

KEITH HART

# HUMAN ECONOMY AS A RELIGIOUS PROJECT

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a cura di Matteo Aria



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# LARES

ECONOMIE UMANE, ECONOMIE INTIME

Né per Dio né per denaro

a cura di  
MATTEO ARIA

Leo S. Olschki  
Firenze

# LARES

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*Economie umane, economie intime. Né per Dio né per denaro*  
a cura di M. ARIA

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KEITH HART

HUMAN ECONOMY AS A RELIGIOUS PROJECT

‘Human economy’ is not an exclusive concept or method, but an umbrella term for a conversation between people who draw individually on a wide variety of intellectual and political precedents. With colleagues, I have been developing this idea for two decades. Our first collection, drawing on Latin American and French antecedents, was *The Human Economy: A Citizen’s Guide*.<sup>1</sup> John Sharp and I then launched a South African node in the growing ‘alter-globalization’ network at the University of Pretoria.<sup>2</sup> This *Human Economy Programme*<sup>3</sup> was interdisciplinary, inspired by anthropology and development studies in particular; and its members came from everywhere, with a strong African core. A Human Economy Book Series followed.<sup>4</sup> We encourage many forms of enquiry united by a desire to make economy more human. Our aim is to generate an open, plural, inclusive and decentred network with the books of our series as one common core. Economy concerns how people should manage their lives to get by or perhaps do better. World economy now undermines the national vehicles for living that dominated the last century.<sup>5</sup> Economics remains impersonal and remote from daily life. The human economy approach brings together scholars, activists and practitioners for whom building bridges between what people really do and human interests as a whole are a matter of urgent concern.

Two great ideas drive modern history – *democracy* and *science*. The first says that citizens must be free and equal in order to be self-governing; the second that such societies can only flourish if knowledge in them is based on what is real. A democratic society has to break down intrinsic barriers

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<sup>1</sup> K. HART – J.L. LAVILLE – A.D. CATTANI (eds.), *The Human Economy: A Citizen’s Guide*, Cambridge, Polity, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> G. PLEYERS, *Alter-Globalization: Becoming Actors in a Global Age*, Cambridge, Polity, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> I was a Co-Director, 2011-2018.

<sup>4</sup> Published by Berghahn Books, <[https://www.berghahnbooks.com/series/?pg=huma\\_econ](https://www.berghahnbooks.com/series/?pg=huma_econ)>.

<sup>5</sup> K. HART, *The Rise and Fall of National Capitalism*, <[https://www.academia.edu/43500374/The\\_rise\\_and\\_fall\\_of\\_national\\_capitalism](https://www.academia.edu/43500374/The_rise_and_fall_of_national_capitalism)>.



to its own development – poverty, ignorance and injustice. To do so, it needs science. Our plans will only succeed if we find out how things work. Science also thrives on democratic social organization. It is a collective enterprise, building on the cumulative efforts of generations. When science is cut off from the interests of ordinary people, it wastes away. Education links the two sides. Free and equal citizens must be knowledgeable. Science is sustained by a culture that values truth, learning and invention. Human economy's end is social justice, but its means are democracy and science.

World religions have long bridged the gap between everyday life and a vast universe. In the world's leading societies science has now driven religion from its former place of public influence. But science only understands how past regularities shape the present. A lot more is needed if we wish to build a world society. We must also discover new religions compatible with scientific knowledge.

I first address the concepts and methods that could inform building a human economy together. A major theme is our need to resist and overcome alienation. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx and Frantz Fanon are my guides here. Political movements must be in part religiously motivated if they would transform individuals through self-education as well as society collectively.

The main event of the twentieth century was the anti-colonial revolution and its catalyst was two World Wars. Peoples coerced into world society by European colonial empires now made an independent connection with a world they hoped would abolish racism. This is still an unfinished project. But the anti-colonial intellectuals offer us rich grounds for reflection on how we might aspire to a society based on social justice, democracy, science and world religion. I draw on the Pan-Africanists – W.E.B. Du Bois, C.L.R. James and Frantz Fanon; but Mohandas K. Gandhi has most to offer us. I end with some thoughts on religion and economy.

### *Building a human economy together*<sup>6</sup>

Markets and money are largely left alone today. Only corporate capital is freely mobile. The rest of us have to adapt to it; and society is highly unequal as a result. One victim of neoliberalism is democracy in any meaningful sense. The financial crisis unleashed massive intervention by governments to save the banks. A major shift could be taking place to 'emerging markets'

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<sup>6</sup> K. HART – J.L. LAVILLE – A.D. CATTANI, *Building a Human Economy together*, in K. HART – J.L. LAVILLE – A.D. CATTANI (eds.), *The Human Economy*, cit., pp. 1-20.

like China, India and Brazil. Neoliberalism is wounded, but not yet defeated.<sup>7</sup>

Humanity has recently formed a world society, a single interactive social network. This world is unequal and voices for human unity are drowned. Emergent world society is the new human universal. This is not an idea, but 7.5 billion people crying out for new principles of association. Economists analyse decision-making in markets. People play no part in their calculations. They cannot find themselves in the numbers published by the media. The economy is an impersonal machine, remote from ordinary experience. The idea of a 'human economy' reminds us that the economy is made and remade by people in their everyday lives.

There are two prerequisites for being human. We must each learn to be self-reliant to a high degree and to belong to others. Emile Durkheim considered individuals and society to constitute *homo duplex*.<sup>8</sup> This means merging our personal identities in a great variety of social relations. Modern ideology finds it problematic to be both self-interested and mutual. When culture is set up to expect a conflict between the two, it is hard to be both. Yet some societies encourage private and public interests to coincide. The next human universal will be the unity of self and society.

Economics needs to be rescued from the economists. The mask of neoliberal ideology is already slipping from world economy. We must propose effective replacements. To be human, an economy must be at least four things:

1. It is made and remade by people; economics should be of practical use in our daily lives.
2. It should address a great variety of economic situations in their institutional complexity.
3. It must be based on a more holistic conception of human needs and interests.
4. It has to address humanity as a whole and the world society we are making.

People already insert themselves into economic life on their own account. What they do there is often marginalized or repressed by dominant economic institutions. In the last century, society was supposed to be impersonal. Public bureaucracy, capitalist commerce and scientific experts managed society. Most people felt powerless as a result. But they did not sit on their hands. They expressed themselves in domestic life and in the cracks of the economic system. They made associations for their own protection, betterment and recreation. 'Capitalism' or 'socialism' may be the

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<sup>7</sup> P. MIROWSKI, *Never Let a Serious Economic Crisis Go to Waste: How Neoliberalism Survived the Financial Meltdown*, New York, Verso, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> E. DURKHEIM, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, edited by S. Lukes, London, Macmillan, 2013 (ed. or. 1895); M. MAUSS, *The Gift*, edited by J. Guyer, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2016 (ed. or. 1925).

distinctive part of an economy; but there is a lot more going on. Economies are more alike than we think.

