

Karatani Kōjin's World Republic

Possibilities and Perspectives

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At the time I first chose to introduce Karatani Kōjin's *World Republic: Beyond the Trinity of Capital, Nation, and State*, no one could have anticipated the crisis that would shake the world in the latter half of 2008. These events have given me a new perspective on Karatani, one that I will try to lay out in the pages that follow.

WHO IS KARATANI?

Karatani (Yoshio) Kōjin 柄谷 (善男) 行人 (1941-) is renowned in contemporary Japan as a literary critic and philosopher. Ranging across the fields of philosophy, literary theory, economics, aesthetics, and politics, he represents one of the most intense and critical voices of our time. Awarded the Gunzō Literary Prize for an essay on Natsume Sōseki in 1969, he began working actively as a literary critic, while teaching at Hōsei University in Tokyo. In the 1980's he made a political commitment to assist Asada Akira 浅田彰 in editing the quarterly *Critical Space* (批評空間), which was one of Japan's most influential intellectual journals during the decade of the 1990's. In 1975 Karatani was invited to Yale University as a visiting professor to lecture on Japanese literature. There he became acquainted with critics like Paul de Man and Fredric Jame-

son. After writing *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* (1980; English, 1993) and *Architecture as Metaphor: Language, Number, Money* (1983; English, 1995), his *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx* (2001; English, 2003; Turkish, 2007) earned his work widespread recognition as one of the most stimulating re-readings of the two philosophers in recent years. Besides these works Karatani has written over twenty books in Japanese that have yet to be translated. In 1990 he began teaching regularly at Columbia University as a visiting professor of comparative literature. He was a regular member of ANY, an international conference of architects held annually from the last decade of the twentieth century. In 2006 Karatani retired from teaching in Japan to devote himself full-time to writing and lecturing. In his last book, *World Republic* (2006), which is a continuation of ideas not fully developed in his *Transcritique*, Karatani draws a broad historical outline of different economic systems that gradually evolved into what is known today as the capitalist free market system. The author shows how intimately politics and economics are interwoven, and how conditions changed through time to give birth to various systems that have led to the predominant capital–nation–state model we have today.

“WORLD REPUBLIC”

Karatani prepared the following English abstract for a lecture delivered at Stanford University in October 2007:

Society today is constituted by the trinity of capital, nation, and state. It operates in the following way: the capitalist market economy gives rise to disparity and other ills. But the nation, a community of sentiment that strives for equality among its members, provides the basis for the state to regulate the economy and redistribute wealth, thus alleviating these problems. Thus capital, nation, and state form interlocking rings that mutually reinforce each other, a very flexible and solid structure. Toward the end of the twentieth century, people came to be bound by these rings, utterly losing the capacity to imagine or think beyond them. However, I believe it is possible for theory to overcome them. What is required is a new perspective from which to

view the history of social formations. This will be the subject of my lectures, as well as future prospects for going beyond capital–nation–state. (KARATANI 2007, 1)

Karatani uses the Borromean rings to explain the interconnection of the three terms, capital, nation and state, all of them linked to one another in such a way that breaking one of the rings loosens the two others.



Karatani's text is of interest to us for at least two reasons:

1. It shows a concise history of economic and political evolution up to modern times and develops a pattern of three types of state organizations; exchanges may give way to a fourth one, associationism.
2. Karatani's *World Republic* is a description of a new "utopia," a "non existing place" (*u-topos*) that we long for and imagine as a life enjoying the kind of peace and harmony only possible in an ideal society.

The History of Capital–Nation–State

In an English Preface to the Turkish translation of his *Transcritique* published in 2007, Karatani explains that he wrote *World Republic*

to elucidate the trinity of capital–nation–state, I suggested going back to three basic modes of exchange from which the trinity originates: reciprocity, plunder/redistribution and commodity exchange. But in

Transcritique, these ideas had yet to be fully developed. Since then, I have been working to clarify them.

I dealt with three different modes of exchange by going back to pre-capitalist social formations. Any social formation stands as a combination of these modes of exchange. The difference between them is determined by which one of them is dominant and how they are combined. For example, in the primitive community of hunters and gatherers, the principle of reciprocity is dominant. That is, although plunder and trade also take place, they are not conspicuous (easily visible). Likewise, the fact that the mode of commodity exchange is dominant in capitalist social formation does not indicate the disappearance of other modes. Rather, they are transformed, and appear as the conjugation of capital–nation–state. Based on such a view, I have been aiming for the structural clarification of the entire history of social formations. My purpose is to illuminate the path for going beyond the trinity of capital–nation–state.

