands. By language alone, there are between five to ten thousand nations in the world. If only 10% become independent, the world may soon have 1000 states. (The former USSR alone officially recognized 100 ethnic groups. South America also has 100, Indonesia 300, Europe 75, and China 50).

Consequently, the future global synthesis could turn out to be a pyramid resting upon a 1000 small city-states, supporting 100 large nation-states, organized around 10 continental federations, which finally cooperate in a single global UN system. Thus strong local political communities coordinate their policies within regional societies whose cooperation optimizes economic inter-dependence in the ecoumenic system and its natural environment.

This optimistic scenario, combines both synchronic and diachronic dialectics by synthesizing ancient philosophy with the modern technology to form the future society. The classical principles of strong local community, integrity and simplicity, can combine with more modern notions of humanity, equality and liberty to create a peaceful, tolerant, multicultural and multilevel coexistence.

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