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# Globalisation and social democracy: european politics at the crossroads

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David Held : globalisation and social democracy, european politics at the crossroads

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### Abstract

David Held created an impressive body of work with a great ambition: to redefine the rules of the world<sup>1</sup>. He lived through three major phases in the development of democracy during the past several decades in Europe: the cold war; the brief period described as the “end of history”; and the current era. These troubled times we live in, with the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, terrorism, and nationalism, force us to rethink the dynamics of our world. In his own words, Held operated at three levels: “normative-philosophical, empirical-analytical and as [...] an advocate<sup>2</sup>” for what he saw as the “fundamental bedrock of cosmopolitanism”, “the principle of equal worth and dignity” of every human being.

The title of my paper is “*Globalisation and social democracy: European politics at the crossroads*”. I will focus among the 50 countries of the continent Europe, on the 27 members of the Union.

**Keywords** : cosmopolitanism ; Europe ; globalization ; David Held ; politics

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<sup>1</sup> through a model, the one he developed in 1995 (nineteen ninety-five) in a book he co-edited with Daniele Archibugi and in his own book *Democracy and the Global Order : From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan*.

<sup>2</sup> GAGNON, Jean- Paul (2011) An interview with David Held: exploring the concepts of cosmopolitanism and democracy. *Journal of Democratic Theory*, 1, p.6 (open access article)

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## Introduction

As Held described, humans are all interconnected, and collective decisions must be made as we face these existential threats. “Globalisation” defines the increase of trade around the world, especially by large companies producing and trading goods in many different countries<sup>3</sup>. The meaning has expanded to describe the rapid changes occurring in all parts of the world. Available goods and services gradually become similar, while technologies and financial markets become linked. We will see how cosmopolitan democracy, according to David Held, can serve as a model and what we can learn from the creators of the concept. To better understand these challenges in European politics, we’re going to analyse the meaning of the terms “globalisation” and “social democracy.”

### Globalisation : the interconnectedness, an opportunity, and a threat

Held noted that “such interconnectedness has existed for some hundreds of years<sup>4</sup>.” This reality is not as new as it is usually described. Globalisation in a way is a European product. There have been different historical forms of globalisation such as the spread of world religions like Catholicism from ancient Greek “*katholikos*” which means universal, Islam, Protestantism, in the fifteenth century the Great discoveries and the *conquista* by the Spanish and Portuguese of the New World. More recently, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the development of empires, especially British Empire show that global cultural and economic phenomena are not new.

In 2000<sup>5</sup>, David Held stated that globalisation is “one of the most talked-about phenomena of the last decades<sup>6</sup>”, but “the term is so often used it is danger of becoming a cliché<sup>7</sup>”. If we trace its increase, “there is now an ongoing transformation, from economics, politics and migration to culture and law, which is creating a new kind of world order.” David Held defined

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<sup>3</sup> Two scholars of globalisation David Held and Paul Hirst the 22 th January 2002 clash over its nature, its originality today and its likely future. *The discussion was chaired for open Democracy by Anthony Barnett*  
[https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/article\\_637jsp/](https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/article_637jsp/)

OPEN DEMOCRACY: “Globalisation: the argument of our time”

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> HELD David, *A globalizing world? Culture, economics, politics*, Psychology Press, 2000 - Social Science - 188 pages

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Introduction, Page 3

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

“globalisation” as the “widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life<sup>8</sup>.”

Whatever we are talking about, the lunch, everywhere around the world, the same franchises of fast food: *Mac Donald*, *KFC*, *Pizza Hut*, *Burger King*, *Starbuck*, the same clothes, *H and M*, *GAP*, *Levi's*, of course internet and the universal giants which now are stronger than many states, stronger than every state? The GAFAM Google Amazon Facebook Apple Microsoft have such an economical power and wide influence. It means that, in their daily lives, human beings all over the world adopt the same kind of behaviour, wherever they live. Now, millions of Europeans and Americans, if they have not become citizens of the world, behave as consumers of the world. They travel with the same low-cost airlines, sleep over with *AirBnB*, binge-watch *Netflix*, and use the same apps such as *TikTok*. Therefore, democracy within states must be understood in relation to wider issues in the international order as the world becomes increasingly interconnected.