We first seek recognition and legitimacy for what people already do for themselves. An economy can move forward while drawing on established initiatives. These need more room to grow. We encourage people to try things out for themselves. There is always tension between a movement's universal aspirations and local interests. Our emphasis is on the second. Yet, there is no knowing how far we could go if the principles outlined here took off. Our human predicament is global and requires global solutions. We take many small steps now, rather than wait for one great transformation later. This is not for lack of ambition. If more of us commit to engaging with the economy differently, who knows what we may conclude about the need for systemic change?

The object of economy should be the reproduction of human life. Beyond that it should preserve everything that sustains life. The world's leading societies of the last 5,000 years have done a poor job of that. The object of economy is now to make money through producing and selling commodities. Human life is a secondary means to that end. Economics, a science for human emancipation, has become a dehumanized expert ideology. It is remote from people's practical concerns and offers no understanding of them.

Traditional African economies aimed to produce life embodied in human beings. Money often took the form of cattle used for marriage.<sup>9</sup> Modern capitalist economies accumulate money through the production of inanimate things for sale. But the fastest-growing sector of world trade is in cultural services. These include entertainment, education, media, software and information, not to mention finance and transport. The economy is becoming more about what people do for each other (services). It may be reverting to the production of human beings. The largest television audiences are for the finals of football's World Cup and the Olympics 100 metres.

We are the frontal lobes of the biomass, the part of life that can think.<sup>10</sup> Installing democracy as a universal political principle is essential to that end. Science too will be needed. The idea of economy is central to promoting truth and justice in the world. The last concerted effort along these lines was the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. We must renew their revolutionary project for our own times.

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<sup>9</sup> In Southern Africa *Lobolo(a)*, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lobolo>>; retrieved November 2, 2020; J. GOODY, *Bridewealth and Dowry*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1973.

<sup>10</sup> R. RAPPAPORT, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

The human economy idea launches a new «new institutional economics». <sup>11</sup> It combines anthropology, development studies, economic history and world literature. Marcel Mauss and Karl Polanyi pioneered such a synthesis. <sup>12</sup> They started from the ‘real economic movement’. Fundamental change was «by no means committed to revolutionary or radical alternatives, to brutal choices between two contradictory forms of society, [but] is and will be made by a process of building new groups and institutions alongside and on top of the old ones». <sup>13</sup>

They both showed us a concrete road to ‘other economies’ based on the possibilities revealed by history and anthropology.

For Mauss, human history extended society to more inclusive levels. The point of *The Gift* is that society cannot be taken for granted as a pre-existent form. It must be made and remade, sometimes from scratch. Heroic gift-exchange pushes the limits of society outwards. It is liberal like the ‘free market’, except that generosity powers the exchange. It is self-interested, but not in the way of *homo economicus*.

Polanyi showed how economic institutions organize several distribution mechanisms together. <sup>14</sup> In the modern world these affect the lives of millions who are part of them but with no control. We insist that states and the markets have to work together in less one-sided ways. Polanyi called for a return to social solidarity, drawing on the reciprocity of voluntary associations. People must contribute their energies to society’s renewal. It is not enough to rely on impersonal states and markets. <sup>15</sup>

Two great lessons may be drawn from the twentieth century. First, market society generated huge inequalities by privileging individual freedom. Then political will controlled economy on the pretext of equality and suppressed freedom. These two solutions called democracy itself into question. One took the form of totalitarian systems. The other subordinated political power to big money. Institutions should guarantee a plural economy within a democratic framework. This is impossible when money-making without limit goes unchecked. How might democratic norms be reinserted in economic life? Democracy in a complex society depends

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<sup>11</sup> O. WILLIAMSON, *The New Institutional Economics: Taking Stock, Looking Ahead*, «Journal of Economic Literature», 38, 2000, 3, pp. 595-613.

<sup>12</sup> K. HART – H. ORTIZ, *The Anthropology of Money and Finance: Between Ethnography and World History*, «Annual Review of Anthropology», 43, 2014, pp. 465-482.

<sup>13</sup> M. MAUSS, *The Gift*, cit., note 8.

<sup>14</sup> There were two Polanyis, during and after the war. K. POLANYI, *The Great Transformation: The Origins of Our Times*, Boston, Beacon, 2001 (1944); ID., *The economy as instituted process*, in K. POLANYI – C. ARENSBERG – H. PEARSON, *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*, New York, Free Press, 1957, pp. 243-270.

<sup>15</sup> K. HART, *Heads or Tails? Two Sides of the Coin*, «Man», 21, 1986, 4, pp. 637-656.



on reconciling freedom and equality.<sup>16</sup> Potential solutions must build on the reactions of people in society.

The issue is how to resolve, in Jürgen Habermas' words, the «irreducible tension between capitalism and democracy». The deregulated economy has not guaranteed prosperity for all, far from it. In dissolving the social fabric, it has paved the way for authoritarian regimes. Market failure had the same result in the 1930s. While a market economy is essential, a market that knows no limits poses a threat to democracy.

The four principles outlined above reveal tension between scales. This is conceptual, methodological and political, ranging in scope from everyday humanism to the human predicament as a whole. Albert Camus' novel *The Plague* explores this tension with great insight.<sup>17</sup> The human economy idea must be humanist. How else is the economy to be transferred from remote experts to the people most affected by it? But humanism is not enough. A human economy must bridge the gap between everyday life and our common interests. These are impersonal and lie beyond the actor's point of view. That means drawing on philosophy, world history, literature and grand social theory. Globalization is a fact of contemporary life, but not irreversible. We must extend our intellectual and political reach to address its contradictions.

### *Small-scale humanism with large-scale bureaucracy*<sup>18</sup>

How might some large bureaucracies find common cause with grassroots democratic movements? We could stop viewing the economy only in national terms. Many activists will not consider working with public and private bureaucracies. Yet the French revolution was partly financed by the shippers of Bordeaux and Nantes, the Italian revolution by the industrialists of Milan and Turin. A subsidiary of Vodacom launched Kenya's world-leading experiment in mobile money, M-pesa. Going it alone on a small scale is fine. Maybe the Luddites were right about technology.<sup>19</sup> There are strong doubts about Big Tech too. But a human economy approach is above all pragmatic.

Money and markets are intrinsic to our human potential. They are not anti-human but should take forms that are more conducive to economic

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<sup>16</sup> A. DE TOCQUEVILLE, *Democracy in America*, London, Penguin Classics, 2003 (ed. or. 1835). K. HART (ed.), *Economy For and Against Democracy*, New York, Berghahn, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> A. CAMUS, *The Plague*, New York, Vintage, 1991 (ed. or. 1947). *La peste* is a metaphor for the Algerian war.

<sup>18</sup> K. HART, *Money in the Making of a Human Economy: Beyond National Capitalism*, keynote address, 2013, <[https://www.academia.edu/36229606/Money\\_in\\_the\\_making\\_of\\_a\\_human\\_economy\\_beyond\\_national\\_capitalism](https://www.academia.edu/36229606/Money_in_the_making_of_a_human_economy_beyond_national_capitalism)>.

