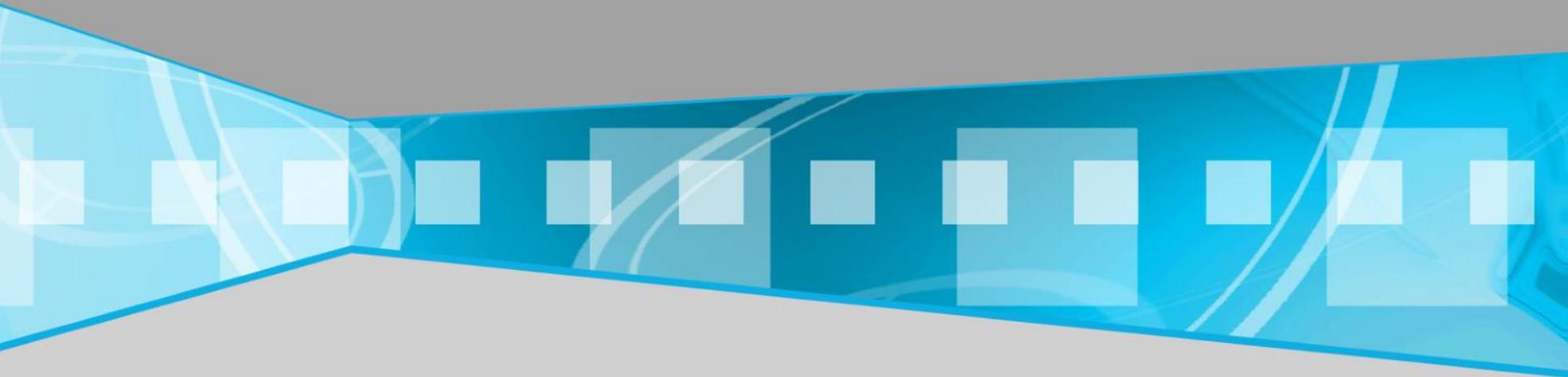


Is a sustainable world state possible?

Scenarios of possible, (un)likely and (un)desirable futures



Arguments for change

- The critical-explanatory-transformative argument: a discursive formation is (in some important regards) false & we can explain its circulation and reproduction in terms of social structures → an obligation to change those structures.
- A social situation is contradictory or otherwise problematic (unnecessary, unwanted & unneeded) & this contradiction or problem can be overcome by institutional arrangements → an obligation to change those institutional arrangements (structures).

The blindness of negative critique

- We have a moral obligation to limit strategic action to such modes which are conducive to preserving and cultivating public and pluralist political spaces
 - even though this requirement establishes a sort of direction to the critical-explanatory-transformative argument, mere abstract obligation to change the social context, even if further specified in this way, cannot guide practical action
 - No form of negative critique – whether explanatory or more generally ethico-political – can provide sufficient guidance about direction, about possible and desired changes.
 - Therefore, mere negative critique is not sufficient for the purposes of transformative action.
- 

Towards desirable future possibilities

- Ernst Bloch: **concrete utopia** is a future possibility that can be achieved through struggles and experiments
 - "the principle of militant hope"
 - an alternative to both pessimism and fanciful thinking
 1. unrealised emancipatory possibilities of the past
 2. the latent tendencies and potentials of the present
 3. and realisable hopes about better futures
- **Dialectics of utopian imagination:**
imagined contrasts to the actual situation => critique => transformative activism => new actual situation, perhaps with unintended consequences / utopian imagination => contrasts...

Hope and progress

- Modern imaginary is grounded on anticipations of the future; people routinely dream about better futures.
- Linear time in modernity: "New is better than old"
 - there are always many reasons to grouse about the present
 - who has the power to channel complaints into positive change?
- In the absence of systematic social scientific critique, the hope for a better world is all too easy to be harnessed to serve particular interests, bringing about dystopian effects
 - e.g. the logic of neoliberal reforms
- Systematic critique & well-founded concrete utopias & learning through different modes of reasoning → progress!
- A vital task of social sciences: to produce not only explanatory understandings but also concrete utopias.

