

Johannes Heinrichs (Berlin&Duisburg/Germany)

**A Model of Value-Based Democracy
as Condition of Ecological Sustainability**

(Florence, June 25th 2009)

1. We speak of **economism** in order to label an intellectual attitude, which affirms the power and the pretended right of economics to determine the whole of society. The neo-liberal view was essentially such an economism (but also some streams of Marxism as well as some of the alternative monetary systems, the believers of which think: If economy is in order, the whole of society is automatically in order).

2. But there exists also an **ecologism**, which I would define as the intellectual attitude of those, which have a highly developed ecological conscience and also lot of knowledges how to do better with nature, but not the essential insight that most of our ecological problems are **not problems of nature, but of society**, and consequently must be dealt with as problems of society and its institutions. (The Environmental Law Studies can be regarded as an *exception from this ecological main-stream*, under the condition that the juridical questions are not regarded as specialities, but as basic questions of the entire socio-political structure!)

3. Not only the pre-democratic nations at the limit of industrialization, but to a higher degree the “democratic” and fully industrialized nations have a fundamental **lack of democratical institutions** to cope effectively with the ecological problems – and are lacking even the conscience of this fact. But this double lack, again, is not a special one, but concerns deeply the very **understanding and development of democracy itself**.

4. I see **two main and principal deficiencies of our democracies** (which normally we are not used to regard as developing forms of government, but as a once and for all achievement of social evolution): First, **the whole of society depends structurally on economics**; this is not *one* level of the entire society, but *the decisive level* – just as it is seen by the above mentioned economism; all our democracies, in their daily life, are not really based on human rights, human dignity and ultimate values, as they pretend to do, but on the ruling money system and its stock markets; the money system would be a discussion of most current interest, but this is not my main topic here.

5. The second main deficiency is the functioning, or better, **not-functioning of the system of political parties**. These parties do not and structurally cannot really organize the political will of the sovereign, i.e. of the people; they are not solution finders, but themselves an **essential part of the democratical problem**. (Not to speak here of the anglo-saxon system of two match-teams which pretend to arrange the common wealth by simple alternance, a view on democracy which seems to me historically out of date.) I take the example of the Green parties in the European democracies. They have a highly developed ecological conscience, but little of a new perspective on the evolution of democracy, in spite of their initially pronounced “basic

democracy". In addition, they have an underdeveloped sense of the "cultural biotopes" called nations or cultural communities (at least in Germany). This is only one single example. **The general situation of the voters is dilemmatic:** They can vote for a political party with regard to one certain value, but at the same time, in voting for this party, they implicitly vote for values which they don't favour at all. This structural dilemma of the actual democracies concerning **all** political parties cannot be underlined enough. It is suppressed by the "willing" majority of our political scientists – because they don't and won't see an alternative solution. As long as you see no alternative solution, you can rarely admit a non-functioning.

6. The rest of this paper is dedicated to the question: Is there **a realistic alternative to this party-dilemma?** My answer is: There Is A Necessary Alternative (**TIANA** versus TINA!). Necessary, because it is not merely an emergency measure, but it goes back to the very anthropological roots of human community- and society-building. At the same time, by adopting this alternative, the other main problem of present democracies, the illegitimate *predominance of economics, which is so hostile to ecological standards, can be solved.*

7. When I speak of "**anthropological roots of society**", the association of "anthropocentrism" must be kept clear off. The so called ecological anthropocentrism would better be called anthro-egocentrism. Its view on nature is one of a beast of prey, so not a very "human" or anthropological one. When I speak of the anthropological roots of society, I mean the link between individual action and community or social system

8. The link between individual action and social system has been matter of long discussion last century (esp. the debate between J. Habermas and N. Luhmann, after T. Parsons had failed to give a logical principle of his sequence of subsystems). In the view of a "reflexion theory of society" (developed by me since 1975), the evident principle of a hierarchy of social subsystems is that of **subsequent reflexion-levels. Reciprocal interpersonal reflexion or practical reflexion** constitutes the decisive, socializing link between individuals, and thereby also between each individual and the social system. This is what neither the theorists of social action nor those of social system achieved to clear up.

9. The **levels of direct interpersonal reflexion** are limited, not at all iterating ad infinitum:

1. **simple objective relation:** I see the other one like an object.
2. **subjective-reflexive relation:** I look at the other one as to another looking being, but I reduce him and his activity to my interests (and reciprocally: a reciprocity of *strategic attitudes* on each side).
3. **Double and responsive reflexion:** I look at the other as someone who is able of "our" reciprocity of looking, that means of a *communicative* attitude, as I am able to do. (Whether we realize this ability of a communicative attitude, is a further question. But the structural potency is given by this double and responsive reflexion.)

4. To that communicative potential each of us can take position in a **metacommunicative relation**: I can reject the responsive reciprocity of the 3rd level and devalue the other one, or I can continue a communicative life – *hereby* establishing a **system of inner reciprocity or practical reflexion**.

In this sense the interpersonal reflexion-circle is constitutive for a social system, the 4 levels of which are reflexion levels.