<sup>19</sup> C.B. FREY, *The Technology Trap*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2019.

democracy. It helps to recognize that money spans the extremes of our engagement with society.<sup>20</sup> As Simmel said, it reflects our human potential to make universal society.<sup>21</sup> Human motivations for economic action are also broader than the economists allow for. Religion once shaped these. We could revisit the complex interaction between religion, education and economy too (see below). A further principle is methodological: theoretical and practical work must work together. The 2009 World Social Forum in Belém, Brazil acknowledged this. Activists and researchers discussed there how science and democracy might be combined effectively.

Economic activities should have rules (not only state-made laws) that are debated and enforced by political means. The recent attempt to naturalize the market was a species of utopian capitalism. It has provoked a many-sided social movement in response. The experiment was reductive in two senses. Politics was removed from the market, while the market invaded public life. Even if economics has taken over modern society, the latter is not reducible to capitalism. There is still room in contemporary societies for economic invention with democracy in mind.

Society will not become democratic without democratizing the economy. We must look to actual experiments around the world. These include activities that have non-economic ends. We should also try to avoid the recent pitfalls of progressive politics. The centre-left swallowed claims that the market is the only source of wealth-creation. They adopted neoliberal economics, moderated only by less restrictive social policies. The far left wants to break with capitalism but has no definite programme for the transition. Both of these have collapsed since the millennium.

Building a human economy presupposes renewed public engagement – a civil society championing the common good must balance regulation by political authorities. Guarantees of citizens' rights must give space for self-organization. Market contracts and citizenship are not the only route to freedom and equality. People living together also draw on the mutuality and egalitarianism of everyday life. At the other extreme, the need to curb the power of the corporations requires a new alliance of grassroots movements and bureaucracy to change public policy. Voluntary reciprocity must shape attempts to regulate capitalism and develop redistributive institutions. Authoritarian xenophobic nationalism is one reaction to the erosion of national capitalism's foundations.<sup>22</sup> It will not last. What are the levels of political association now that a national monopoly of politics has gone?

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<sup>20</sup> K. HART (ed.), *Money in a Human Economy*, New York, Berghahn, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> G. SIMMEL, *The Philosophy of Money*, London, Routledge, 1978 (ed. or. 1900).

<sup>22</sup> K. HART, *After 2008: Market Fundamentalism at the Crossroads*, «Cultural Anthropology», 33, 2018, 4, pp. 536-546.

*Rethinking the world*

By the end of the 1960s the prevailing attitude among students was that western societies were decadent. In public demonstrations we chanted the names of Mao Tse Tung, Fidel Castro, Kwame Nkrumah and Ho Chi Minh. The anti-colonial revolution did not pass us by. My youthful education as a classicist meant that my head was full of the western literary canon. And the anthropology I was taught likewise celebrated how western academics, after first-hand investigations of isolated peoples, generalized about the unity and variety of the human species. A stay in Jamaica (1986-1988) generated a late-flowering personal synthesis.<sup>23</sup> This was triggered by meeting the Trinidadian writer and revolutionary, C.L.R. James. I now took a more explicitly political line to anthropology and history. I saw that my anthropological education had been biased towards 'our' side of the anti-colonial revolution, its significance reduced.

This revolution's political leaders were often intellectuals too. Their writings provide a reservoir of inspiration for building a better version of our depleted world. Only the Marxist tradition offers comparable nourishment. Many of the anti-colonial intellectuals fed there too and theirs was truly a world revolution. In 1900 European empires controlled 80% of a unipolar world whose wealth ended up in their coffers. I have a bookcase containing the complete works of Lenin and Gandhi. With Rousseau, Kant, Marx, James and Fanon, they are my principal guides to making a better world.

What does it take to rethink the world? The circuit of money today is global and lawless. Politics is still national but cannot handle that more inclusive economy. Recently there were several models of human being in circulation, but now there is only one made by and for finance. We need to refresh our thinking. Nineteenth-century world society was an evolutionary racial hierarchy imposed by 'white' conquerors. A sequence of world wars and economic depression undermined their monopoly. Peoples seeking emancipation from empire had leading thinkers who had to imagine a new world and to persuade the masses to fight for it. Each individual in that movement had to educate him- or herself to participate in the world they hoped to make.<sup>24</sup>

The collapse of European empires temporarily opened up anthropologists to history and critique. We believed then that western societies should

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<sup>23</sup> Id., *Caribbean Cubism*, 2018, <[https://www.academia.edu/37213890/Caribbean\\_cubism](https://www.academia.edu/37213890/Caribbean_cubism)>, retrieved November 2, 2020.

<sup>24</sup> Id., *Gandhi as a Global Thinker*, South Asian University, New Delhi, 2015, <[https://www.academia.edu/35893687/Gandhi\\_as\\_a\\_Global\\_Thinker\\_Anthropological\\_Legacies\\_of\\_the\\_Anti-colonial\\_Revolution](https://www.academia.edu/35893687/Gandhi_as_a_Global_Thinker_Anthropological_Legacies_of_the_Anti-colonial_Revolution)>, retrieved November 2, 2020.

absorb political lessons from the independent countries. The Vietnam War felt like the end of imperialism too. But the social anthropology syllabus at Cambridge was still imbued with the spirit of Radcliffe-Brown.<sup>25</sup> As a Ghana specialist, I only found out in the late 1980s that President Kwame Nkrumah was a protégé of the London-based Trinidadian Marxists, George Padmore and C.L.R. James. Moreover, James published a devastating critique of his protégé's post-colonial politics.<sup>26</sup>

### *Resisting Alienation*

We can only be fully human if self and society reinforce each other. Achieving this is a real, but largely unconscious need for most people. Profound obstacles stand in its way. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx and Frantz Fanon each grappled with the problem. All of them believed that unequal society corrupts human nature. Yet human beings have the potential for redemption. We can become whole again by tackling the root causes of inequality together. For Rousseau, unequal society meant the arbitrary class divisions of agrarian civilization. For Marx it was the class structure of the new industrial capitalism. For Fanon it was the racism of colonial empires. All these historical processes made people only part-human. They were denied the chance to be whole persons in society.

In his *Discourse on Inequality*<sup>27</sup>

Rousseau summons men to hear for the first time their history as a species. Man was born free, equal, self-sufficient, unprejudiced, and whole; now, at the end of history, he is in chains, defined by relations of inequality, dependent, full of false opinions or superstitions, and divided between his inclinations and his duties. Nature made man a brute, but happy and good. History has made man civilized, but unhappy and immoral.<sup>28</sup>

Rousseau is not concerned here with individual variations in natural endowments that we can do little about, but with the conventional inequalities of wealth, honour and the capacity to command obedience that can be changed. To construct a model of human equality, he imagines a pre-social state of nature, a phase of human evolution in which men were free. This freedom was metaphysical, anarchic and personal. Original human

<sup>25</sup> ID., *Decolonizing Cambridge University: a Participant Observer's View*, «Cambridge Journal of Anthropology», 36, 2018, 2, pp. 92-106.

<sup>26</sup> C.L.R. JAMES, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*, Chicago, Lawrence Hill Books, 1978.

<sup>27</sup> J.-J. ROUSSEAU, *Discourse on Inequality*, London, Penguin, 1984 (ed. or. 1754).