### Social- democracy: a post-war European policy regime

The second term of the equation, “social democracy,” is a special kind of democracy intended to promote the ideals of social justice within the framework of a capitalist economy. To quote David Held, democracy is “that extraordinary, radical notion of rulership or rule by people in its various complex forms<sup>9</sup>.” What they share in common is an idea that “places at its heart the idea that legitimate governance should be [...] accountable to citizens<sup>10</sup>.” He noted: “Social-democracy has typically been committed to the principles in social justice and social solidarity, one the one hand, and, on the other, to the core principles of liberal democratic politics : the rule of law, political, equality and citizenship<sup>11</sup>.”

In *Models of democracy*, in two thousand and six (2006), David Held set out different models of this term. He determined three major revolutions in thinking about democracy. The first is direct and linked to the city-state, most notably the polis of Athens in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The

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<sup>8</sup> D. Held, A. McGrew, D. Goldblatt and J. Perraton. *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*. Cambridge: Polity. (1999)

<sup>9</sup> GAGNON, Jean- Paul (2011) An interview with David Held: exploring the concepts of cosmopolitanism and democracy. *Journal of Democratic Theory*, 1, p.2 (open access article)  
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<sup>10</sup> GAGNON, Jean- Paul (2011) *Ibid*, p.1

<sup>11</sup> HELD David, *Global covenant*, p.11, Broché, 2004

second is representative democracy in the nation-state. The third, cosmopolitan democracy,<sup>12</sup> explores the application of the principles of democracy at transnational and global levels. Building democratic institutions is a historical construction, not an event, but a process. In England, Parliament executed the king Charles the first in 1649. In France, the National Convention executed Louis XVI by guillotine on 21 January 1793 in Paris.

In the aftermath of World War II, after the Holocaust and the creation of the atomic bomb, humankind has recognised its mortality. We know that in our hands lies our destiny and the fate of the planet. We risk destroying the world and ourselves along with it. This fragility is terrifying, but instead of being petrified and doing nothing, the Allies did not give up. They decided to organize the aftermath of war and establish peace. In 1944, the delegations from the Allied Big Four, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and China formulated and negotiated the creation of the United Nations<sup>13</sup>. They agreed on the aims, structure and functioning of the institution<sup>14</sup> and, in 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>15</sup>.

### European politics at crossroads: at the intersection of the nation-state and neoliberalism

In Europe, social democracy emerged to reconcile the efficiency of markets with values of social community<sup>16</sup>. In his interview with the philosopher Jean-Paul Gagnon, Held said, “Europe was the nastiest global region of the world for centuries. In the twentieth century alone, Europe brought the world to the edge of the abyss twice<sup>17</sup>.” From the ashes of two world wars, Europe survived and decided to move forward. Sovereign European countries have entered into treaties, cooperated and harmonised policies in an increasing number of areas in the European integration project. The EU inherited many of its present responsibilities from, and the membership of the European Communities (EC), which were founded in the 1950s in the spirit

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<sup>12</sup> GAGNON, Jean- Paul (2011) *Ibid*, p.1

<sup>13</sup> at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference from 21 September 1944 to 7 October 1944

<sup>14</sup> after months of planning, the UN Conference on International Organization opened in San Francisco, 25 April 1945

<sup>15</sup> International document adopted by the UN that enshrines the rights and freedoms of all human beings. It was accepted by the General Assembly as Resolution 217 at its third session on 10 December 1948 in Paris, France. Of the 58 members of the United Nations at the time, 48 voted in favour, none against, eight abstained, and two did not vote

<sup>16</sup> HELD David, *Global covenant*, 2004, p.11

<sup>17</sup> GAGNON, Jean- Paul (2011) *An interview with David Held: exploring the concepts of cosmopolitanism and democracy*.

*Journal of Democratic Theory*, 1, p.4 (open access article)

On line : <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/40283/>

of the Schuman Declaration. Since 1993, the Copenhagen criteria, to become a member, a country must be governed by a stable democracy that respects human rights and the rule of law. They must also have a functioning market economy and accept the obligations of membership, including European law.

As history shows us, Greek democracy, the Roman Empire, Christianity, infighting, fratricid wars, blood ties<sup>1</sup>, renaissance humanism, the Enlightenment, the struggle for colonization and world domination<sup>1</sup>, two world wars have built and distraught Europe. Today, it is a place full of past scars but also a place full of possibilities and opportunities.