Concrete eutopia

- Criticism presupposes the possibilities of better practices and systems; how can we have knowledge about them?
 1. practical wisdom (Aristotle: what is good; and how to achieve it)
 2. lessons drawn from past or contemporary models (Bloch: a utopia is concrete when it is within the domain of the real; open-ended history is the final arbiter)
 3. abductive reasoning: creating hypotheses about new possibilities (Peirce: abductive reasoning is the key to understanding the logic of science)
 4. counterfactual reasoning about the possible effects of an altered context; as well as thought-experiments about the consequences of the transformed practices and systems
 5. experiments and lessons drawn from them (however, background context may be critical in determining the conditions of success of an experiment)

Eutopia – dystopia

- Plausible scenarios about possible future vary from eutopias to dystopias
 - eu-topia: a good 'place' (social context)
 - dys-topia: a bad 'place' (social context)
- Ethico-political ideologies are Janus-faced: apart from false beliefs, illusions and contradictions, they include also elements of hope and eutopia.
- On the other hand, any eutopian endeavour may involve also false beliefs, illusions and contradictions.

Beyond concrete utopias

- In short, knowledge about the future is based on past experiences and on normative, abductive and counterfactual reasoning.
- This knowledge can be tested in open-systemic social experiments.
- The final arbiter is history, but no arbiter is categorically final, because an altered background context may open up new, hitherto closed possibilities.
- Hope must be “militant” the sense that it must go beyond any particular – perhaps relatively easily achievable – reforms or improvements.
- Moreover, there is a meta-logic to progressive transformations.

Reflexive anticipations

- Actors can be aware that others too are temporal and conscious about the future.
- Expectations and anticipations can turn out self-fulfilling or self-denying; and this may be part of their purpose.
- Reflexivity of future-oriented actions can change not only the way social systems function but also their very identity
 - homeostatic causal loops
 - self-regulation through feedback
 - reflexive self-regulation

The point of view of the whole

- Many contradictions and problems stem from the fallacy of composition.
- If you go on generalising the context and making it spatially wider, you end up with a conception of the world system.
- In the early 20th century, the science of geopolitics emerged with the exhaustion of the geographical space for Western colonialists and explorers
 - it aimed at viewing the planet earth as a whole and stipulating positivist 'laws' about the statist or imperial governance of the limited global space
- At the same time emerged also the first systematic **arguments for a world state**, as a solution to a number of actual or possible planetary problems.

Standard arguments for a world state

- World-historical megatrends (Albert – Chase-Dunn – Jessop)
- Development of the technologies of destruction (Kant – Wells – K'ang – political realists – Wendt)
- Common global problems → need for functionalist co-operation (Weiss: not only governance but government)
- Overcoming political economy contradictions (Marx – theorists of imperialism – Keynes – Kalecki – Jessop – Wallerstein)
- Struggle for recognition (Wendt); universalising morality (Linklater)
 - ❑ *Wendt, Alexander (2003) "Why a World State is Inevitable", European Journal of International Relations (9)4: 491-542.*
- The establishment of adequate global institutions would be a step in 'the long march of mankind toward its unity and better control of its own fate' (Robert Triffin 1968)

World historical mega-trends

- The overall mega-trend is striking: from perhaps as many as 200 000 – 300 000 units in 1000 BCE to a mere 200 units in 2000 ACE.
- A parallel trend is towards larger-sized units
 - so far the peaks have been the Mongolian and British empires
- Assuming that these trends continue, humanity is likely to end up in a single political unit within the next couple of centuries.
- However, a claim about a long-term trend is *not* an argument in favour of a world state; *nor* does this trend show that the process is inevitable.