<sup>28</sup> A. BLOOM, *Introduction*, in J.-J. ROUSSEAU, *Emile: On Education*, New York, Basic Books, 1979 (ed. or. 1762), p. 344.

beings had free will, they were not subject to rules of any kind and they had no superiors. At some point humanity made the transition to 'nascent society', a prolonged period whose economic base was hunter-gathering with huts. This represents his ideal of life in society close to nature.

The rot set in with the invention of agriculture: this led to incipient property institutions which contained the seeds of entrenched inequality. Their culmination awaited the development of the state. This new social contract was fraudulent in that the rich gained legal sanction for transmitting unequal property rights in perpetuity. Political society then usually moved, via a series of revolutions, through three stages:

The establishment of law and the right of property was the first stage, the institution of magistrates the second and the transformation of legitimate into arbitrary power the third and last stage. The status of rich and poor was authorized by the first epoch, that of strong and weak by the second and by the third that of master and slave, which is the last degree of inequality and the stage to which all the others finally lead.<sup>29</sup>

One-man-rule closes the circle. «It is here that all individuals become equal again because they are nothing, here where subjects have no longer any law but the will of the master».<sup>30</sup> New revolutions dissolve the government altogether and bring it back to legitimacy. The growth of inequality was only one aspect of human alienation in civil society. We need to return from division of labour and dependence on the opinion of others to subjective self-sufficiency.

Alienation means separation from something that belongs to us (land, personal integrity). It could mean the attribution of agency to forces beyond our control (the gods, the weather or just 'them'). Madness is its extreme form. The unity of self and society is weakened in different degrees. The Enlightenment's achievement was to challenge religious alienation by overcoming inhibitions imposed by spiritual beings. To redemption in the afterlife, they opposed the here and now – 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness'.

Karl Marx captured Victorian capitalism in *Capital*.<sup>31</sup> An early passage on *The fetishism of commodities and the secret thereof* is his deepest reflection on alienation here. In capitalist society most people belong to a class that must work under conditions imposed by the owners. They are estranged from their own humanity. To be human is to realize our intentions by producing objects with social value. But in production organized by capitalist private property a worker is a tool, not a person. Products are designed neither by workers nor con-

<sup>29</sup> J.-J. ROUSSEAU, *Discourse on Inequality*, cit., p. 131.

<sup>30</sup> *Ivi*, p. 134.

<sup>31</sup> K. MARX, *Capital: The Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 1, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1970 (ed. or. 1867).



sumers, but by the owners who keep most of their market value. The work process consists of repetitive, often meaningless acts. Workers overcome their servitude by understanding the causes of their alienation. Revolution restores the unity of self and society we have lost. It brings money, machines and the workplace under social management.

Frantz Fanon approached damaged humanity through the critique of racism.<sup>32</sup> The last chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* reports on his psychiatric work with patients in the war.<sup>33</sup> This included two 12-year-old Algerian boys who could not cope with having killed a European schoolmate. A young French soldier was driven mad by memories of torturing insurgents. Fanon concludes that, for the victims and victimizers on both sides, violence is impossible to live with. His death from cancer at 36 was brought on by the stress of dividing his efforts in that genocidal war.

Race defined two unequal and separate worlds in colonial society. Dehumanization as an inferior race under capitalism was an explosive combination. Fanon used psychiatry to rehabilitate individuals. But he also believed that oppressed peoples would win emancipation through their collective efforts. This is important. Many assume that the passivity of subordinate classes perpetuates alienation. Fanon believed that colonized people possessed a drive for freedom. This resistance to alienation would defeat alienation itself. Classes whose humanity was denied by colonial racism offered proof of their active drive for self-emancipation. What means are available for overcoming alienation? It is a persistent theme for this project.

Alienation means that we are part-, not wholly-human. Saul of Tarsus put it this way:

For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now, *we see through a glass, darkly*; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.<sup>34</sup>

‘Charity’ in Christian theology is love directed toward God but also toward oneself and others as objects of God’s love, that is, love of humanity. Paul says that we make do with knowing little about people and guess the rest. It is usually wrong. We don’t understand ourselves and we project our own dark side onto others. One day, when we meet face to face, not through the distortions of identity politics, we will recognize the humanity

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<sup>32</sup> F. FANON, *Alienation and Freedom*, London, Bloomsbury, 2017, contains early reflections on this issue.

<sup>33</sup> F. FANON, *Les damnés de la terre*, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1962.

<sup>34</sup> *New Testament* (King James version), I Corinthians 13: 8-13 (emphasis added).

in everyone. Humanity is a historical project for our species. What will it take to succeed in this? Belief, hope and love are all we need.

This message is universally human. It is also an ethnographer's charter: when we interact with others, we want to see and be seen as we really are, not as a dissembling crook or white oppressor. Perhaps we will all find our way to humanity; but now we are only part-human.

### *Pan-Africanism: Du Bois, James and Fanon*

The Pan-African Federation was founded in Manchester in 1944 by African and Coloured peoples. Its aims were

to promote the well-being and unity of African peoples and peoples of African descent throughout the world; to demand self-determination and independence of African peoples and other subject races; to secure equality of civil rights for African peoples and an end to racial discrimination; and cooperation between African peoples and others who share our aspirations.<sup>35</sup>

The Fifth Pan-African Congress was held there in October 1945. It was organized by George Padmore. The 90 delegates included 33 from the Caribbean. The British media ignored them.

Why Manchester? Associations (friendly societies, the cooperative movement) flourished there in and after the industrial revolution.<sup>36</sup> 10,000 people signed an abolitionist petition there in the 1790s. Manchester was central to the international campaign to end the slave trade. The 1860s saw a cotton famine in Lancashire because of the American civil war. The bosses lobbied for British battle ships to break the blockade of the South; the workers held demonstrations for the North and free labour. Marx and Engels based their revolutionary vision on what they found in Manchester.<sup>37</sup>

Africa succumbed to the last phase of the European land grab. The Pan-African movement aimed to restore control of their land to Africans. Its main intellectual drivers came from the New World. Du Bois, James and Fanon lived from the 1860s to the 1980s. Each developed a vision of a new world order that inspired a movement for general emancipation.

W.E.B. Du Bois was born in 1868 of mixed ancestry. He grew up without much experience of racial discrimination. University in Tennessee

<sup>35</sup> <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-African\\_Federation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-African_Federation)>.

<sup>36</sup> N. SMELSER, *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution*, London, Routledge, 2012 (ed. or. 1959).

<sup>37</sup> K. HART, *Industrial Labour in India: The View from Lancashire*, «Critique of Anthropology», 20, 2000, 4, pp. 439-446; F. ENGELS, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844*, Independent Publishing, 2019 (ed. or. 1844). See also Mike Leigh's film, *Peterloo*, 2019.

changed all that. He went to Berlin University and then to Harvard where he was the first Black American to receive a PhD. His first three books were a history of the slave trade, a sociological monograph, *The Philadelphia Negro*, and an anthropological masterpiece, *The Souls of Black Folk*.<sup>38</sup> He helped to found the National Association of Coloured Peoples (NAACP). He wanted to build bridges to the white majority in the US. But he later took a separatist stance. On President Nkrumah's invitation to help with an *Encyclopaedia Africana*, he settled in Ghana and died there in 1963.

