

# Letters to World Citizens

Garry Davis

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## Are Design Science and Political Science Compatible?

I was invited to speak at the Buckminster Fuller Centenary Forum at MIT's Department of Architecture on April 21. The event was sub-titled, "The Global Impact of Bucky." I was on a panel called "World Thought." Right up my alley, I thought.

Professor Arthur Loeb, head of the visual and environmental studies department at Harvard, was chairing this session. Sharing the podium with me were Ed Applewhite, author of *Cosmic Fishing* and collaborator with Bucky on *Synergetics I & II*; architect Shoji Sadao, the director of the Moguchi Museum; Kiyoshi Kuromiya, adjutant of Bucky for *Critical Path* and *Cosmography*; and, finally, the forum's convenor, Lim Chong Keat, eminent architect and urban designer in Malaysia and Singapore and co-organizer with Bucky of the Campuan Group, a design science think tank. Altogether an impressive list of academics, with the exception of yours truly.

We have quoted Bucky Fuller many times in these pages. "One world" and "world citizenship" run continuously throughout his writings. Also, in 1927 he accepted humanity as a whole, a "happening" or "verb," as he wrote in *Critical Path*, and devoted his life's work to giving that "fact" a reality through the "design-science revolution," as he called it. Fuller's World Game, created with the assistance of our own Bill Perk at Southern Illinois University, is played to "make the world work." His Dymaxion map revealed the interlinking of the five continents, with the exception of the Bering Straits (a 35-mile gap). But his greatest contribution was his theory of "synergy" and how it applied to human events.

As I reread his writings, always with a humbling sense of awe, I noticed for the first time two serious omissions or even contradictions. The first was his total rejection of any political solutions to the world's problems: Design science would be sufficient to solve every single problem—war, environmental devastation, poverty, overpopulation, nationalism, energy inequalities, greed, hate, the lot. Forget any and all political actions. Drop political commitment. We would all become world citizens passively because of tools applied globally.

And that's the second contradiction: world citizenship was for the future, not for now. In brief, though everyone was a member of humanity already, no one could *claim* world citizenship personally! Political choice was not a part of Bucky's thinking.

I designed my talk, therefore, as a veritable challenge to the academic world and particularly to design science. My aim was to urge an alliance with the only type of politics that equates with the holistic premises of pure science.

other activities, issues its own passports and other documents based on human rights.

....My mission then is to offer a bold challenge to the academic world. I call upon all of you not only to endorse world citizenship in theory, as Bucky has done so eloquently, but to personally claim it, along with the corollary political artifact which we have created: the World Government of World Citizens.

The importance and urgency of this conference is underlined in Bucky's *Grunch of Giants*: "We may soon be atom-bombed into extinction by the pre-emptive folly of the political puppet administrators fronting for the exclusively-for-money-making, supranational corporations' weaponry industry of the now hopelessly bankrupt greatest-weapons-manufacturing nation, the USA."

He really puts it all together!

When I received this invitation to speak, I plunged into my limited Fuller collection to find references to this panel's theme: World Thought.

How does Bucky define himself? "I am not a political revolutionary," he writes in *Critical Path*. "I am a design-science revolutionary." That seems eminently clear. But what are the essential differences between a design-science revolutionary and a political revolutionary which, incidentally, I claim to be? The former makes tools and considers their use to be the main factor in changing society. Bucky was adamant on this point. "I sought to change the environment," he wrote in *Critical Path*, "not the humans."

The political revolutionary commits himself or herself to a political philosophy and then acts on it. The design-science revolutionary essentially works alone in his or her shop or laboratory while the political revolutionary necessarily works in a crowded social milieu. There are valid arguments for both sides.