In my view, it was Hegel who first grasped the trinitarian nature of capital–nation–state, which we can see in *Philosophy of Right*. Because Hegel’s understanding was idealistic, Marx tried to turn it around materialistically. In so doing, Marx saw civil society (capitalist economy) as infrastructure and the state or nation as super-structure. This leads to the idea that once the capitalist economy is superseded, the latter will automatically be extinguished. Obviously, this is not true. This is why Marxists repeatedly stumbled when it came to matters of the state and nation. This is because Marx himself failed to see that the state or nation has a solid and real basis of existence, which cannot be easily abolished. If we are to seriously supersede capital, nation, and state, we need to first recognize what they are. To simply deny them leads us nowhere. As a result, we are forced to accept the reality of them, which only makes us scornful of “ideas” that attempt to supersede them.

Whereas Marx focused on “modes of production,” I believe that Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* can be turned around materialistically by basing our perspective on “modes of exchange.” This does not mean that I have suddenly begun to criticize Marx. As I wrote in *Transcritique*, Marx in *Capital* brilliantly clarified the structure of the historical development of the mode of exchange known as commodity

exchange. However, because he did so by bracketing the state and nation, his theory of the state was naturally inadequate. I believe that if one has the free time to criticize this, it would be more productive to reconsider state and nation on one's own, using the method Marx took in *Capital*. And so that is what I did. (KARATANI 2007B, 2)

Karatani roughly classifies these different systems into four basic patterns as shown in the following graph. None of the existing systems is purely defined as A, B, C, or D; it is rather in terms of their general orientation in the decision-making process that societies today may be fitted more or less into one of the four categories.

B state capitalist (welfare state/social democracy)	A state socialist
B liberalist (neo-liberalism)	B libertarian socialist (anarchist/communist)

Karatani's Definition of "Associationism"

Because the word "socialism" is mainly understood as "state socialism," it risks ending up in totalitarianism. Marx, as well as Proudhon who inspired him, were opposed to a strong state (KARATANI 2006, 8, 190). The socialism Proudhon and Marx proposed was one of cooperation. In his reinterpretation of Marx, Karatani argues that it is misleading to consider Marxism as a form of associationism. In fact, Marxism ended up as a totalitarian state socialism, while what Karatani aims for is a liberal and free, yet egalitarian, state organization. Proudhon rejected the idea of a strong state and encouraged cooperative organizations. Although Marx shared this point of view, significant differences led to a profound disagreement between them and finally a break in contact. Marx placed the political approach at the center and considered revolution (in the form of a struggle to abolish the class system) a necessity. Proudhon, who valued individual liberty, considered the economic approach less violent and more efficient. He saw competition and challenge as ingre-

dients in individual freedom that eventually contribute to the welfare of the whole community. The most important step for him was to abolish power (state power, political power) in favor of an order without power (anarchy), an organization based on democratic and cooperative structures—in other words, on networks. Karatani thus avoids the use of the word “socialism” as misleading, and prefers to speak of this type of society organization as “associationism.” The question is how to construct an associationist system in reality, how to bring about such a utopia.

DEFINING A NEW UTOPIA

In its treatment of economic history, *World Republic* consists basically in a dialogue between Hegel, Marx and their successors. In taking up the utopian dimension, Karatani compares Kant with Hegel. From this perspective he may be placed in a long line of more or less well-known “utopians.”¹

Sir Thomas More (1478–1535), better known as Saint Thomas More, was an English lawyer, author, and statesman, who earned a reputation during his lifetime as a leading Renaissance humanist scholar and occupied a number of public offices, including that of Lord Chancellor from 1529 to 1532. It was More who first coined the word “utopia” to designate an ideal, imaginary island nation whose political system he described in *Utopia*, a work published in 1516 with the subtitle *On the Best State of a Republic and on the New Island of Utopia*.

The French Humanist and medical doctor François Rabelais (1483?–1553) created the Abbey of Thelema, which he described at the end of his novel *Gargantua* (1534) as a splendid Renaissance castle without walls or clocks, an ideal place for humanistic studies where young men and women could meet freely and work together in perfect harmony. Thelema was the very antithesis of the monastic life prevalent at his time. Its only rule was, “Do what you wish.” This did not mean that

1. On 28 May 2009, Karatani gave a lecture entitled “Rethinking City Planning and Utopianism” at the Architectural Education Forum in Erciyes University, Kayseri, Turkey.

the Thelemites were not free to abandon their own selfish desires out of respect and love for the others and in line with humanistic education.