Du Bois' speech to the First Pan-African Congress in London (1900) is famous.

The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line. How far will differences of race be made the basis of denying to over half the world the right of sharing the opportunities and privileges of modern civilization?... [If] Negroes and other dark men [are given] the largest and broadest opportunity for education and self-development, then this contact and influence is bound to have a beneficial effect upon the world and hasten human progress. But if, by reason of carelessness, prejudice, greed and injustice, the black world is to be exploited and ravished and degraded, the results must be deplorable, if not fatal... Let not the natives of Africa be sacrificed to the greed of gold, their liberties taken away, their family life debauched, their just aspirations repressed, and avenues of advancement and culture taken from them.<sup>39</sup>

*The Souls of Black Folk* is extraordinary. Its essays range from a polemic against the leading Black politician through Georgia sharecroppers to the death of his young son. Du Bois aimed to touch his readers' hearts as well as their minds. Excerpts from Negro spirituals, 'sorrow songs', head each chapter. Black music was the one thing of beauty produced by nineteenth-century American society. It expressed the common soul of black folk and reached out to wider notions of soul. 'Soul' is an aspect of individual persons and shared by whole peoples, even by humanity as a whole. It is the non-material, immortal part of each of us; it is our core, most integral, vital part; it is the sensitive component of personality. Du Bois hoped that a religious meaning of soul could link Blacks and Whites in a Christian nation. He sought recognition of his own human worth. Disappointment led him to abandon that strategy.

Black people are seen first as Black and only then as themselves. This can be a strategic resource for them. Not to be seen might be an opportunity. Du Bois is writing 'through, inside, outside and above the veil'. The veil makes Blacks unseen, but they are not invisible. One may be unseen but

<sup>38</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Independently published, 2020 (ed. or. 1903).

<sup>39</sup> <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Pan-African\\_Conference](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Pan-African_Conference)>, retrieved November 2, 2020.

not veiled, veiled but visible. But the great prize is still to be seen as oneself. The cracked mirror of race prevents us from seeing and being seen as we are. Our knowledge of ourselves and others is always partial. All Black people in the United States are victims of 'double consciousness'. They aspire to be full members of society, but they are not and never will be. Du Bois did not pursue white recognition for long. He published *Darkwater: Voices from within the veil* in 1920; by then he was a fully-fledged separatist.<sup>40</sup>

C.L.R. James was likewise an intellectual of extraordinary range and impact who lived for almost 90 years. His Trinidad was a more benign place to be Black and middle class than Reconstruction in the US. He chose to stay and write fiction and sports journalism rather than jump on the escalator to London and become a doctor or lawyer. James arrived there at 32. In six years he published the first Caribbean novel of urban low life, a political history of labour in Trinidad, a pamphlet advocating West Indian self-government, ghosted a cricket autobiography, and wrote the first global history of the Trotskyist movement, a play about the Haitian slave revolution's leader starring Paul Robeson, the definitive history of that revolution and a survey of Black revolt in the Atlantic world.<sup>41</sup> He became the outstanding far left political figure in Britain, organized the International African Service Bureau with George Padmore (formerly Stalin's coordinator of Black affairs) and wrote and spoke brilliantly in the available media.

James's masterpiece is *The Black Jacobins*.<sup>42</sup> He showed there that Haiti's slave revolution changed the world as much as the American and French revolutions did. Yet it was now forgotten. The leading powers sent large armies to defeat the insurgents and lost comprehensively. The British Prime Minister, William Pitt, switched the British Empire's focus from the New World to India as a result. James saw here the inspiration for an anti-colonial revolution in Africa. Black revolt in the Atlantic region had now shifted from the New World to Africa itself.

The mechanized sugar plantations had been the most advanced sector of production in the world. They ran on the basis of appalling racism. The slave revolution was provoked by this historical conjuncture. Something similar was occurring in Africa now. Gold Coast dock workers, Johannesburg gold miners and East Nigerian women palm-oil producers were building an African revolution that would erupt soon. No-one, from African

<sup>40</sup> W.E.B. DU BOIS, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1920.

<sup>41</sup> C.L.R. JAMES, *Minty Alley*, London, Secker & Warburg, 1936; ID., *The Life of Captain Cipriani: an Account of British Government in the West Indies*, Nelson, Coulton, 1932; ID., *The Case for West Indian Self-government*, London, Hogarth Press, 1933; L. CONSTANTINE, *Cricket and I*, London, P. Allen, 1933; C.L.R. JAMES, *World Revolution, 1917-1936*, London, Secker & Warburg, 1937; ID., *Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, New York, Vintage, 1989 (ed. or. 1938); ID., *The History of Negro Revolt*, London, Fact Limited, 1938.

<sup>42</sup> ID., *The Black Jacobins*, cit.

politicians and European Marxists to colonial officials, thought this was likely. But James was right, and they were wrong.

James was a practicing revolutionary and world history was his teacher. His second masterpiece, *Beyond a Boundary*, is possibly the best sports book ever written (on cricket) and a political autobiography.<sup>43</sup> James criticized the media's exclusive focus on the field of play. Society is also present as the crowd of spectators. He spent 15 years in the United States from 1938. His partners in the Johnson-Forest Tendency there were Raya Dunayevskaya and Grace Lee. They broke with party politics. Letters James wrote to New York colleagues from Nevada while seeking a divorce were published as *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin*.<sup>44</sup> He considered this his most significant contribution. But the world does not yet agree. *American Civilization* stands with the other two classics as his supreme achievement.<sup>45</sup>

Frantz Fanon spent six years as a psychiatrist in Algeria. He worked first in a French military hospital and then joined the FLN insurgency.<sup>46</sup> This experience drew Fanon to the Pan-African cause. *The Wretched of the Earth* has a Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre. The book argues that colonial society is racist and can only be overcome by force. But Fanon was a consummate writer and that was not the book's only message.

As noted earlier, he worked with patients on both sides. Fanon concludes – for victims and victimizers alike – that violence is humanly impossible to live with. His advocacy of violence sits awkwardly with the idea that war places intolerable strains on our humanity. The longest chapter confronts the weakness of the nationalist bourgeoisie in Africa.<sup>47</sup> They will break up Pan-African unity, he says. Few African countries had then won independence, so this prophecy is remarkable. But he does not dismiss national politics.

Fanon's synoptic vision of Africa comes out in his class analysis of the war for independence. Small urban elites were tied to the metropolis. They despised the rural masses and their chiefs. But persecution by the colonial power forced them to take refuge in the countryside. The two sides exchanged political education for practical lessons in the anti-colonial struggle. Their resulting partnership was how the revolutionary movement for independence was born.

<sup>43</sup> Id., *Beyond a Boundary*, New York, Vintage, 2019 (ed. or. 1963).

<sup>44</sup> Id., *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin*, Chicago, Lawrence Hill Books, 1981 (ed. or. 1948).

<sup>45</sup> Id., *American Civilization*, edited by A. Grimshaw and K. Hart, Oxford, Blackwell, 1993, was based on a manuscript written in New York in 1950.