....Like science itself, design science is concerned only with what works, not with the eventual application of its artifices which, indeed, may be political. There's no guarantee that the tools of design science are going to be used for the betterment of humanity. The nuclear bomb is itself a devastating application of pure design science. The B-17 I flew over Germany to destroy cities was an impressive application of design science technique, as was also the German bomb that destroyed the U.S.S. *Buck*, on which my brother served. The microchip, lauded as a technological breakthrough in 1956, is now being used to help Internet surfers worldwide to gather information as well as by the Pentagon to control laser-beam targeting for its latest missiles....

Let us be frank. Design science per se has no morality, no conscience. Its tools are bought by the highest bidder. Indeed, they are often sequestered by national officials under the delusive fiction of "national security." How many universities are today engaged in design-science projects underwritten by the Pentagons of the world?

...Without moral control, its artifacts can be used either for the demise of humanity or for its betterment. Bucky's geodesic dome could be used to house humans or nuclear missiles. The application of design-science artifacts is obviously a political choice, not one determined by the inventor of that particular artifact.... What influence do the nuclear physicists have on national foreign policy?

This said, where and how can politics and science find common moral ground? Both politics and science are essentially holistic. Neither science nor the world itself admits of borders, mental or actual.

But if science is directly applied to politics, a new holistic political science would be generated. Such a true political science already has a name: "geo-dialectics".... Briefly,

geo-dialectics is the science of recognizing the dynamic relationships of human events under a superseding unity based on pure dialectics.

In 1927, Bucky accepted humanity as a fact, a whole, a happening, an “evolutionary process” or “verb,” as he wrote. He decided that to be optimally effective, he would dedicate himself to that whole instead of— and I quote—“committing my efforts to the exclusive advantage of my dependents, myself, my country, my team.”

Devoting one’s entire life to “humanity” as a fact is as rare as it is to be admired and even blessed.... But the 20th century is essentially different from all previous eras. In the so-called Nuclear Age, humanity itself is threatened. A word had to be invented to define that threat: “omnicide.” That total threat, however, vividly exposes the fact that humanity has not achieved legitimacy. The only government sanctioning humanity’s survival is the one I founded: the World Government of World Citizens.

That extraordinary fact is still a blind spot for pure science and those who practice it.

Bucky himself did not accept humanity as a legal or political fact. Opting for humanity’s survival through the “design-science revolution,” Bucky deliberately renounced any political connotation to his work. Only design science was to be employed for this momentous political change. In *Critical Path*, he wrote, “All who are really dedicated to the earliest possible attainment of economic and physical success for all humanity—and thereby realistically to eliminate war—will have to shift their efforts from the political arena to participation in the design revolution.”

Although he wrote extensively about going from weaponry to “livingry,” or from a nation-state system to a one-world system, he denied the efficacy of political action in its entirety, including as a means of eliminating war between nations. In other words, no democratically enforced world law was either anticipated or condoned by Bucky to prohibit war between nations... but only the passive introduction of tools to “make the world work,” as his World Game proposes....

In 1948 I accepted humanity as an organic fact. ...I gave it a political name: the following is an excerpted version of that speech. While still lengthy, especially for a Newsletter, I think the subject warrants a full exploration. Full versions are available on request from the World Citizen Foundation.

### **“World Thought, Corollary to World Action”**

I am happy to find myself in such distinguished company. “World Thought” indeed is a fitting metaphor for Buckminster Fuller’s life. But I must preface my remarks by confessing that I am neither an intellectual nor an academic. I have no university degrees, honorary or otherwise. Thus, I have no credibility on this level but then, happily, nothing to defend.

It is an enviable but risky position to be in. Enviable because I may be as blunt and bold as I consider the occasion requires. Risky because in breaking from tradition, I risk alienating those who could be my allies. Be that as it may, our perilous times require rejection of double-talk and strict adherence to veracity. I dare say Bucky would be the first to agree.

Professionally, I have been an actor, a soldier and, finally, a stateless, global wanderer. Over the last 47 years, I have published books, written articles, been interviewed and served as an invited speaker.

I have also, by dint of circumstances, founded a world government which, among world government.” As a sovereign human being I considered myself already a dynamic part of that natural if politically mythical government....