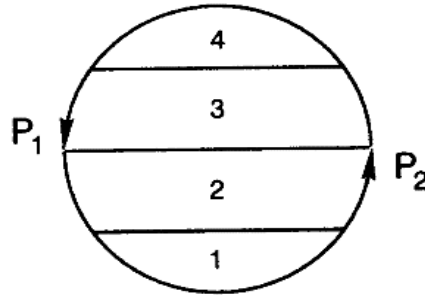


Figure 1: The unity of horizontal interpersonal reflexion and vertical systemic reflexion-levels

The reflexion circle can begin anew, but structurally it is finished by these 4 levels. The expressions “strategic” and “communicative” I take from J. Habermas, but he never developed a reflexion theory. Otherwise the gap to Luhmann’s system-theory (who developed it neither, because he didn’t distinguish theoretical and practical reflexion) would have been overcome.

10. If now we change our perspective from that of the individual actors into a perspective (by Luhmann called “system reference”) of collectivity, we get not only **action levels** but **system levels**. This is a very important step of thought. The systemic levels are now:

- (1) Interaction system of exchange of goods: the level of **economic community**. (unifying medium: **money**)
- (2) Interaction in terms of goal attainment and power: from which results a **community of law** (For law is nothing else than the regulation of power, a more or less just regulation, by the way.) The community of law is common goal attainment of common interests which are not only economical ones. (unifying medium: **law**)
- (3) The interaction of real reciprocity or mutuality, a **community in the proper sense of the word: a community of communication** which has its value in itself, not in the goal attainment of something different from the community itself. (unifying medium: **language**)
- (4) The interaction can, finally, direct itself upon the implicit value conditions of the former forms of community. The meta-communicative type of community is an **ethical and a spiritual community**. (unifying medium: **value-axioms** like dogmas and their expressive **rites**)

All these systemic levels can be regarded as implicit levels of every community, but also as explicit types of community or society.

11. These intentional levels or action-levels defined above develop themselves as systemic levels, **in a modern constitutional nation state**, into more or less clearly differentiated **subsystems**:

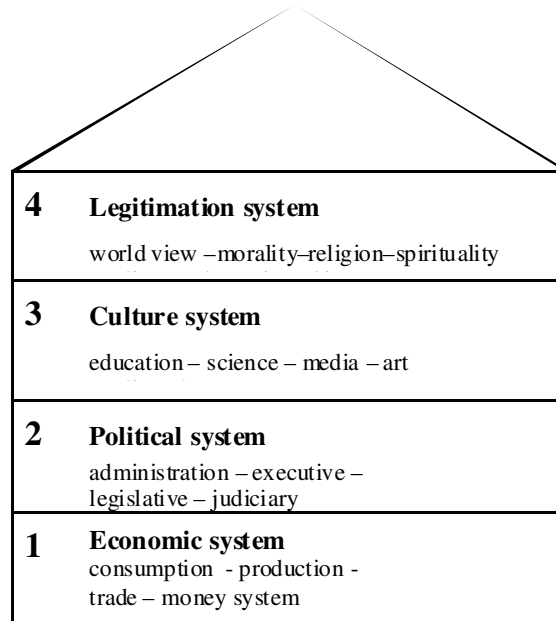


Figure 2: Hierarchy and inner division of the subsystems of a society

12. The historical evolution of **a constitutional state** was essentially characterized by the (a least theoretical) differentiation of religion (pars pro toto for the legitimation system) and politics as well as by the differentiation of religion and an autonomous culture. The differentiation of **politics (in the narrower sense) and economics/ecologics** still remains the task of our days! The pretended neo-liberal autonomy of economics is not the solution.

13. The effective regulation of a democratic society by democratic means becomes possible just by **the practical and institutional differentiation of all of these subsystems, namely by the differentiation of the legislative “power”: by independent or interdependent partial parliaments** (parliamentary “chambers” or “houses”):

- a basic-value parliament
- a cultural parliament
- a political parliament (in the narrower sense of “politics”)
- an economical parliament

Parliamentarism is the heart of democracy, on the state-level at least. A comparison: We know since William Harvey, the English physicist of the 17th century, that the physical heart of man has four chambers, which are essential for its functioning and which must be differentiated until the birth of a human being. Analogously, we should have to say that our democracies are even not

yet completely born, because their heart chambers are not yet (theoretically and practically) differentiated.