<sup>46</sup> The National Liberation Front.

<sup>47</sup> F. FANON, *Les damnés de la terre*, cit. This chapter is sometimes called *The Pitfalls of National Consciousness*, elsewhere less negative about nationalism.



*Gandhi's world vision*<sup>48</sup>

Mohandas K. Gandhi grew up in an ancient Indian Ocean port. This was a cosmopolitan place with little religious conflict. He studied law in London. He then went to South Africa to advise on a commercial dispute between Indian Muslims. He stayed there for over two decades (1893-1915). He was only concerned with local Indian politics at first, but he later became the country's leading civil rights activist. He chose to work through the British Empire, the world's largest political entity, to subvert it. As a pacifist he was a stretcher-bearer in the First World War.<sup>49</sup> When he returned to India, he led the campaign for home rule. He was assassinated by a Hindu zealot soon after India's independence in the 1940s.

Gandhi's critique of the modern state was devastating.<sup>50</sup> It disabled citizens, subjecting mind and body to the control of professional experts. The purpose of a civilization is to enhance its members' self-reliance. Instead, we are patients, students, taxpayers and prisoners under doctors, teachers, bureaucrats and jailers. Home rule would be driven by self-realization at the personal level. Gandhi's term for self-rule was *swaraj*,<sup>51</sup> with a focus on political decentralization. The independence movement later moved on and today he is a target for vilification in India and South Africa. He did set a precedent for work organizations, voluntary associations and NGOs after independence. Gandhi's ideal of bottom-up organization by individuals in communities lives on.

His method for achieving self-rule was *satyagraha*, 'insistence on truth'.<sup>52</sup> His autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*,<sup>53</sup> reveals his politics and ethics. The pursuit of truth is related to non-violence (*ahimsa*). He was a religious figure, and many find him less effective as a politician accordingly.<sup>54</sup> He was becoming marginal to national politics before he died. But mobilizing the masses to fight for a new society needs more than political science. The Pan-Africanists combined religious thinking and secular politics in different ways. 'Soul' was central for Gandhi and for the early Du Bois.

<sup>48</sup> K. HART, *Gandhi as a Global Thinker*, cit.

<sup>49</sup> A. DESAI – G. VAHED, *The South African Gandhi: Stretcher-bearer for Empire*, Palo Alto, Stanford University Press, 2015.

<sup>50</sup> B. PAREKH, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination*, London, Palgrave, 1989.

<sup>51</sup> <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swaraj>>, retrieved November 2, 2020.

<sup>52</sup> <<https://simple.wikipedia.org/Satyagraha>>, retrieved November 2, 2020.

<sup>53</sup> M.K. GANDHI, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, New York, Dover, 1983 (ed. or. 1927).

<sup>54</sup> P. ANDERSON, *Gandhi Centre Stage*, «London Review of Books», 34, July 5<sup>th</sup> 2012, 13, <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v34/n13/perry-anderson/gandhi-centre-stage>>, retrieved November 2, 2020.

Like Rousseau and others, Gandhi knew that mass society could overwhelm human agency. He chose the village as the site of India's renaissance because most Indians lived there. Its scale was suitable for self-respecting peasants. He wanted to build up the personal resources of individuals. In this he synthesized Victorian romanticism and Buddhist economics. The first strand is well-known – Thoreau, Tolstoy and Ruskin. Ajit K. Dasgupta places Gandhi with Buddha as an economic philosopher: «For the purpose of gaining understanding of Gandhi's social and economic thought, I would regard Buddha as his most significant predecessor».<sup>55</sup> There is a strong affinity between Protestantism and Buddhism: both have their origins in the middle classes.

How then do human beings span the chasm between self and world? Divisions of race, class, nationality, religion, gender, time and place mediate the poles. What size and type of society enables rather than disables its citizens?

Two examples from Gandhi's *Autobiography* show how he scaled up the self and scaled down the world. When he went to London to study law, he couldn't find food he liked. He joined the Vegetarian Society committee. By the time he left, there were a dozen more vegetarian restaurants in London. Back in India, a large strike broke out in the industrial city of Ahmedabad. Gandhi went there and sat down on a street corner. The strike soon hinged around him. He was not content to practice this method himself. Independence would succeed only if millions of Indians emulated him – and many did.

Gandhi's vision contained a humanist message. Every human being is a unique personality and belongs to humanity as a whole. Between these extremes lie a great number of divisions, categories and associations. This provoked an existential question. We each feel small, isolated and vulnerable in a world devoid of meaning governed by impersonal forces known only to remote experts. Yet modern cultures tell us that we are personalities with significance. The anti-colonial intellectuals renewed the liberal tradition by reviving its metaphysics. Their slogans have been hi-jacked by capitalists and their political stooges for purposes of imperialism and class warfare. No wonder that the language of liberalism is now viewed with suspicion or that I was slow to appreciate the other side's perspective in the anti-colonial revolution.

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<sup>55</sup> A.K. DASGUPTA, *Gandhi's Economic Thought*, London, Routledge, 1996, p. 164.

*Religion and economy in the making of world society*

Traditional religion helped devotees to make a meaningful connection between self and world. The classical means for joining them together was prayer. Marcel Mauss, the specialist in comparative religion of Durkheim's team, chose to study prayer because speech is the unity of thought and action.<sup>56</sup> Anyone can talk to God, in private or in public. Many people still bridge the gap between self and world in this way. Religion links something uniquely subjective and personal inside us to an impersonal world. But for two centuries the main medium for doing this has been works of *fiction*: novels, plays and movies.

Humanity as a whole consists of individual personalities. How can we pool our resources and make a world society fit for us all? We must learn how to make possible worlds out of actual experience and that means finding hope somewhere. A contemporary means for this draws on fiction as a source. Works of fiction reduce history to a paperback, stage or screen that individuals can enter on any subjective terms they choose, without being accountable to others. Contemplating little things makes it easier to think about the macrocosm, as Vladimir Nabokov puts it in his autobiography: «There is, it would seem, in the dimensional scale of the world a kind of delicate meeting place of imagination and knowledge, a point, arrived at by diminishing large things and enlarging small ones that is intrinsically artistic».<sup>57</sup>

The victims of western imperialism used a similar perspective on self and the world to make modern history. The anti-colonial intellectuals invented a new and inspiring form of cosmopolitanism. They wanted to extend the best achievements of western civilization to all humanity without racial exclusion. World society is still racist, but their example illuminates the struggle we face now.

The twentieth century elevated impersonal society above the person. This made it impossible for contemporary social science to connect our intellectual history to the Enlightenment's. The digital revolution in communications makes a difference, however. It spawns the idea and practice of new kinds of person in a society whose time and space dimensions are collapsing. This trend, at once personal and remote, should be familiar to us. We encounter it whenever we buy something online.

Truth is always local, but we must each extend our self to grasp the world. World society is driven by power relations; but understanding our common humanity is basically moral. Morality is the ability to act on per-

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<sup>56</sup> M. MAUSS, *On Prayer*, edited by W. Pickering, Oxford, Bergahn Books, 2003.

