

The mutual principle behind the United Nations Organization (UNO) and the brotherhood of St. Francis of Assisi¹

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Currently, all over the world political authorities are increasingly confronted with stress overload, demands, inadequacies and dissatisfaction in the population. Social issues have got out of hand. In order to regulate current cross-state and cross-continent challenges early enough as well as competently and fairly, we need a central institution with a global overview. This is why the United Nations Organizations (UNO) were founded in 1945, hoping they might effectively ensure worldwide peaceful coexistence and constructive cooperation.²

The conception of the United Nations is based on contributions of outstanding wise intellectuals, especially from Germany, Europe, Africa and Asia – philosophers, natural and social scientists.³ But the UNO's success has turned out to be disappointing and unsatisfactory due to a lack of education, intelligence (=insight) and willingness of both *governments and population* to sincerely engage in this vision.

For many centuries, *monasteries* around the world were places that were particularly valued and respected regarding research, science, art, teaching and *interdisciplinary* understanding and cooperation. Monasteries were designed to support and protect; they provided the peaceful structure required for optimal development of education, intelligence, quality and culture of life. Consequently, many of them became extremely successful in every respect, even commercially.

With regard to the United Nations, the enlightened holistic human value approach to life of St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) and his brotherhood seem to have had an extraordinary impact: At the conference in San Francisco (April 25 - June 26, 1945) – the city named after St. Francis – the delegates from 50 states agreed on the structure of the world organization UNO. They drafted the charter that was unanimously accepted by all delegations on June 25, 1945, and signed it the following day. Along with Bethlehem in Palestine, San Francisco is the official partner city of the town of Assisi in Italy.

Even today, the intellectual openness and the personal modesty and humility of the approach of St. Francis of Assisi can occasionally be encountered at universities and in scholars. His popularity and significance are primarily based on the fact that he did not advocate a detached, unworldly spirituality. Due to his respect for the divine creation, he engaged himself intensively to acquire know-how of nature – how to support and to cultivate the development of everything which is natural.

¹ This text – in a revised version – is part of the introduction to the book: Thomas Kahl: Die besten Jahre liegen noch vor uns. Die Menschenrechte als Basis weltweiter Gerechtigkeit und friedlicher Zusammenarbeit im Sinne der Vereinten Nationen. Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag BWV 2017, S. 23-26. (The best years are still ahead of us. In the view of United Nations, human rights are the basis for worldwide justice and peaceful cooperation)

² United Nations. Peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet. <https://www.un.org/en>
United Nations https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations

³ E. M. Hough: The Concept of the United Nations. A Philosophical Analysis. The Indian Institute of Culture. Basavangudi, Bangalore 1951 <http://www.iiwcindia.org/transactions/transaction9.pdf>

Tine Stein: Kann es einen *overlapping consensus* der Religionsgemeinschaften geben? Über religiöse Identität angesichts religiöser Pluralität. In: Edmund Arens, Martin Baumann, Antonius Liedhegener, Wolfgang W. Müller, Markus Ries: Integration durch Religion? Geschichtliche Befunde, gesellschaftliche Analysen, rechtliche Perspektiven. Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2014, S. 87f.

“I think it is time to free the man of Assisi from the shackles of a spirituality that is seen as the property of the Franciscan religious organization and to return him to the Church as the man who, in his interpretation of the Gospel, has shown a way which for society as a whole is practicable – not only for an albeit large number of women and men of good will who want to live in an alien world of Christian penance.

