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V.J. McBrierty,  
D.M.D. Murphy  
and C.P. Power

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# A New, wholly secular, World Order?

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V.J. McBrierty, D.M.D. Murphy and C.P. Power

The consolidation of the all-embracing cyber universe has generated an era of unprecedented global perplexity and chaos without the ability to formulate coherent responses<sup>1</sup>. Even within the span of an individual's lifetime, new developments in science and technology continue to accelerate unabated: *Change* appears to be the only constant, as, indeed, in all of creation everything that is manifest into being, including mankind, is in transition and decay from the moment of manifestation. This staggering confluence of emerging technology breakthroughs, resulting in the transformation of entire systems, across and within countries as a whole, has generated a disconnect between social and economic relationships within civil governance structures at all levels, on the life of each individual, of the family, and of every human grouping<sup>2</sup>. The all-pervasive reach of cyber technology ignores geopolitical borders and diminishes the capacity of control of sovereign civil authority, which implicitly requires the establishment of *global* civil governance structures, as

- 1 V.J. McBrierty, J.B. Morgan and C.P. Power, 'Spirituality in a Cyber World', *The Furrow* 71: [Dec. 2020] 673-80.
- 2 C.P. Power and V.J. McBrierty, 'Public Policy: The Defining Global Parameters of Society and Science', Chapter XXII, *Leadership and Business Ethics*, G. Flynn (ed.) Springer, Switzerland, for publication in 2021

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Vincent Joseph McBrierty is Physics Professor and Fellow Emeritus in Trinity College, Dublin. He is a Member of the Royal Irish Academy, Fellow of the Institute of Physics, the American Physical Society and erstwhile Fellow of the Institute of Engineers of Ireland.

Damian Murphy served as a parish priest in Scotland for 40 years. He holds degrees in the Humanities from Salamanca University, a B. Phil in Philosophy and a Licentiate (STLmag.) in Dogmatic Theology from the Gregorian University in Rome. He is since retired in his native Ireland.'

Cornelius Patrick Power was Director (Economic Affairs) of the Irish Business and Employers' Confederation (Ibec, formerly CII) 1979-1993, and Director (President) of IT Sligo 1972-1979.

discussed comprehensively by Pope Leo XIII<sup>3</sup> in the last decades of the nineteenth century and raised again by Cardinal Ratzinger who served as Pope Benedict XVI<sup>4</sup> from April 2005 to February 2013. During the perilous economic downturn within his papacy, Pope Benedict stressed the need for more global legislative, regulatory, and administrative protocols, as outlined in his 2009 Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth) in which he stated: ‘In the face of the unrelenting growth of global interdependence, there is a strongly felt need, even in the midst of a global recession, for a reform of the United Nations Organisation, and likewise of economic institutions and international finance, so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth.’

While information and communications technology (ITC) has brought many benefits to humanity, those who ultimately control global networks have so structured systems that humanity has gone beyond using technology as a tool which undoubtedly has the capacity to manage mega data at a rate impossible for the human intellect. Instead of using information and communications technology primarily for computational, analytical, and archival purposes, the tendency has emerged to depend on some such ITC systems for primary inputs and for decision-making algorithms. The inevitable result of a systems collapse was shown in the early months of 2021 in Ireland when the systems of the Health Service Executive were hacked, leaving clinicians without access to the primary records of patients resulting in a huge number of patient appointments and medical and surgical procedures cancelled as a result. This incident, at a national level in a sovereign state, should be a wake-up call to humanity seriously to consider the role of ITC systems in a holistic manner, and humanity should not place itself in such a vulnerable position that a tool which humanity should use for its benefit becomes a crutch for humanity, the withdrawal of which caused collapse!

The current Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic has added a new dimension to the problem in bringing with it much suffering and further social disruption. But it has also brought numerous fundamental perspectives sharply into focus<sup>5</sup>. It revealed the fragility and vulnerability of our threatened world which was brought to a virtual standstill. The consequent safeguarding of livelihoods and economies has become a truly formidable task. Although technology has never been a more essential and utilized

3 *Inscrutabili Dei Consilio*, Encyclical by Pope Leo XIII, 1878, and *Rerum Novarum*, his Encyclical, 1891, both examples of his 8 Encyclicals on aspects of Civil Governance, among the 88 Encyclicals of his pontificate 1878-1903.

4 *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI, 2009.