<sup>57</sup> V. NABOKOV, *Speak Memory: An Autobiography Revisited*, London, Penguin, 2000, p. 197.

sonal judgments concerning what is good. Works of fiction allow us to span actual and possible worlds. They help us to resist alienation. How can we be at home in the restless turbulence of our world? Intimate face-to-face relations make us feel at home. But we must also engage in remote, often impersonal exchanges at distance. The drive to overcome alienation has to be more powerful than alienation itself. We have universal communications at last; let us make world society in the image of our own humanity.

For this task we need religion. It belongs to a set of terms that also includes art and science. Science began as a form of knowledge opposed to religious mysticism but is now often opposed to the arts. If science is the drive to know the world objectively and art is mainly a means of subjective self-expression, religion typically addresses both sides of the subject-object relationship by connecting what is inside each of us to something larger outside. Religion binds us to an external force; it stabilizes our interactions with the world, providing an anchor for our volatility.

Durkheim's last book, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, is his most neo-Kantian work.<sup>58</sup> Compared with his approach of the 1890s, this study of religion conforms more closely to my definition above. He divided experience between the known and the unknown. What we know well is everyday life, the mundane features of our routines, and we know it as individuals trapped in a private busy-ness. But this life is subject to larger forces whose origin we do not know, to natural disasters, social revolutions, economic depressions and, above all, death. We desperately wish to influence these unknown causes of our fate, which are both individual and collective in their impact. At least we hope to make them less uncertain and to establish a meaningful connection with them. For Durkheim, religion was the organized attempt to bridge the gap between a profane world of ordinary experience and a sacred, extraordinary world located outside that experience.

We know little about our collective being in society, he claimed. Through ritual we worship our unrealized powers of shared existence, society, and call it God. Society lies within us and outside; it is both subjective and objective. The chaos of everyday life attains some stability when informed by beliefs representing the social facts of a shared collective existence. Rituals instill these collective representations in each of us.

Assisting with the publication of Roy Rappaport's *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*<sup>59</sup> sharpened my appreciation of Durkheim, be-

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<sup>58</sup> E. DURKHEIM, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008 (ed. or. 1912). No-one knows who wrote it: Durkheim himself, with Mauss or an *Année sociologique* team (Marcel Fournier). See S. LUFT (ed.), *The Neo-Kantian reader*, London, Routledge, 2015.

<sup>59</sup> R. RAPPAPORT, *Ritual and Religion*, cit.

cause it is an extended reflection on ritual as the ground where religion is made. Rappaport's own definition starts from an emphasis on formality, invariance, and tradition. The project of achieving our potential to be collectively human has barely begun. It is entailed, however, according to him, in our origin as a species, in the discovery of language and religion. Religion, which is constantly renewed through ritual, is how we get in touch with the wholeness of things ('holiness'). So far, the Catholic church, white supremacy and bourgeois economics have all sought to define world society as a human universal. The new universal, however, is not an idea, but the social fact almost 8 bn of us trying to find a way of living together on this planet. Humanity must now assume responsibility for the stewardship of life as a whole. Religion is indispensable to that task.

What is economy?<sup>60</sup> For the French, economy and economics are the same thing – a social object and a form of subjectivity united in one word, *économie*. The economy is neither subjective nor objective, but a subject-object relationship, a dialectic, like religion. It is something like the skin of an organism. Skin holds the inside in and keeps the outside out while allowing limited interaction between the two. Shells perform the first function, but not the second. Marcel Mauss starts from the local.<sup>61</sup> People live in local societies that aspire to self-sufficiency and they attach social rights and obligations to their proximity. But no human society has ever been self-sufficient, materially or otherwise. People have to trade with foreigners in order to make good local deficits. This trade can take many different forms, but its institutional foundation is always money and the markets it makes possible.<sup>62</sup> Money and markets are thus human universals, since society is impossible without them. They extend a society's reach, while the demands of home society pull this expansion back. There is a permanent tension between the internal and external dimensions of any economy.

After the industrial revolution, the wage labour system came to rely on the separation of complementary spheres (production and consumption) in which paid and unpaid work predominated respectively. One is impersonal, specialized and calculated; the other is personal, diffuse, based on long-term interdependence. The market is a zone of infinite scope where objects and human labour are bought and sold for money. Home is a sphere of intimate personal relations where work in principle is done for love. The market is unbounded and, in a sense, unknowable, whereas the bounds of

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<sup>60</sup> J. SCHUMPETER, *History of Economic Analysis*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996 (ed. or. 1954); M. CALLON, *The Laws of the Markets*, Hoboken, Wiley-Blackwell, 1998.

<sup>61</sup> E. DURKHEIM, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, cit.; M. MAUSS, *The Gift*, cit.; K. HART – H. ORTIZ, *The Anthropology of Money and Finance*, cit.

<sup>62</sup> C. HANN – K. HART (eds.), *Market and Society: The Great Transformation today*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009.



domestic life are known only too well. The result is a heightened sense of division between an outside world where our humanity feels swamped and a precarious zone of protected personality at home. This is the moral and practical foundation of capitalist society. Money is intrinsic to the home economy and personality remains important in the workplace, so that the cultural effort required to keep the two separate is huge and incomplete.

In its Greek origin, 'economy' privileged budgeting for domestic self-sufficiency and was anti-market; it expressed the interests of a military landlord class. Economy was mainly domestic for another two millennia; then political economy promoted capitalist markets over military landlordism, profit over rent, trade over households. Urban economy retained a minor influence throughout. The role of world religions (Catholic, Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, etc.) in shaping economy during this period was immense. The strategy of 'national economics' pioneered by Friedrich List employed a combination of free trade and protection to strengthen a nation's position in the world economy.<sup>63</sup> It was the forerunner of 'national capitalism'.

The notion of 'human economy' helps us to envisage the next stage, linking individual persons meaningfully to everyone else. This would stretch the inside/outside pair to its extremes. The social and technical conditions of our era – urbanization, fast transport and universal media – will shape how a human economy might be concretely realised. People in their everyday lives should be in the foreground of economy; but baseline humanism is an insufficient means for global development on the required scale. Popular initiatives will have to be combined selectively with large-scale bureaucracies, such as states, corporations, cities, regional federations and international agencies.

People want to make meaningful connection between themselves as subjects and society as an object. It helps that money, as well as separating public and domestic life, was always the main bridge between them. Today money makes us feel vulnerable in society while offering each of us a practical symbol that makes an impersonal world meaningful. That is why money must be central to any attempt to humanize society. It can join together what it has divided. If you have some money, there is no limit to what you can do with it; but, when you buy something, payment lends concrete finality to your choice. Money's significance thus lies in the synthesis it promotes of impersonal abstraction and personal meaning, objectification and subjectivity, analytical reason and synthetic narrative. Its social power comes from the fluency of its mediation between infinite potential and finite determination.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> F. LIST, *National System of Political Economy*, New York, Cosimo Classics, 2013 (ed. or. 1841).