Jean-Baptiste André Godin (1817–1888) was inspired by the hygienists of the late nineteenth century and by the ideas of the utopian-socialist Charles Fourier (1772–1837). In 1859 he founded the *Familistère*, which sought to apply the social theories of his time to his own factory in France. It provided time for work, living, and school as well as free time—all organized within the structure of the Familistère. Gardens surrounded some 350 apartments, a school, a swimming pool, and a theater, all of which were open to the workers. About 1,500 persons lived in this industrial town (which Émile Zola labelled in a derogatory manner a “caserne sociale,” a military camp with social ambitions). Godin’s Familistère functioned for more than a century, closing down only in 1968—ironically the year of the French intellectuals’ revolution. Other examples of such living utopias include the *phalanstères* who were active in the United States in the 1840’s.

Ebenezer Howard (1850–1928), a British urban planner who, inspired by reading Edward Bellamy’s utopian novel *Looking Backward* (1888), wrote *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*. The work was reissued in 1902 under the title *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*. In it he offered a vision of ideal towns that would combine urban life with a life in nature. In 1907, he founded the garden city of Lechworth in England, a pioneering project of healthy living and efficient working in surroundings constructed with respect for the natural world. In it we see a synergy among all three dimensions of sustainable development: the social, the ecological, and the economic. The garden cities are models for newly planned “eco-quarters” (ecological residences) like BedZed, the Beddington Zero (fossil) Energy Development in the United Kingdom, the Vauban in Freiburg im Breisgau, Rungis in Paris, and residences in Utrecht. These ecological quarters aim at providing sustainable living with a sustainable food supply by offering vegetable gardens next to the houses. The same principle of sustainability serves as a guide to a newly launched policy in Japan (2008), which has 2008 thirteen ecocities to deal with the social, environmental, and economic challenges of the twenty-first century.

UTOPIA ON A WORLDWIDE LEVEL

The above-mentioned attempts to realize an ideal society were confined to small-scale communities and not considered applicable to world politics at large. But in our times, worldwide problems require nothing less than worldwide networks, solutions, and action.

The first utopian in world politics seems to have been Guillaume Postel (1510–1581), a language professor at the *Collège de France* in 1538 who was literate in Latin, Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, and Syriac. He believed that he had been chosen by God to work out a universal contract for peace and composed his master work, *De orbis terrae concordia*, in 1544 with this in mind. His was a utopian project to unite political and religious powers based on moral principles to which all religions could agree and which all peoples would approve, thereby laying the groundwork for universal peace and welfare. He did not succeed in convincing either King Francis I or Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit Order, to help in realizing the project. Still, his utopian ideal of a world community living in accord with common shared values seems not very far removed from Karatani's.

The first utopia in world politics to be discussed widely and have a real impact on world history was presented in 1795 by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*. Kant was influenced by the Enlightenment but was also intrigued by the French Revolution and the abrupt end of Napoleon's imperialism. He was familiar with Voltaire, who lived in France and in Russia, Diderot and the Encyclopaedia project, Rousseau and his theories on education and social ideals, and with the discovery of diverse cultures through the memoirs of de Bougainville's travels around the world. A world culture based on peace, tolerance, and science, therefore, seemed perfectly plausible to Kant. In *Perpetual Peace* he stated that peace is not a "natural state" (*status naturalis*) for human beings but needs to be established in three stages: the rights of the state (*Staatsrecht, ius civitatis*), the rights of the people (*Völkerrecht, ius gentium*), and the rights of world citizenship (*Weltbürgerrecht, ius cosmopoliticum*) (KANT 1795, 203). Everlasting world peace was thus a realistic project for Kant already at the end of the eighteenth century.

In contrast, we are confronted with Hegel, who criticized Kant for his "idealism" and dismissed him summarily as a dreamer. Hegel was a

characteristically nineteenth-century thinker.² World peace, for him, was a complete illusion. This may have been correct for his own age, but Kant's views seem more fitting for the twentieth century, as reflected in the establishment of a world community of nations in the form of the League of Nations founded in 1919. Although the League was dissolved in 1946, the idea lived on through the creation of the United Nations Organization (UNO) in 1945.³ The main purpose of the United Nations is to create and consolidate a global alliance among countries to help maintain world peace—a clear reflection of Kant's own vision.