5 V.J. McBrierty, J.B. Morgan and C.P. Power, ‘Spirituality in a Cyber World’, *The Furrow*, 71: [Dec.2020] 673-80

resource, it has revealed a widespread *digital poverty* regarding the exploitation of its benefits through lack of internet facilities, equipment and skills, compromising, in turn, the developing pattern of ‘working at home’. The age-old approach to the provision of education at all levels has been radically challenged, and there are consequential health issues such as mental anguish and frayed human relationships caused by prolonged isolation and which has been exacerbated further for those who are denied regular access to religious services and sacraments during imposed shut-downs<sup>6</sup>. In addressing the problem, we are reminded of Bland’s prescient insight: ‘We no longer have the luxury of tradition; but before we change the world, we need to change the way we think<sup>7</sup>.’ Therefore we must first try to understand the impact of the cyber world on humanity: We may be denied the luxury of tradition, but not the lessons of history.

The assimilation of scientific advances by society is, per force, contingent upon society’s capacity and willingness to embrace such progress: But is the world ready for it, recognising that ‘the age of scientific innocence is over ... despite the best of intentions, scientific and technological advances may have unintended, adverse, consequences for human life and human welfare’?<sup>8</sup> Aside from those few who are orchestrating change, the world at large remains in chaos as reflected in the widely diverse opinions on the subject. ‘The Great Reset’, a book co-authored by Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret and masterminded by the members of the World Economic Forum, renowned for their annual conference of the elite of the world’s political, economic, and business classes at Davos, Switzerland, describes the World Economic Forum’s goal to build a ‘New World Order’ post Covid-19, but one that is wholly secular, and devoid of any spiritual dimension<sup>9</sup>. The *thrust* of this proposal, thus far backed by many world leaders, is to create a more sustainable and far-reaching future in the aftermath of the coronavirus crisis, invoking global solidarity.

The implications of this new approach are far-reaching and, at first sight, laudable: the devil, however, is in the detail and on further examination is of immediate concern. The underlying philosophy may well reduce to a ‘divide and conquer’ policy whereby fundamental rights are systematically forfeited. Renato

6 Ibid.

7 Russell Bland; New Statesman – Politics – 24 October

8 K. Matsuura, DG, UNESCO, Opening address, ‘*Bioethics: International implications*’. Round Table of Ministers of Science, UNESCO, Paris, 23-24 October, 2001.

9 ‘The Great Reset’ is the name of the 50th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF), held in June 2020. Proceedings were authored by Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret in *COVID-19: The Great Reset*, Forum Publications, July 9, 2020.

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Cristin, philosophy professor in the University of Trieste, argued that the initiative will lead to ‘an economic, social and cultural hybrid whereby, in the end, the strongest ideological aspect will prevail, namely socialism<sup>10</sup>.’ He concluded that the proposals run the risk of enhancing global chaos throughout the human race, *not* relieving it, primarily by encroaching upon personal, social and religious freedom: in essence centralized control. He further argued that, overall, this approach reflects ‘a current global lack of certainties and ideas, understood as firm, clear and solid points on which to build the future’. Cristin is convinced that ‘The Great Reset’ is an example of this deficiency and of the mental confusion with which people try to find answers. It might well be argued with some certitude that the project is yet another example of the struggle for power among individuals and interest groups which has been ever present throughout human history.

Recalling the ease and unanimity of the unilateral global response to the Coronavirus pandemic, one might well ask if the present proposals in ‘The Great Reset’ will be accepted without comparable mature reflection. This lends credence to the underlying theme, high-lighting the potential peril as well as the beneficial impact on humanity, raising alarm bells as to the scale of the challenges to be addressed because of the virtually limitless potential to control almost every aspect of society, in particular, growing and unwarranted infringements on individual freedom. Is it, in fact, heralding a return to medieval serfdom? In the absence of radical societal upheaval or unforeseen spiritual intervention, is it conceivable that the human race will be reduced to micromanaged human robots? The proposed ‘New Normal’ brings to mind the prophetic words of W.B. Yeats, in describing the Easter Rising in Ireland in 1917: ‘All changed / changed utterly / A terrible beauty is born’<sup>11</sup>. [The emerging, and deeply polarised division, between those who acquiesce to the current new scenario and those who dissent within the ‘new normal’ may well herald the birth of another terrible beauty.

10 R. Cristin <https://edwardpentin.co.uk/italian-professor-the-talian-Philosopher>:

11 W.B. Yeats, Easter 1916, in *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, The Franklin Library, Franklin Center, PA, (1979). p. 196.