Modern technologies of destruction

- The Kantian international problematic
 - how will the era of satellites, missiles and nuclear weapons come to an end?
- Wells: *"We have to an end to war, and to make an end to war we must be cosmopolitan in our politics. It is impossible for any clear-headed person to suppose that ever more destructive stupidities of war can be eliminated from human affairs until some common political control dominates the earth..."*
- Morgenthau: *"There is no shirking the conclusion that international peace cannot be permanent without a world state..."*
 - the existence of huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons means that great power war is no longer a viable tool of statecraft; the problem is acute...
- Waltz: *"The obvious conclusion of a third-image analysis is that world government is the remedy for world war..."*

Common global problems → co-operation

- Many of the most intractable contemporary problems are transnational, ranging...
 - from climate change, migration, and pandemics
 - to terrorism, financial instability, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
- Addressing them successfully requires actions that are not unilateral, bilateral, or even multilateral but rather global
 - resources necessary for tackling such problems remain vested in individual states rather than collectively in a universal institution
- “The fundamental disconnect between the nature of a growing number of global problems and the current inadequate structures for international problem solving goes a long way toward explaining the fitful, tactical, and short-term local responses to challenges that require sustained, strategic, and longer-run global perspectives and action.”
 - ❑ Thomas G. Weiss (2009) What happened to the idea of a world government?
International Studies Quarterly (53)2: 253–271

Overcoming political economy contradictions

- Profit-oriented, market-mediated economic activities take the world market as their ultimate horizon of calculation.
- Yet political power is territorialized, segmenting the globe into distinct, formally equivalent units.
- Contradictions and various crises of political economy can be, at least in part, overcome by means of collective actions and common institutions
 - Marxian theory: contradictions of capital accumulation and exchange
 - (Post-)Keynesian theory: paradoxes stemming from inequalities and the limited self-regarding horizon of actors (fallacies of composition etc), resulting in inefficiencies, business cycles, crises, unemployment and often counterproductive political responses to them
- Either better global governance or a world state proper required
 - a Marxian variation of the theme: "Socialism involves the creation of a new kind of *world-system*, neither redistributive world-empire nor a capitalist world-economy but a socialist world-government." (Immanuel Wallerstein 1979)

Scenarios of constructing a world state

- 1) Elements of world statehood exist already
 - “From the very beginning of the modern state there was a co-originality of an international or cosmopolitan legal order (with some aspects of universal statehood) and a legal order of particular states” (Brunkhorst)
 - global constitutionalism (human rights etc); the new constitutionalism of disciplinary Neoliberalism (Gill)
 - the UN system, Bretton Woods institutions, WTO etc.
- 2) Gradually evolving through learning, cooperation and common governance
 - functionalist cooperation creating the ground for a world state
- 3) Mass movements and/or world political parties and/or “global gorbachevs” will build the momentum for a world state.
- 4) Catastrophe → emergence of a world state

Is a world state sustainable?

- Leaving aside scenarios of its possible emergence – or of the already on-going emergence – the question is: once in existence, would a world state be viable?
- Would it be legitimate?; would the 'public opinion(s)' support it?; would some actors have reasons to resist the world state rule or even fight against it?
- Analysis of elements and dynamics of legitimation also facilitates the assessment of the feasibility of different paths towards planetary-scale integration
 - the point is to understand the potential for conflicts, divisions and possible subsequent disintegration

...in terms of normative legitimation

- Every argument about the possibility, desirability and/or inevitability of a world state constitutes a standpoint for assessing its future legitimacy and sustainability.
- **Security-military argument:** *tries to convince the rational members of the audience to submit their wills to a central authority in order to avoid risking a major or total military catastrophe in the future.*
- **Functionalist argument:** *a number of practical-technical global issues and contradictions of global political economy require trans- and supranational co-operation and institutions, with at least some centralised direction.*

The problematique

- There may be good security and political economy reasons for furthering integration towards a world political community (WPC), possibly conceived as a world state.
- However, although these security and political economy arguments are relevant and plausible, the question is whether they provide a basis for the possibility of a legitimate planetary political community?
- While the standard security-military and functionalist political economy arguments for planetary unification may work to a certain point in terms of legitimation, after that they may well become irrelevant, in some ways counterproductive, or even self-defeating.
- What matters: the moral standards and political judgements constituting multiple political actions and struggles in a future WPC.

Problems of the security argument

- Conceptually ambiguous (*ex ante* vs. *ex post*).
- After the creation of a global state, this argument could serve as a constant reminder of the potential threat posed by the others.
- Moreover, the argument is conservative as it justifies any order against any claims to change.
- The security-military argument may thus become counterproductive from the point of view of establishing a global security community.