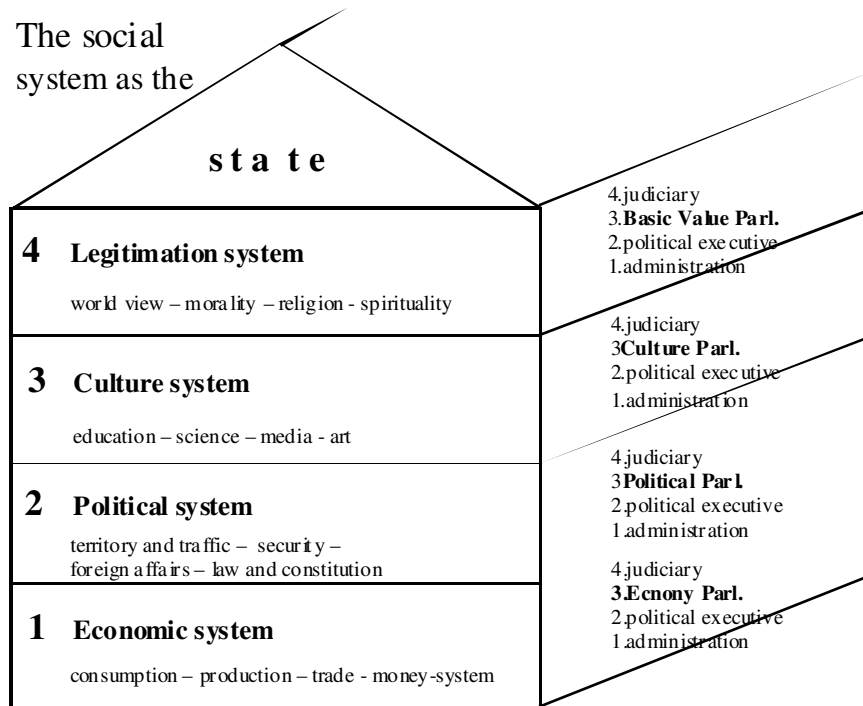


Figure 3: The social system as the state with extended division of “powers”

13. More concretely: **We need four expert- or better: trustee-parliaments (and respective executive organs), elected independently from each other for each system level.** Direct election and responsibility of the affected representatives for their specific field is the remedy. Elections should be held e.g. each year for one of the specific parliaments. The character of the political parties would change by the force of these differentiated elections (and a little bit of juridical aid) from power-oriented into **matter-oriented parties** (Sachparteien).

14. In this matter-orientation of the new type of parties and of elections lies **an inner synthesis of direct and representational democracy.** (Direct democracy alone without representative structures, applied on modern states, is a pure and even insane illusion!)

15. **Hierarchical and circular interrelation of the subsystems.** Without the correct hierarchy of values (economical, political, cultural and basic values), that means without an **inversion of the present “order”, i.e. disorder, a real reversal of the practical (not only theoretical) order of values,** our democracies cannot become credible. And without a thoroughly new credibility they could not be saved in the long run!

But, on the other hand, it is not sufficient, to reverse the materialistic dominance of economics simply into an idealistic dominance of the basic value representatives. Let us take the example of genetic engineering for plants, animals, and human being. You know what a lot of ethical and economic questions is risen by that. The general answer to this kind of interference of ethics and economics, or more generally, inferences of all levels of the social system, is: There must be **a feedback between these levels and their respective parliaments**. Most democratic parliaments of the world know already the institution of a first, second and third reading of a legislative draft. Thus, a circular interrelation between the partial parliaments (or chambers) can easily be instituted.

It cannot be but very seldom, that there is dispute over respective areas of responsibility between the parliaments. All the more, as these “aeras” are **distinguished not always materialiter, but formaliter**: by the point of view of respective responsibility or value-level. In the rare cases of competence dispute, the Supreme Court would have to decide about the competence.

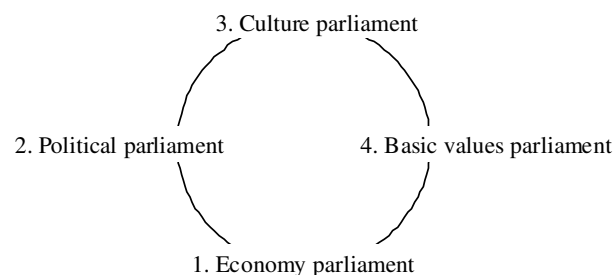


Figure 4: The systemic circle of the social as a parliamentary system

15. **The ecological values** are basic values in the double sense: 1. **ultimate values of dignity of Nature and Life**, 2. they are **basical for human survival**. Consequently, **a common commission** of the basic value-parliament and the economic parliament, i.e. the juridical institutionalization of ecological economics, would be the most realistic form of **effectively achieving** a sustainable form of economics. But this special arrangement seems to be realistic and effective only in the broader frame of the outlined “four path democracy”.

After courageous steps of our forefathers in the last two centuries (and much blood-shedding of those, who didn't succeed as in 1848) we have to do a step today, which could seem relatively tiny. In reality, it is a step as big and important as that of the founding fathers of the United States – which today are no longer a lighthouse of democracy (in spite of Obama). I suppose, the “old” and the “new” Europe, must take the initiative to prepare an indispensable further step - together with all democratical movements worldwide, where institutional thinking is estimated, not emotions alone.

For further information see: www.johannesheinrichs.de / www.viergliederung.de
 J. H., Revolution der Demokratie. Eine Realutopie, 444 p., Berlin 2003 (Maas Verlag)
 J.H., Demokratiemanifest für die schweigende Mehrheit, 120 p., München 2005