### Can social-democratic values serve as stepping-stones to a cosmopolitan democracy?

Held's idea of "overlapping communities of fate" is now regarded as a fact, not a theory. More than two centuries ago, in *The Metaphysical Elements of Justice*, Kant wrote: "If you are so situated as to be unavoidably side by side with others, you ought to abandon the state of nature and enter, with all others, a juridical state of affairs, that is, a state of distributive legal justice<sup>18</sup>". To enter in a "juridical state of affairs<sup>19</sup>" is not a choice but the only rational option<sup>20</sup>. The idea that we are "unavoidably side by side" has historical roots, but when the German philosopher wrote it, he did not anticipate how profound that statement would become. In his essay, *Political Theory and the Modern State*, from nineteen eighty-nine (1989), Held noted "New forms of multinational politics have been established and with them new forms of collective decision-making involving states, intergovernmental organizations and a whole variety of transnational pressure groups<sup>21</sup>." The local matters and has to be re-contextualised in a more complex world of economics, politics, culture and migration: "Globalisation is not an end state, or a single thing, any more than is democracy or industrialisation. These are processes, involving changing relations of human affairs which means it is wrong to say that the local doesn't matter anymore<sup>22</sup>."

### Cosmopolitan democracy as a supranational model

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<sup>18</sup> KANT Immanuel. *The Metaphysical Elements of Justice*, John Ladd, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), p. 7

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> conceptualized in his essay *Idea for a Universal History on a Cosmopolitan Purpose*, 1784

<sup>21</sup> HELD David, *Political Theory and the Modern State*, p. 232

<sup>22</sup> David Held, Paul Hirst, "Globalisation: the argument of our time" Two scholars of globalisation clash over its nature, its originality today and its likely future, 22 January 2002

On line: [https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/article\\_637jsp/](https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/article_637jsp/).

To face the contemporary issues, economical, ecological, social, David Held advocated for cosmopolitan democracy. He was a pioneer of the concept, the belief that democratic ideals in government do not stop at the borders of nations but are essential for transnational institutions as well. Democratic ideals in government do not stop at the borders of nations, but are essential for transnational institutions as well.

However, there are obstacles to applying the principles of cosmopolitan democracy in European politics. In *Global covenant*, in two thousand and four, Held stated that the relation between globalisation and social integration has always been problematic<sup>23</sup>. Globalisation has contributed to uneven economic development, causing widening global inequalities and asymmetries of influence. The crisis of democracy affects many if not all the liberal democratic states. The conflicts are not only internal, within states, but also in the intersection of the national and the supranational. David Held studied this discord, the rise of nationalism<sup>24</sup>, and the hostility among citizens towards European institutions. Brexit shows how complicated it is for an individual nation to leave the union, but at the same time, it demonstrates that it is possible. Moreover, it is not a choice made by government, but by citizens. There is a tension between the individual nations and the union, notably in Hungary and Poland. In the words of David Held, “We are at risk of being entrapped in a vicious circle<sup>25</sup>” operating on a global scale and refracting into national politics: “the clamour for protectionism, ineffective regional and international institutions, and a growing xenophobic discourse that places virtually all the blame for every problem on some form of Other<sup>26</sup>.”

If there are fears unjustified and fuelled by nationalist leaders, some are legitimate. Where is the political European common front towards taxation, ecological issues, terrorism, and geopolitics? Delocalisation, deregulation, disappearance and privatization of public services, the electricity, the rail company, the post office, within the framework of the common market and the opening up to competition are not an illusion but a reality. The increasing social insecurity of the working class, the impoverishment and precariousness of the middle class are

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<sup>23</sup> HELD David, *Global covenant* (2004), P.37.

<sup>24</sup> Fareed Zakaria theorized the concept of the illiberal democracy like Hungary or Poland.  
<https://fareedzakaria.com/columns/1997/11/01/the-rise-of-illiberal-democracy>

<sup>25</sup> “The Overlapping Crises Of Democracy, Globalization And Global Governance” by David Held on 3rd July 2018

On line : <https://www.socialeurope.eu/the-overlapping-crises-of-democracy-globalization-and-global-governance>

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

a major issue. Which is responsible? Which is accountable? Globalisation? European Union? States? Is European Union the problem of the states or the scapegoat of the member states?

For critics, the European Union is described as the enemy of the nation-states, the Trojan horse of neo-liberalism bringing unregulated globalisation, the adversary of the national identity; the European supranational structure is too distant from local concerns and issues. European Union remains first and foremost an economic union. There is a lack of a social Europe. The response to COVID-19 shows the strength of the European Central Bank as it helps countries cope, but on the other hand, we see a weakness of the European Union: Schengen countries reintroduce border checks at their internal borders. Every country has its own experts and its own rules. Right now, the EU budget is blocked by Hungary and Poland over rule of law<sup>27</sup>.