THE DRIVING FORCES FOR WORLD PEACE

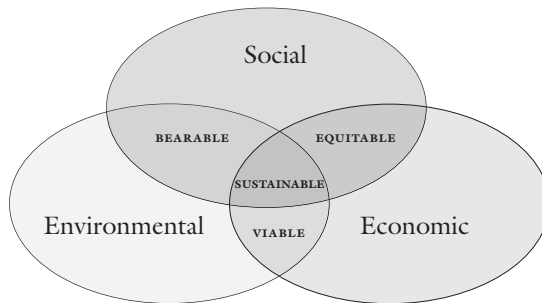
Kant considered war and linguistic differences as dividing forces, and saw the need for trade and the desire for peaceful living as uniting forces. Today, in a time of conflicting values and convictions, small-scale projects based on a different social order have already reached some measure of success. To move from small-scale utopias and ecological urbanism to a world republic, however, requires us to think on a larger scale. Today's shared global concerns point us in this direction.

For the first time in its history, humankind has come face to face with a critical and global concern over the state of the ecology, one in which the very survival of our species has been jeopardized by pollution of the air and soil, and by serious shortages in the supply of food and water. In fact, our entire life-environment is at risk. The anxiety is multifaceted, but the focus of the world today seems to be on measures to control the emission of CO₂, which, if not actually the only indicator of climate change or perhaps even the most relevant, happens to be the one most mentioned

2. Hegel's opinion reflects the main current of nineteenth-century views of world politics as developed by Antoine-Henri de Jomini (1779–1869), a military strategist and war counsellor of Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleon III, and Tzars Alexander I and Nicolas I, who was convinced that a well-trained army was the best guarantee of peace (JOMINI 1838, 82, 100).

3. In the Ralph Bunche Park next to the United Nations headquarters in New York, we read the following words inscribed in bronze “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2.4).

in the media. Last, but not least, is a growing social concern for working people, fortified by the consciousness that our prevailing economic models are not sufficiently linked to the cultural aspects of society or to the great variety of social frameworks around the world. This is the reason why labor can be exported as a tax free product to countries where wages are low and social protection is poor, and why goods can be imported only for their cash value, ignoring issues like child labor, working conditions, and health care systems in the exporting countries. As a result, lowering the cost of production has been considered a priority and the definition of “economic value” has been able to short-circuit social values as irrelevant to the inherent quality and worth of the product itself. With the continuing economic crisis at hand, we now feel the pressure of economic issues on a global scale and are more generally aware of what was once purely academic talk of the “limits to growth,” and of the fact that GNP-oriented indices do not sufficiently reflect the totality of ecological and social aspects in the economy. In other words, the worldwide alarm over “sustainable development” has become a major driving force towards the foundation of a world republic in our times.



The Meaning of “Sustainable Development”

In general terms, sustainability is the ability to maintain balance in a particular process or state within a given system. Since the 1980’s, the idea of human wellbeing has become more and more linked to the integration of economic, social, and environmental issues. In 1987 the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) published its report, *Our Common Future*, in which it articulated what has

now become a widely accepted definition of sustainable development: a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

How to Realize “Associationism” on a Worldwide Scale

As Karatani regularly refers to Marx, his book on the imagined (but not utopian) “world republic” may be seen as a direct continuation of his *Transcritique*, where he merely raised the question of how an ideal modern society in which all peoples live together peacefully might look. The rationale behind Karatani’s questions and suggestions is even more crucial in the economic and ecological crises that are threatening us at a planetary level. At this point we may return to the four models presented on page 334 and consider the role of “associationism.” With regard to the three dimensions of sustainable development, human trade in the capital–nation–state model is mainly an economic activity. Transferred to the associationist model, trade as a human form of exchange needs to be redefined to take into account not only the traditional economic dimension (costs, markets, benefits) but also the social and ecological ones. In other words, associationism must apply to trade in order to disrupt the dependency of the three interlocking Borromean rings of capital, nation, and state for the sake of sustainable development. What Karatani aims at are small networks for exchanging goods and services that bypass and undermine current systems: networking without state, trade without money, order and organization without centralized power.