Problems of the functionalist argument

- **Functionalism:** loyalties and beliefs in the legitimacy of the system should more or less automatically follow the transfer of technical, economic and welfare functions from the nation-state to international and supranational organizations.
- To the extent that (i) the instrumentalist orientation prevails in society and (ii) trans- or supranational co-operation is widely seen as more efficient than national, the functionalist argument may work **to a certain point**.
- However, these conditions can never be fully met: attempts to push integration beyond the limits of prevailing loyalties, solidarities and ethico-political sentiments become easily **counterproductive**, however moral the motivation.

...involving ignored historical lessons...

- Modern European states could not have succeeded in progressively establishing their legitimate monopoly over violence by just dispossessing their competitors in physical violence by stronger means of violence
 - neither did they prove their worth by mere technical-functionalist means....
- They also engaged in what Norbert Elias calls the 'civilizing process'.
- The emerging territorial-national states embraced **new universalising principles**, but forged them into particular national imaginaries to justify and legitimise territorial rule.

A 'civilizing process' for world citizens...?

- A key question is: would the required 'civilizing' and story-telling process resonate with deep tendencies underlying actual geo-historical events, episodes and trends?
- Wendt relies on Hegel's metaphorical story about the 'struggle for recognition': only a global political community can ensure an equal, symmetric and stable collective identity and solidarity.
 - this post-Hegelian story is instructive, but its epistemological and ontological status is unclear
- Linklater has articulated a parallel normative account of the reasons for believing in the gradual emergence of a PPC.
 - the overall argument is, as in the case of Wendt, at best indicative

Collective learning

- The Hegelian story about the dialectical movement of one moment of 'recognition' to another gives, essentially, an ideal-typical account of the human learning process.
- Similarly, the 'civilizing process' refers, ultimately, to an ethico-political learning process
 - a 'civilizing process' : increasing awareness and respect for other people's point of view → collective moral learning
- Now, certain kinds of cognitive structures emerge in a logical order that constitute what can be called 'stages'
 - the sequence of cognitive stages is conceptual-logical rather than just empirically correct (Piaget, Kohlberg, Habermas)

Table 1: Stages of Cognitive-Moral Learning According to Kohlberg

I. Pre-moral level

A child understands language and is responsive to the labels of good and bad, right or wrong, but only in a physicalist or hedonist way, or in terms of the physical power of those who enunciate the rules and labels.

Stage 1: *The punishment and obedience orientation.* Avoidance of punishment and unquestioning deference to power are valued in their own right. The physical consequences of action determine its goodness or badness.

Stage 2: *The instrumental relativist orientation.* A specific principle of reciprocity, based on instrumental satisfaction of one's needs and occasionally those of others, determines value. Reciprocity is a matter of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours", not of generalised loyalty or gratitude or principles of justice. Human relations are viewed like those in the market place.

II. Conventional level

Maintaining the expectations of the relevant community is perceived as valuable in its own right, regardless of consequences. The attitude is not only one of *conformity* to personal expectations and social order, but at a higher level also of *loyalty* to it. The point is to actively maintain, support and justify the order and identify with the persons or groups involved in it.

Stage 3: *The inter-personal concordance or 'good boy – nice girl' orientation.* At this level, goodness and badness is defined in terms of conformity to the prevailing expectations (to what is "natural" or "normal" or otherwise expected behaviour). Intentions – "he means well" – becomes important for the first time. One earns approval by being "nice".

Stage 4: *The 'law and order' orientation.* Right behaviours consists of doing one's duty, showing respect for authority, and maintaining the given social order for its own sake. There is loyalty toward authority, fixed rules, and the maintenance of social order.

III. Critical-reflective level

There is a clear effort to define morality and ethico-political principles which have validity and application apart from the authority of the groups or persons holding these principles, and apart from the individuals own identification with these groups.

Stage 5: *The social-contract legalistic tradition.* This comes generally with utilitarian overtones. There is a clear awareness of the relativism of personal values and opinions and willingness to engage in critical reflection and examination of the basis of general rights and duties and common standards and procedures. The result is an emphasis on the "legal point of view", but with an emphasis on the possibility of changing law in terms of rational considerations of social utility.