European politics is at the crossroads of social democracy and globalisation. To David Held, one road points to authoritarian regimes, while another leads to a more hopeful cosmopolitan future<sup>28</sup>. Desired or feared, globalisation is there. It can be an opportunity or the angel of death of the social democracy regime.

Indeed, with the ending of the Cold War, the political model of a cosmopolitan democracy achieved a new relevance. World interdependence has advanced much further than ever before, because of instantaneous digital communication and the increasing economic interdependence of states. States and societies are linked in webs of international conditions and processes. The nation-state in the context of the interstate system and the world economy must change to retain its relevance : creating new global tax and spend systems. The community of fate does not happen just at moments of catastrophe like terrorist attacks, natural disasters, Covid pandemic, but as well in trading, daily life, environmental concerns. There is emergencies on the ecological level we have to adress in order to save the planet and the humanity. These are not theoretical speculations but a truth we know but want to ignore. It is a crime against the cosmos. Governments should be accountable towards citizens and future generations what they do for the planet.

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<sup>27</sup> "The E.U. Puts Its Foot Down on the Rule of Law while the leaders of Hungary and Poland resist." By The Editorial Board, Nov. 22, 2020, The New- York Times

On line : <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/22/opinion/eu-poland-hungary.html>

<sup>28</sup> "From multilateralism to gridlock and beyond" by David Held, November 30, 2016

On line : <https://globalchallenges.org/from-multilateralism-to-gridlock-and-beyond/>



The development of a multi-layered structure of governance forces to re-examine the role of the state and of the practice of democracy. Democracy on the international level must take a different form. It is necessary to rethink the institutional objectives for the realization of a global social democracy. The cosmopolitan ideas of recognition of equal rights and worth, self-governance, individualism, and universality, point the way to adapt globalization social democracy. There's a democratic deficit noticed within the supranational organizations undermined by diverse sites of social economic power and by dense networks of regional and global interconnectedness. To democratize the new system of governance, it is now necessary to set in the constitutional framework of the institutions. David Held believed in reframing and regulating markets, adapting the principle of subsidiarity to the multi-layered system of governance in order to restore the congruence between decision-makers and the recipients of political decisions. There must be trading covenants in the nature of financial markets to address existential threats, such as nuclear weapons and environmental concerns (ozone depletion, global warming), plus institutional safeguards that are fundamental to fight against terrorism and protect human rights. Human health and welfare must also be considered along with scientific issues, such as the genetic manipulation.

Can we learn from history? After the fall of communism, American political scientist Francis Fukuyama wrote that it was “the end-point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government<sup>29</sup>.” In 1992, he thought that liberal democracy had won as the “universal policy regime.” He described this as the “end of history,” but the terrorist attacks on 9/11 showed the world that conflicts, battles, wars of values and different conceptions of the world had not disappeared. It also showed the extent of globalisation. The event echoed in a second in the world.

### Cosmopolitan principles: Equal worth, self- determination and reason

If Kant and Fukuyama conceived of time as an arrow, Ancient Greeks<sup>30</sup> conceived time as a circle. Most notably stoicism and Zeno, there was the idea of eternal return: in the beginning lies the end. Time is cyclical and everything is connected.

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<sup>29</sup> Fukuyama, Francis (1989). "The End of History?" *The National Interest* (16): 3–18. ISSN 0884-9382. JSTOR 24027184

<sup>30</sup> Ancient cultures such as ancient Greeks, Native American Tribes (Incan, Mayan, Hopi..) plus the Babylonians, ancient Greeks, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism have a concept of a wheel of time: they regard time as cyclical and quantic, consisting of repeating ages that happen to every being of the Universe between birth and extinction.

Circle or line<sup>31</sup>, time is a dynamic. He believed in progress and thought we can, and must, learn from the past. His writings restored and revived the notion of *kosmopolites*. To understand the theory of cosmopolitan democracy, it is important to review some background and history.