Above all, Francis was concerned about the coming of the kingdom of God. He believed that he had found the key to accelerate this process – the manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth – when he discovered that the gospel is also attractive to humans if the hierarchy of values is changed – just like the keys in a musical staff can be changed from treble to bass clefs.”⁴

“With his strong, religious expressiveness, he was like a magnetic pole of attraction and identification for the thousand needs of man. And everyone followed him, so that Brother Masseo exclaimed: “Why you, why you, why is the whole world following you?”⁵

Josef Derbolav (1912-1987), Professor of Philosophy and Education at the University of Bonn/Germany, emphasized Francis of Assisi’s exceptional attitude towards nature. This attitude corresponds to the basic position of the United Nations expressed in human rights: Humankind is not above nature. Humans are in no way superior to nature, let alone able and entitled to rule over nature and to manipulate and exploit nature according to their needs and will. Because, as a natural collective creature, humankind is, of course, a part of nature and is subject to its laws, just like all other creatures. When human beings damage nature, they damage the foundations of their own existence. Consequently, they should sensibly align their actions with the laws that are subject to nature and life processes: the rule of natural law. Due to their cognitive abilities, humans are able to understand these laws and consciously choose to follow them, supporting their own and all other creatures’ welfare for the benefit of the greater good (common wealth):

“The only saint of the Catholic Church who pushed open the gate down here was Francis of Assisi. He referred to the animals of the forest as his brothers and preached to the birds of the sky. Of course, this Franciscan spirit has hardly prevailed in the Christian Church. In their moral doctrine there are no traces of normative provisions to regulate the relationships of humans to vegetative or animal nature in a binding manner and thus to put their daily side in a more favorable light.”⁶

The principle of brotherhood, as used by Jesus of Nazareth (which affirms the willingness to understand and respect everyone, including those in the opposition) was accepted in the context of the Enlightenment and human rights (French Revolution, American Declaration of Independence, Rule of natural Law in Great Britain). It refers to human values: *harmonizing naturally existing differences, coexistence of individual talents and attitudes on the basis of inherent diversity and respect for one other. It is based on supportive, conflict-resolving cooperation in equality.* The intention is to achieve constructive human interaction that strives for mutual understanding. In modern language it corresponds to *collegial cooperation (teamwork)* on the basis of *the subsidiarity principle*.⁷ This principle can be explained in Jesus’ words:

“Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must

⁴ Gianmaria Polidoro: Franziskus von Assisi. Edizioni Porziuncola. Assisi 2009² p 7 f.

⁵ Gianmaria Polidoro: Franziskus von Assisi. Edizioni Porziuncola. Assisi 2009² p 9.

⁶ Daisaku Ikeda, Josef Derbolav: Auf der Suche nach einer neuen Humanität. Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung München 1988, S. 106.

⁷ David A. Bosnich: The Principle of Subsidiarity. Religion & Liberty, Vol. 6, No. 4, July 20, 2010.

<https://www.acton.org/pub/religion-liberty/volume-6-number-4>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subsidiarity_%28Catholicism%29

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subsidiarity> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subsidiarity_\(European_Union\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subsidiarity_(European_Union))

Steven Blockmans, Judith Hoevenaars, Adriaan Schout and Jan Marinus Wiersma: From Subsidiarity to Better EU Governance: A Practical Reform Agenda for the EU. CEPS Essay. No. 10 / 8 April 2014.

https://www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Essay%20No%2010%20SB%20et%20al%20From%20Subsidiarity%20to%20Better%20EU%20Governance_0.pdf

be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20:25-28)

In politics, the term *collegial democracy* might be appropriate. In accordance with the human right to *personal self-determination* and to *the principle of popular sovereignty*, all state bodies should have the task (the obligation and willingness) to contribute to the general good (“common wealth and public health”) of their citizens as service providers or employees. According to these social norms, Sir Winston Churchill pointed out:

“No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government, except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time; but there is the broad feeling in our country that the people should rule, continuously rule, and that public opinion, expressed by all constitutional means, should shape, guide, and control the actions of ministers who are their servants and not their masters.”⁸

How did Sir Winston Churchill arrive at this concept of democracy? About 250 years before the Age of Enlightenment and about 300 years after St. Francis, the English lawyer and Lord Chancellor Thomas More had transferred essential aspects of St. Francis’ holistic attitude and religious community to the country’s state organization as well as to the global community level: In a science fiction novel titled “*Utopia*” (“Of a republics’ best state ...”)⁹ Thomas More described his ideal of human coexistence and cooperation in 1516. The term *Utopia* means “nowhere” and “placeless”. In More’s novel it is used as the name of an island where people live peacefully and happily together eternally, since they do not need to defend themselves against attacks from aggressing enemies in the outer world. Thomas More’s ideas might have inspired the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who can also be called *a psychologist*,¹⁰ to write a book on “perpetual peace” (1795)¹¹. This has become fundamental to the UNO’s vision for the future of mankind.