Stage 6: *The universal ethical principle orientation.* Right is defined by the decision of conscience in accord with the self-chosen ethical principles appealing to logical comprehensiveness, universality, and consistency. These principles are abstract and ethical (the Golden Rule, the categorical imperative, the original position); they are not concrete moral rules like the Ten Commandments. At heart, these are universal principles of justice, of the reciprocity and equality of human rights, and of respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons.

Adopted, with some modifications, from Kohlberg 1971, 164-5; for a slightly different and substantially more specific formulations, see Kohlberg 1973, 631-2.

Learning → quest for democracy

- Due to moral learning, rules are not anymore taken as something external to individual actors and thus sacred or conventional in the authoritative sense.
- Rather they come to be felt as the free product of mutual agreement and an autonomous conscience.
- Hence, actors come to understand that collective rules are the product of their autonomy and free, mutual agreement → quest for democracy.

Learning → cosmopolitanism

- At the critical-reflexive level of reasoning, morality and general ethico-political principles must have validity and application **independent** from:
 1. the authority of the groups or persons holding these principles; and
 2. apart from the individuals own identification with any particular groups or institutions.
- Critical-reflexive ethico-political orientation thus requires a community of world citizens.

The problem of collective identity

- Collective learning anticipates a **telos** of world history in which all others are recognised and constituted as fully autonomous subjects with a legitimate social standing in relation to the Self.
- This telos can only be realized within the **framework of common planetary institutions**.
- However, global solidarity and common institutions would raise a new problem: can there be any solidarity without a **common identity** at some level of human beingness...?
- Does a shared global political identity and telos imply **different others**, perhaps conceived as negative outsiders?

Some 'othering' is inevitable

- Global-democratic 'self'-determination presupposes a 'we' and 'us'. Who is this 'we'?
- More generally, in human language and reasoning negativity and thus some 'othering' is inevitable.
- Two positive, reconstructive possibilities (there are also more problematical and dangerous possibilities):
 1. Otherness can be located in our own past or, alternatively, in our contemporary being, when seen from a point of view of a possible future position in world history.
 2. Within a higher level identity-in-difference, a co-constitutive and mutually transformative relation between self and others can involve letting many differences just be.

Temporal othering

- Wendt: '[...A] world state could compensate for the absence of spatial differentiation between its present and its past [...]. In Hegelian terms we could say that 'history' becomes the Other in terms of which the global self is defined.'
 - an analogy to truth commissions & history of Germany
- However, it is also possible to imagine a future historian or sociologist looking back at us now
 - arguably, our future historian is likely to identify with the planetary political community as a whole, possibly extending his or her moral horizon even way beyond Earth
 - looking at us/the human past from of a Big History vantage point...
 - common history: imperative to avoid any forms of 'centrism' (Eurocentrism etc).

Rethinking horizontal self-other relations

- **Epistemological axis:** *aiming at better knowledge and understanding about the within-the-humanity differences.*
- **Axiological axis:** *basic moral entitlements are independent of the stage of learning; furthermore, mutual learning is always possible, because learning is not preservative.*
- **Praxiological axis:** *neutrality; indifference; critical responsiveness, with letting some differences just be.*
- Global identity takes the acknowledgement of irreducible differences, however unstable and changing, within itself
 - differences are seen positively as drivers of further human learning – also concerning our place in the wider cosmic scheme of things.

Is a viable WPC possible?

- Yes, it is possible, but only contingently, depending on manifold, multi-layered and complex conditions of legitimation.
- Moreover, although world history may be directed towards planetary integration, it does not follow that the *telos* is known.
- A planetary planetary-scale community and its organizational structures may turn out an emergent phenomenon
 - something that cannot be deduced from *ex ante* reasoning or anticipated in essential aspects and regards, but known, only *ex post* to its emergence.
- Thus the category of 'the state' may – or may not – be misleading
 - what matters is the future process of planetary integration, involving far-reaching (especially green global-Keynesian) political economy reforms, coupled with democratisation in multiple sites of power

Discussion