This concept has roots in Athens at the time of Alexander the Great, in the 4th century B.C., among the cynics. It derives from the Ancient Greek word, *kynikos*, meaning 'dog-like'. The word dog was thrown at the first Cynics as an insult for their shameless rejection of conventional manners and their decision to live in the streets. The cynic philosopher Diogenes (405-323) is said to have invented this term. Born in Sinope<sup>32</sup>, he moved to Athens where he criticized the cultural conventions of the city<sup>33</sup>. As he believed that virtue was better revealed in action than in theory, Diogenes of Sinope used his simple lifestyle and behaviour, sleeping in the street and begging, to set an example. According to Diogenes Laerte, to an Athenian who asked him for his homeland, the Cynic replied: "I am a citizen of the world!" This claim from an exile and an outcast echoed the words of Socrates (470-399). In *Ethika*<sup>34</sup>, Plutarch wrote that he once said, "I am neither Athenian nor Greek, but a citizen of the world." These two quotations show the same idea: the two mythical figures of the ancient philosophy describe themselves as citizens of the world rather than claiming allegiance to just one place.

From the start, the concept was controversial in a world where a man's identity was tied to his citizenship in a particular city-state. Cynics considered the laws of nature superior and contrary to those of the city. They did not care about offending their fellow Athenians and were even pleased to provoke. In democratic Athens, a man defined himself in and through the city. Aristotle described the man as a "zoon politikon", a political animal. Foreign residents, women, and children were excluded from citizenship. The idea of being a citizen of the world - with equal worth and every human being as a part of the cosmic soul - was a radical statement. The word "*Kosmopolitès*" offers the world to everyone, seeing in each human being a part of the *kosmos*, the city of gods and humans. At the same time, the fact to be *kosmopolites* for cynics is only for those who are wise enough to reach this level of understanding. There is an ambiguity

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<sup>31</sup> The Christian world-view regards time as linear and directional beginning with the act of creation by God

<sup>32</sup> an Ionian colony on the Black Sea coast of modern day Turkey, he was banished after a scandal involving counterfeit currency

<sup>33</sup> A meeting between Alexander the Great and Diogenes is supposed to have Diogenes explained, "I am searching for the bones of your father but cannot distinguish them from those of a slave" taken place. In an account of the conversation, Alexander found the philosopher looking at a pile of human bones.

<sup>34</sup> in Ancient Greek *Ethika*, in latin *Moralia*

and ambivalence linked to the ancient term. It gives the universe to each human, but to be citizen of the world, you have to have acquired a certain level of wisdom that obviously few people can achieve. Socrates and Diogenes<sup>35</sup> were wise men, one of a kind, unique. Is the common man, are we wise enough to adopt a wider, global point of view, a global perspective, to go beyond the personal interests?

With Stoicism, especially during the Roman Empire, *kosmopolitès* no longer meant living apart from the city. The three great thinkers of its later period, a state man and dramatist, Seneca, a freed slave, Epictetus, and an emperor Marcus- Aurelius, lived and worked in the city. There was the idea of concentric circles. Each human being is plural, part of a small circle, the family, a middle circle the local city, a big circle the cosmos. Being cosmopolitan meant being in the matrix of the universe, a part of the cosmic soul, the dust in the wind of history <sup>36</sup>. The stoic notion of universal sympathy refers to the interactions observed between elements of the universe. It comes from the greek “cum pathos”, to suffer with, which can be understood as co-affection. It refers to the interactions observed between elements of the universe. The facts described through the notion of “*sumpatheia*” are explained through the sharing of one common breath. All parts of the world are individualized and unified into one global and coherent organism. They physically communicate between themselves through this agent. Seneca identified this as the “air” that penetrates all things from celestial aether to minerals

What can we learn from the origins of *kosmopolitès*? Of course, the world they refer to, divine and cosmic, is no longer the one we inhabit. Even though the contemporary world is a-cosmic, cosmopolitan ideas are still relevant, such as the ”conception of human beings as having equal worth and dignity and being endowed with reason<sup>37</sup>”, and “bound in collective power relationships<sup>38</sup>”. Like cynics and stoics, David Held thought you should live according to your beliefs, praxis according to theoria. Cosmopolitanism is “both an ethical theory and a political

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<sup>35</sup> As a member of the cynic school of philosophy, Diogenes modelled himself on Heracles, the ideal Cynic. Heracles, also known as Hercules, brought Cerberus, the hound of Hades, from the underworld. The iconic hero appealed to the dog-man, Diogenes. Diogenes was referred to as the "Dog", a distinction he seems to have relished, stating, "other dogs bite their enemies, I bite my friends to save them."

<sup>36</sup> Posidonius developed the notion of “*sympatheia*”.