<sup>64</sup> K. HART, *Introduction. Money in a Human Economy*, in Id. (ed.), *Money in a Human Economy*, cit., pp. 3-14, <[https://www.berghahnbooks.com/downloads/intros/HartMoney\\_intro.pdf](https://www.berghahnbooks.com/downloads/intros/HartMoney_intro.pdf)>.

Most people become quite anxious when they depend on impersonal and anonymous institutions. This is an immense force for reversing the historical pattern of alienation on which the modern economy has been built. How we combine the personal and impersonal aspects of money has much in common with religion.<sup>65</sup>

The idea is slowly taking root that society is less an oppressive structure and more a subjective capacity that allows each of us to learn how to manage our relations with others. Money symbolizes this shift. It once took the form of objects outside ourselves of which we had a greater need than the available supply; but now it is increasingly manifested as digitized transfers mediated by plastic cards and telephone wires, thereby altering the notions of economic agency that we bring to participation in markets. Cheap information is undermining the assumptions that supported mass production and consumption for a century. Economic anthropology should aim to show that the numbers on people's financial statements, bills, receipts, and transaction records constitute a way of summarizing their relations with society at a given time. The next step is to show where these numbers come from and how they might serve in building a viable personal economy.

It is easy to debunk religion, but to understand its social force we must enter the minds of believers. Searching for the source of money's power is like asking how God gets us to believe in Him. We made him up, just as we make money up. When all we can ever know is the past, why would anyone accept a claim to guarantee an unknowable future?<sup>66</sup> But we do, because we have to – and faith is the glue sticking past and future together in the present. Simmel made a good case for why money is able to make this spurious claim.<sup>67</sup> Because all the ephemeral transactions we wish to calculate are made in terms of it, money seems to be more stable than the rest, even though we know it is not so really. The river bank seems to be solid and yet it is just slow-moving deposits thrown up by the faster-moving water. But, if we are drowning, we settle for its presumptive stability.

There is an 'elective affinity' between religion and economy.<sup>68</sup> The movement of both is from the known to the unknown (or even the unknowable) and back again. The intellectual paradigm is neo-Kantian: people need to connect with the object world in ways that engage their subjectivity, while retaining at least a partial objectivity. Today's main problem is that

<sup>65</sup> K. HART, *Money as a Form of Religious Life*, «Religion and Society: Advances in Research», 1, 2011, pp. 156-163.

<sup>66</sup> Id., *The Persuasive Power of Money*, in S. GUDEMAN (ed.), *Economic Persuasions*, Oxford, Berghahn, 2009, pp. 136-158.

<sup>67</sup> G. SIMMEL, *The Philosophy of Money*, cit.

<sup>68</sup> The phrase is Goethe's but Max Weber adopted it, especially in his famous essay on the relationship between capitalism and Protestant religion: M. WEBER, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013 (ed. or. 1904/1905).

our global interdependence exceeds our social and imaginative grasp. We lack the political and legal means of instituting economic order. We need to find more effective ways of realizing our common humanity. This is a religious project not a scientific one. Social science focuses our attention on myriad divisions between the extremes – nation, religion, class, gender, race, etc. But how does each of us relate to the whole, a puny self in an unknowable universe that could come crashing down around our ears at any time – and will when we die, as everyone must? The forces of alienation feed hungrily on this gap.

To sum up, religion and economy – in their most cogent historical manifestations – encourage individual members to develop a subjective relationship to the object world they share with everyone. Human teleology is to find ways of coordinating our common interests that reflect our species being of which the last will be a university system of social justice. As Immanuel Kant insisted, our human capacity for reason can only be realised fully at the species level, not that of the individual.<sup>69</sup> The idea of economy is one way of envisaging a more rational basis for world society; but extension to more inclusive levels is inevitably uneven and often regresses. This contradiction finds concrete expression in the dialectical tension between economy's internal and external dimensions. Even so, we have to imagine and strive for a better world. Perhaps social movements will take us out of our fearful redoubts into wider human cooperation. The world religions have long performed this task, imperfectly for sure, but always seeking to reconcile the local and the global.

We could do worse than look at religion and economy as sharing an 'elective affinity'. There is no causal relationship between the two, but a part of each finds some support in the other. This affinity permits but does not guarantee their mutual development; but the possibility is there. I hope that by exploring the scope for a 'human economy' we may bring religion and economy into a fruitful relationship once more.

#### RIASSUNTO – SUMMARY

La 'human economy' pone le persone al centro della teoria e della pratica economica. Data l'urgenza di creare una società mondiale sostenibile, dobbiamo pensare all'umanità nel suo insieme. Ciò comporta imparare a combinare un umanesimo di piccola scala con il sistema burocratico di larga scala. Come ripensare il mondo? La rivoluzione anticoloniale del secolo scorso ci offre un ricco materiale su cui riflettere. I suoi principali intellettuali hanno convinto le masse a lottare per

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<sup>69</sup> I. KANT, *Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Purpose*, in H.S. REISS (ed.), *Kant: Political writings*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997 (ed. or. 1784), pp. 41-51.

una società post-razziale. Nell'articolo considero in particolare le visioni di alcuni panafricanisti, così come quella di Gandhi. Mettere in connessione le persone con l'intento di rifondare la società mondiale richiede una rivalutazione del rapporto che esiste tra religione ed economia. Mobilitare la solidarietà, la fede e la speranza è compito della religione più che della scienza politica.

A 'human economy' places living people at the centre of economic theory and practice. We must also think of humanity as a whole, since making a viable world society is an urgent necessity. This entails learning how to combine small-scale humanism with large-scale bureaucracy. How to rethink the world? The anti-colonial revolution of the last century offers rich material. Its leading intellectuals persuaded the masses to fight for a post-racial society. I consider here the visions of some Pan-Africanists and Gandhi. Connecting people to the project of remaking world society requires us to reassess the relationship between religion and economy. Mobilising solidarity, belief, and hope is the task of religion more than political science.

Direttore Responsabile  
Prof. FABIO DEI  
Università degli Studi di Pisa  
Dipartimento di Civiltà e Forme del Sapere

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PER CONTO DI LEO S. OLSCHKI EDITORE  
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Questo numero monografico si propone di esplorare i processi che vedono la religione e l'economia intrecciarsi e giocare un ruolo chiave nel farsi e disfarsi di gruppi e comunità. Concentrandosi sulle cosiddette economie 'umane' e 'intime', i contributi qui presentati mettono in discussione il paradigma razionale dell'*homo economicus* – che riduce la complessità della vita sociale alla logica individualistica della massimizzazione dell'utile – soffermandosi sull'analisi culturale dell'economia e sui significati assunti dai legami personali nelle sfere dell'intimità, tanto quanto negli spazi presuntamente anonimi e astratti del mercato. Allo stesso tempo si allontanano da una visione secolare della religione, che tende a separarla dall'arena politica e a relegarla nella sfera del privato, per comprenderla invece come profondamente intrecciata con la materialità del mondo e come capace di continuare a esercitare uno straordinario potere trasformativo di cui è necessario dare conto.

*In copertina:* Il mago Mallam Obuafour impegnato a mostrare i suoi poteri spirituali. Foto di Angelantonio Grossi. Progetto grafico di Sabrina Guzzoletti.