In accepting global natural rights as inalienable, my first step in affirming them was to divorce myself from the warring political system of the nation-state—a system which assumed its own exclusive sovereignty that denied my and humanity’s sovereignty. The second step was to claim world citizenship, the individual’s political corollary to world government.

I accepted to be the global artifact or human tool of world law myself....

A further rejection of active politics in Bucky’s thinking is that he continually referred to world citizenship not as an actuality in the present but only as a future potential. We humans, living in the 20th century, were only *about* to become world citizens. “I assume that within another two decades,” he wrote in *Utopia or Oblivion*, “the exclusively geographic identity of humanity will have given way to a general world citizenship in which it will be practical only to operate on a rental-service industry basis.” He added, “Nothing could be more prominent in all the trending of all humanity today than the fact that we are soon to become a world man....”

In keeping with this philosophy, no single individual could actually claim to be a world citizen...Although he wrote that “we are greatly frustrated by all of our local, static organizations of an obsolete yesterday,” Bucky remained an exclusive United States citizen until his death. Ironically, in his multiple travels over planet Earth, he always used a State Department passport.

Since making my claim to world citizenship, I have been supported by intellectuals, beginning with the Conseil de Solidarité formed in Paris in 1948. Such renowned personages as Albert Camus, Andre Breton, Carlo Levi, Richard Wright, Albert Schweitzer and Albert Einstein all recognized and supported my claim to world citizenship and its radical expression at the United Nations in 1948. That intellectual support disappeared, however, when I declared world government in 1953. But by then over one million individuals had also claimed world citizenship, many of them refugees and stateless like myself. Faced with increasing harassment and oppression from nation-states, we needed our own political representation to defend our human rights....

Only an obscure South Indian guru, Padmanaban Nataraja, dared embrace me intellectually. In his “Memorandum on World Government,” he confirmed that my action was consistent with the new political/social science of geo-dialectics.

In the meantime, our government slowly began to represent the downtrodden, the refugee family in camps, the deserter from national armies, the traveler jailed for having no papers, those whose human rights were violated—all those with nothing more to lose by claiming world government as their own. Our *de facto* constitution was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the General Assembly in 1948 as a “common standard of achievement...” Our global City Hall was the World Service Authority, a Washington, D.C., corporation which issued global documents based on articles in the Universal Declaration.

The silence from academia is significant. Those reckless souls who take world thought into action defy the powers-that-be. They are threats to institutions premised on division,

conflict and centralized power. They are condemned as heretics, traitors and even terrorists. They are hounded, jailed, tortured and sometimes killed....

My desk in Washington overflows with desperate appeals for a legitimate global status, appeals from so-called refugees and stateless persons facing unspeakable miseries and even death from national officials....

My renunciation of nationality and claim to world citizenship...was a carefully reasoned one. It evolved out of my World War II experience as a bomber pilot, my brother's death during the invasion of Salerno, and three years intense analysis of the political world scene, particularly following the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Books like *Anatomy of Peace* by Emery Reves, *Peace or Anarchy* by Cord Meyer, Jr., and *One World* by Wendell Willkie served to focus my thoughts and resolve....

Sophisticated Europeans, having endured the blowup of the League of Nations into World War II, considered personalized world citizenship a historic breakthrough. Between January 1949 and August 1951, over 750,000 individuals signed with the International Registry of World Citizens which I founded in Paris.

Rather than world citizenship remaining suspended in a theoretical and legal void with no human will and physical presence embodying it, our affirmation of that status gave it flesh and bones and many minds and hearts. In short, it lived!...

In later years, when I invited Bucky to be coordinator of the World Government's World Design-Science Commission, a post which he refused, he graciously acknowledged my "bravery and effectiveness," but admitted that his apolitical commitment was to "solving problems only through physical artifacts"....

If humanity is for real, as Bucky claims, then we humans are all a dynamic part of it...now, not in some vague future. But the very word "humanity" begs a legitimate question. Is it legal? This question is not theoretical because if humanity is legal, then it has rights and duties....