In 2000, Karatani founded the *New Associationist Movement* (NAM), which was designed to organize effective and non-violent alternatives to capitalism and the state. NAM was inspired by the experiment of the *Local Exchange Trading System* (LETS) initiated by Michael Linton and based on non-marketed currency. LETS creates a multilateral balance-of-payments system, one in which each participant keeps an individual account. Goods and services are listed in a catalog and members exchange them freely according to their value. Although NAM ceased its activities in 2003, numerous other examples exist. In Switzerland, WIR (*Wirtschaftsring*) is a similar economic system of an independent and complementary currency. It was founded in 1934 to counter currency shortages after the

crash of 1929. The WIR bank is a non-profit entity responsible for the exchange accounts of its members. In Berkshire, Massachusetts, a local currency known as BerkShare was launched in 2006 to boost local business exchanges and strengthen the local economy. Or again, a kind of “social money,” the “caring relationship ticket” (*fureai kippu* ふれあい切符) used in Japan to compensate volunteers for social services rendered to those (mainly the elderly) not covered by the social insurance system. All three examples show how changing the type of money changes the nature of relationships (LIETAER 2009, 11).

Karatani proposes similar changes in relationship with his associationist principle. His vision of a world republic is not a great, centralized republic covering the entire planet, but a worldwide, interlinked network of small entities that function much like LETS. The worker-consumer couplet gives way to a new paradigm: exchangers (exchanging work, services, and goods) within a market that permits free exchanges between individuals without making monetary gain an object.

World Forums

First conceived in 1971 as the European Economic Forum, the World Economic Forum (WEF) acquired its latest name in 1987. It is an independent, international, non-profit organization committed to improving the state of the world by engaging leaders in partnerships to shape global, regional, and industry agenda. While the WEF holds its meetings in Davos, another Forum, the World Social Forum (WSF) emerged in 2001 as a critical counterpart to stimulate debate on a more interdependent, democratic, and just world. Reactions from neo-liberal tenants, such as the free-trade advocate, Aaron Lukas, could become animated:

It’s interesting: evil corporations supposedly have hapless governments..., yet the answer to literally all the world’s problems is an expansion of the state. One thing you learn after hanging around these meetings: lefty activists are genetically incapable of blaming government for anything; whatever’s wrong, it’s always the businessmen’s fault. (Humanity’s darker traits, such as greed and dishonesty, presumably vanish when one enters the bureaucracy)... That’s the radical left’s vision of democracy: terrorizing their opponents and violating

their property rights—tactics to which collectivists throughout history have always resorted. Yes, “another world” is possible. We could return to the policies that have kept the world’s poorest people mired in misery. We could embrace the language of victimization, convince the developing world that their problems are caused—and can only be solved—by the advanced economies. We could reject the blessings of technology and condemn billions to an early death. We could turn our backs on economic liberty. We could do all of these things—but why on earth would we want to? (LUKAS 2002)

Meantime, recent developments within the debate show that awareness of social problems in the economy is not simple a political-left versus political-right problem, but a real concern to many intellectuals, among them, the lawyer Kent L. Klaudt:

For the new global justice and solidarity movement (as it is sometimes called), the primary threat to global equality and freedom is the power of transnational corporations which, acting in concert with governments, enact their massive imperialist fantasies of privatization of public resources throughout the world. This corporate + state power, which is increasingly overlapping, acts to destroy civil society, democracy, cultural diversity, and the commons. The anti-globalization movement thus fears that we are currently on a path towards (or have already reached) a kind of Hobbesian “fortress world,” in which the rich wall themselves off from the poor on a global level, using their economic and military power to enforce grotesquely unjust economic terms. (KLAUDT 2005, 1)

So which side is right? The evidence suggests that dialogue between the two forums has come to a standstill. For all the different ways neoliberalism can be nuanced, and for the great variety of forms socialism and anti-globalization groups take, the criticisms that the members of the two forums throw at each seem altogether too stereotyped. Restoring the dialogue between them could help restore confidence. The main problem lies in fundamentally opposite systems of value: economic benefit versus social welfare, state initiative versus individual and private initiative. What is needed is a leadership that supports values other than the purely economic or social ones. An understanding of the global issues in

the fullness of their economic, social, and ecological dimensions is called for. This would be the first step towards behavioral change and a shift to associationism. The next step would be to provide people with more initiative and less state. Both suggestions are clearly present in Karatani.