<sup>37</sup> GAGNON, Jean- Paul (2011) An interview with David Held: exploring the concepts of cosmopolitanism and democracy. *Journal of Democratic Theory*, 1, p.2 (open access article)

“commitment to the equal moral worth and equal moral dignity of each and every human being”, ”conception of human beings as capacity to shape their lives and which are essential to themselves”

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

theory<sup>39</sup>”. Political and philosophical theories can help bring change if they are embedded in governmental policies, institutional structures, and public life. In his *Meditations*, the emperor philosopher Marcus Aurelius wrote :

*If mind is common to us, then also the reason, whereby we are reasoning beings, is common. If this be so, then also the reason which enjoins what is to be done or left undone is common. If this be so, law also is common; if this be so, we are citizens; if this be so, we are partakers in one constitution; if this be so, the Universe is a kind of Commonwealth.*<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion

Can European politics embrace globalisation and social democracy at the same time? The pursuit of a democratic ideal requires the enactment of rights inspired by social-democratic values: political equality, social justice, the rule of law, democratic politics, economic efficiency and social solidarity<sup>41</sup>! These are necessary stepping-stones to adapt globalisation to democratic values. David Held saw the limits of political institutions and their flaws, but he also recognized the avenues for improvement. There has been progress such as the treaty of Paris and by European institutions and structures towards more equality and justice, as seen in the European Court of Human Rights<sup>42</sup>.

David Held was an optimist, even though it is hard to maintain a spirit of good will when you face the worries of the entire planet every day. This brings to mind the cosmopolitan intellectual Romain Gary (1914 – 1980) who wrote : “Despair is always a submission<sup>43</sup>.” It takes courage

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<sup>39</sup> GAGNON, Jean- Paul (2011) An interview with David Held: exploring the concepts of cosmopolitanism and democracy. *Journal of Democratic Theory*, 1, p.11 (open access article)

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<sup>40</sup> MARCUS AURELIUS, *Meditations*, Page 24, IV, 4

<sup>41</sup> HELD D. *Global covenant*, 2004

<sup>42</sup> The European Court of Human Rights is a supranational or international court of the Council of Europe which interprets the European Convention on Human Rights. The court hears applications alleging that a contracting state has breached one or more of the human rights enumerated in the Convention or its optional protocols to which a member state is a party. An individual, a group of individuals of the other contracting states, can lodge an application. Aside from judgments, the court can also issue advisory opinions. The convention was adopted within the context of the Council of Europe, and all of its 47 member states are contracting parties to the convention.

<sup>43</sup> Romain Gary (21 May 1914-1980) a French novelist born in the Russian Empire diplomat, Vilna, and World War II freedom fighter, who taught us, “Despair is always a submission” « Le desespoir est toujours une soumission » *Les cerfs-volants*. Born Roman Kacew, he is also known by the pen name Émile Ajar, was a French novelist, diplomat, film director, and World War II aviator of Jewish origin in the Free French Air Forces based in London. He is the only author to have won the Prix Goncourt under two names.

and requires a strong will to think a world different than it is and attempt to change things. It is so easy to dismiss it as unrealistic. We have to defy ourselves of the temptation of perfection, realize a perfect humanity in an ideal world. Hell is paved with good intentions. The politicians who have promised to make the human better, the future brighter, heaven on earth, have always made it worse as totalitarian regimes have shown us. Nothing is perfect nor pure under the sun. It is essential to face the realities and emergencies of today and try to bring a pragmatic and practical answer. History showed us that an evolution is possible: fights for women's rights, Mandela in South Africa, Gandhi in India, Luther King in United States, the construction of the European Union. For better and for worse, ideas have an effect on the world we live in. Rousseau was a major influence for Robespierre in the French revolution without mentioning the influence of Marx on the twentieth century. As Austin theorized, speech is performative, words shape the world. What everyone thinks, writes, shares, acts matters. Trying to make the world a better place is a citizen's duty. However, to be effective, ideas and words have to become actions and rules. Good will and discussions are not enough, but they are a necessary starting point. David Held kept the flame of the cosmopolitan principles alive, the "commitment to the equal moral worth and equal moral dignity of each and every human being" and the "conception of human beings as capacity to shape their lives and which are essential to themselves<sup>44</sup>."

He passed the torch forward and showed us a path to follow: look at the world as it is and think about how to make it not perfect but a better place.

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<sup>44</sup> GAGNON, Jean- Paul (2011) An interview with David Held: exploring the concepts of cosmopolitanism and democracy. *Journal of Democratic Theory*, 1, p.2 (open access article)

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