"Humanity" gained a legal status during the 1945 Nuremberg Trials. The trials were designed around new interpretations concerning humanity's legality. Certain Nazis were indicted, tried, convicted and punished for "crimes against humanity." Since then, nations have used this charge to indict other individuals who participated in the carnage of World War II.

Does humanity have the legal right to live? Do we as individuals? If we do, then obviously humanity as an entity does. The obverse is: If humanity dies, then do we still live? The absurdity is apparent.

If Bucky's whole life was dedicated to humanity's survival and well-being... the question of legitimacy as such did not seem to occupy him. He wrote, "I determined never to try to persuade humanity to alter its customs and viewpoints."

If humanity is an organic species... it follows that all humans are already in a state of natural law with each other. From natural law comes natural rights, the first one being the right to live. So it can be argued that from each human's birth, he or she is a natural world citizen entering a *de facto* world society. That, indeed, is Bucky's major premise. Does it not follow then that the individual claim to that citizenship is not only legitimate but essential to a rational social order? How else does law evolve? Must not humans agree first to be peaceful with each other and on a global scale for the world to work, as Bucky would have put it?...

No national constitution can, by definition, cope with problems beyond its mandate. Therefore, it follows that there must be a constitutional framework to deal with these problems, which then implies a framework of law and its institutions beyond the nation-state structure, a flexible world constitution deriving from the grassroots of humanity. The question then arises: How?

Another eminent design scientist, Stafford Beer, designed a project for the World Government of World Citizens based on Bucky's geometric structure, the icosahedron. We call it the World Syntegrity Project.

"Syntegrity" is a neologism combining "synergy" and "integrity," resulting from Bucky's utilization of the icosahedron, which he claimed had tensile integrity or "tensegrity." The World Syntegrity Project's purpose is to re-empower the individual world citizen in terms of planetary governorship. It permits a world town meeting broken down into Infosets of 30 individuals meeting according to the geometric properties of the icosahedron. Synergy is produced in discussing the operative question: "How can we, sovereign world citizens, govern our world?" From the results come statements which eventually form the basis of a flexible world constitution.

This development is an ingenious and practical example of the application of pure design science to political revolution.

If we judge this century by its national wars and ecological devastation, design science's impact on the 20th century has been negligible. If we judge it by its human condition, we are perplexed by paradoxes.

Bucky predicted that in 10 to 20 years, the design-science revolution would make us all billionaires. Yet the income gap between the richest and poorest 20 per cent of the world's people has not narrowed in the past 30 years. Rather, that gap has doubled. On any given day, 68,000 newborn babies will join families living on less than \$1 a day.

Furthermore, Bucky claimed that the second half of the 20th century would see the design-science revolution turn the world from "weaponry" to "livingry." Yet the military budgets of the nation-states this year are over \$1 trillion, while one-fourth of the human race faces near-starvation.

While acknowledging the synergetic breakthroughs in communications, technology and industry, the political status quo remains the dominating factor in human affairs. The 43-million refugees dramatically attest to this shameful fact.

Something is wrong. And it is the present governing system.

The historic joining of world thought and world action, as performed by political actors in whose company this speaker counts himself, resolves those paradoxes which confuse and discourage the public mind and heart...

I would like to conclude this talk in a somewhat mystical fashion. A Buddhist master, Sogyal Rinpoche, has made an extraordinarily acute observation of our underlying problem: "Western culture is so steeped in denial about death that society has no ability for long-term vision. Modern society operates on the fundamental belief that this life is all there is. Deprived of any real faith in an afterlife, there is no real meaning to this life. That allows society to plunder the riches of the Earth for immediate gratification with no thought for the future. The future does not exist. It is society's fear of death and ignorance of any existence after death that is the cause of the wholesale destruction of our environment and ultimately life on our Earth."

Bucky's spirit is still with us.

**Thank you.**