KARATANI'S ROLE IN SHAPING THE FUTURE

We can actually read Karatani from the perspective of the three driving forces just outlined: Kant's world peace, Brundtland's concept of "sustainable development," and the present debates between the two World Forums: WEF (Davos) versus WSF (different host towns: Porto Alegre, Mumbai, Caracas, Bamako, Nairobi, Karachi, Belém). Karatani's book offers a way to understand the paradigm shift that is currently taking place in global thinking on economic policy and the rule of human values. As he observes, there are three major issues facing humankind: war, environmental deterioration, and economic disparity (KARATANI 2006, 224). By shifting Marx's focus on production towards a focus on the basis of exchange, Karatani opens up new ways of interaction to break the mutually sustaining power of capital, state, and nation: capital symbolizing a mode of indirect, impersonal, and abstract market exchange; the state symbolizing a central organization; and the nation standing for an imagined unity. Pattern D in Karatani's diagram (page 334) aims at a society with no central organization and based on associationist types of exchange. With exchange as a key element in the formation of society, sustainability must apply to the exchange process. That is to say, sustainability must apply to trade in a broad sense. The crisis that began in 2008 has gone a long way to opening up this issue for discussion.

Mainstream liberal economies work by compartmentalizing the different domains affected, rather than consider themselves part of a global system and take into account external costs incurred upstream as well as further downstream. Oil pricing is a perfect example of the political model at work. A natural good is collected and sold, and the price paid for it reflects only the labor and investment involved, excluding from the picture the value of the natural good in itself as well as the negative impact on the environment that results from its consumption. These

external costs may be hidden for the moment, but all of us will end up paying them one way or the other (JANCOVICI 2006, 55). Today we are more alert than we have been in the past to these consequences, thanks in part to an epoch-making crisis.

Set within a broad historical panorama, our age looks more and more like the final stage of a Kondratieff cycle. After a prosperous A phase (1945–1970) came a B phase of stagnation (roughly since 1970), that economies resisted by exporting labor to low-wage countries, and by shifting to the financial sphere and speculation. Along with this has gone a steady decline in U.S. hegemony. Other crises have occurred before and been dealt with successfully by leading states. Today things are different:

The explanation that I have given a number of times in a number of my writings in the last thirty years is that there are three basic costs of capital, which are personnel costs, input costs and taxation costs. Every capitalist has to pay for these three things, which have been rising steadily as a percentage of the price at which you can sell products. They have gotten to a point where they're too large and the amount of surplus value that you can obtain from production has gotten so squeezed that it isn't worth it to sensible capitalists. The risks are too great and profits too small. They are looking for alternatives. Other people are looking for other alternatives. For this I use a Prigogine kind of analyses where the system has deviated so far from equilibrium that it cannot be restored to any kind of equilibrium, even temporarily. Therefore, we are in a chaotic situation.

It is unclear whether capitalism will survive or not, and if it does, what type of capitalism it will be. Equally unclear is whether an alternative world-order can be worked out. Wallerstein goes on:

I have argued that a two-pronged strategy makes most sense. On the one hand, we need always to struggle for the lesser evil in the shortest run, because people live in the short run and do not want to postpone for ten or twenty years what needs to be done at once. And there is *always* a lesser evil. On the other hand, we need to keep an eye on the larger goal of a new world, and for this, constant discussion, negotiation, and integration of visions are indispensable. (WALLERSTEIN 2009)

We may have come to the point at which Karatani's principle of associationism can be put effectively into action. Whenever, in our daily lives, we work or buy or sell things, we can choose to contribute to associationist's ideals and stimulate them in others. As consumers, family members, and academics, we are all "decision makers" from day to day, and this means we have a role to play and a responsibility to take. The internet has helped increase the avenues for change and speeded up the process. The degree of information readily available has grown beyond what we could have imagined not too many years ago; on almost any question there are debates and arguments and a common pool of knowledge accessible to every member of an open society. No amount of misuse can gainsay the great benefit this affords for change. In fact, the more open, transparent, and wide-reaching the decision-making process becomes and the more the contributions of greater numbers of citizens have a voice, the more we can hope for peace on a national and global level, and the more citizens from around the world can join hands in flexible but powerful networks of associations.

Associationism may thus be defined as means to share common interests and values, and to work together to realize them. It might be compared to Proudhon's anarchy as an "order without power," the important difference being that the main objective of Karatani's associationism is not the abolition of power, as is the case with anarchy, but a democratic and transparent networking aimed at peace on a local and global scale. We do not know what the outcome of the present crisis will be. A crisis is not the end, it is a transition and challenge to a fresh beginning. Hopefully it will announce the transition to a new republic, a *kyōwa-koku* 共和国, and from there to *heiva-koku* (平和国): peace-loving countries.

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