What More might have imagined specifically – whether England, a distant South Sea island, the later Commonwealth of Nations, the global village or the earth as an island (planet) in space – is irrelevant and insignificant because here everything refers to the same – to forms of organization which are suitable to support *peaceful* human coexistence and cooperation.

From a *democratic* point of view, living according to the ideas of Thomas More cannot be honoured with respect to *human rights’ values*, because slavery is still acceptable in “Utopia”. So many people were not free and equal. Consequently, more up-to-date versions (and visions) of ideal social coexistence emerged, for example “Island”, the last work by the English writer Aldous Huxley, published in 1962. This book probably inspired John Lennon’s song “Imagine” (1971). Successful steps towards bringing about appropriate living conditions in modern society can be found in the approach of the *New Economic Foundation’s Center for Well-Being* in

⁸ https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1947/nov/11/parliament-bill#column_206

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopia_%28book%29

¹⁰ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychology>

¹¹ Perpetual peace. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perpetual_Peace:_A_Philosophical_Sketch

Jochen Rauber: The United Nations – a Kantian Dream Come True? Philosophical Perspectives On The Constitutional Legitimacy Of The World Organisation.

<http://hanselawreview.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Vol5No1Art04.pdf>

Patrice Ndayisenga: United Nations, Global Governance, and Perpetual Peace

<https://globalfutures.georgetown.edu/responses/united-nations-global-governance-and-perpetual-peace>

Thomas Kahl: In Europa brauchen wir *nachhaltig-vernünftige* Politik. António Guterres konnte in seiner Karlspreis-Rede Wichtiges nur andeuten, jedoch nicht ausführlich darstellen.

www.imge.info/extdownloads/In-Europa-brauchen-wir-nachhaltig-vernueftige-Politik.pdf

London, using the *Happy Planet Index (HPI)* to design quality management together with the government of the Buddhist state of Bhutan.¹²

Today, we know rather well what is most useful to ensure ideal social coexistence and cooperation – based on global biological and empirical-experimental social science findings. These largely relate to the collaboration of researchers with Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Buddhist cultural backgrounds in the fields of social psychology, the psychology of teaching and learning, psychotherapy, neurosciences, education and training. In the course of this research, which is largely in line with UNO's efforts and has been initiated by UNESCO¹³ and WHO, the laws that should be followed in all social systems and communities in order to support wealth and health for everyone have been defined. Within the framework of research, best practices for dealing with (corona-) pandemics are provided. But, due to poor education and intelligence training, helpful know-how is all too often ignored and devalued by political authorities who prefer to assert themselves against the population as rulers with power and violence instead of acting as their servants, as they should.

To support the implementation of sustainable solutions, the website www.globalisierung-konstruktiv.org offers interdisciplinary knowledge (so far only in German). This knowledge is directed at overcoming all current challenges successfully in the shortest time possible and with minimal costs – aligned to Albert Einstein's genius statement: "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler".

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¹² Gross National Happiness - The Paradigm <https://vimeo.com/158291274>

GNH Centre Bhutan. Gross National Happiness in Action <http://www.gnhcentrebhutan.org>

¹³ Initiatives of the UNESCO Institute for Education in Hamburg/Germany to promote democratic forms of organization to ensure satisfactory living, learning, and working. The text is available in German language: Thomas Kahl: Initiativen des Hamburger UNESCO-Instituts zur Förderung menschenwürdiger demokratischer Vorgehensweisen. www.imge.info/extdownloads/InitiativenDesHamburgerUNESCOInstituts.pdf