

NEITHER ORDER NOR PEACE

A Response to Bruno Latour

Ulrich Beck

Translated by Patrick Camiller

Bruno Latour did me the honor of an astute and detailed critique in the fall 2004 issue of *Common Knowledge*, and I am glad to have the opportunity to respond. In “Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics? Comments on the Peace Terms of Ulrich Beck”—which Latour wrote in response to my essay “The Truth of the Other”—he finds me guilty of a truly remarkable piece of superficiality:

A historical anecdote, retold in a major paper by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, may illustrate why Beck’s suggested approach to peacemaking is not completely up to the task. The main example that Beck gives is the “Valladolid controversy,” the famous *disputatio* that Spaniards held to decide whether or not Indians had souls susceptible of being saved. But while that debate was under way, the Indians were engaged in a no less important one, though conducted with very different theories in mind and very different experimental tools. Their task, as Viveiros de Castro describes it, was not to decide if Spaniards had souls—that much seemed obvious—but rather if the conquistadors had *bodies*. The theory under which Amerindians were operating was that all entities share by default the same fundamental organization, which is basically that of humans. A licuri palm, a peccary, a piranha, a macaw: each has

a soul, a language, and a family life modeled on the pattern of a human (Amerindian) village. Entities all have souls and their souls are all the same. What makes them differ is that their bodies differ, and it is bodies that give souls their contradictory perspectives: the perspective of the licuri palm, the peccary, the piranha, the macaw. Entities all have the same *culture* but do not acknowledge, do not perceive, do not live in, the same *nature*. For the controversialists at Valladolid, the opposite was the case but they remained blissfully unaware that there *was* an opposite side. Indians obviously had bodies like those of Europeans, but did they have the same spirit? Each side conducted an experiment, based on its own premises and procedures: on the one side to determine whether Indians have souls, and on the other side to determine whether Europeans have bodies. . . .

The relevance of this anecdote should be apparent: at no point in the Valladolid controversy did the protagonists consider, even in passing, that the confrontation of European Christians and Amerindian animists might be framed differently from the way in which Christian clerics understood it in the sixteenth century. At no point were the Amerindians asked what issue they took to be in dispute, nor is Beck asking now. . . . As Viveiros de Castro has persuasively shown, the question of “the other,” so central to recent theory and scholarship, has been framed with inadequate sophistication. There are more ways to be other, and vastly more others, than the most tolerant soul alive can conceive.

This argument is apt; that last sentence is especially true. And the more rigorous we are in grasping the symptomatic significance, the more realistic will be the “cosmopolitan realism” that I have suggested. Older varieties of cosmopolitanism have *presupposed* a cosmos that is either naturally or metaphysically common to all, but today we must adopt a much more fundamental, realistic approach. We must ask, first, whether and, second, how—amid the radical oppositions of our currently disintegrating world—it is possible to think that commonality is developing or even, as Latour hopes, that it might be *constructed*. In this light, I would say that Latour overstates the intention of my essay. The misunderstanding is already present in the opening sentence of his critique: I am not, as he suggests, a “peacemaker.” We Europeans are still under the spell of the postwar miracle that made neighbors out of enemies, and we see the revival of wars or world wars as the gravest threat to our new arrangements. Competition to find the ultimate formula for peace was from the beginning an aspect of the European Enlightenment: the long neglected founding text of the contemporary world is Kant’s *Perpetual Peace* (whose title was *ironically* meant since, as Kant says in a prefatory note, it associates the eternal peace of the graveyard with the philosophical regulars at a Dutch tavern of the same name). Today, this historical legacy has found an institutional form in the much bewailed Brussels bureaucracy

and its attempts to solve disputes over milk prices, vote-weighting, and other such matters.

But I am not, myself, speaking with the voice or intent of a peacemaker. The cosmopolitan perspective that I have in mind possesses none of the certainties that sustained Kant's cosmopolitanism, and this loss is no victory; it is a reason for nostalgia and, above all, for realism. My essay did not spell out clearly enough the world of difference between *philosophical* cosmopolitanism (as formulated not only by Kant but also by Descartes, Fichte, Hegel, Husserl, and most recently Niklas Luhmann) and the *realistic* cosmopolitanism of the social sciences and political theory. Therefore, I would like to add two points here to my earlier discussion. First, my realist cosmopolitan argument has developed *after* the certainties of philosophical cosmopolitanism collapsed. And second, we need to ask whether the global responsibility demanded by cosmopolitanism is not plunging the world into new wars.

I

The "first modernity," as I have termed it, rested on the regulative idea of a global political order and on the fundamental principles of Western universalism and rationalism, whose defining statements and historical evolution need not be rehearsed here. I need only underscore the difference between the situation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which marked the transition into the first modernity, and the situation at the beginning of the twenty-first century, during our own transition into the "second modernity." The major thinkers of the first modernity planned out a unified world before it was possible to experience the world as a whole. Whereas today we experience the unity of the world but only in its threatened dismemberment, and we are very far from knowing how to conceptualize that situation. The certainties that, as I say, cosmopolitanism has lost are the "transcendental" ones that helped train philosophical cosmopolitans at the beginning of the first modernity. What drives us today is more like curiosity: we want to track down, list, and explain the practices, side effects, pressures, interdependencies, and dangers that proliferate as evolutionary modernization theories (from those of Durkheim, Marx, and Weber to those of Talcott Parsons and Niklas Luhmann) are falsified by historical experience. Lacking a universalist *conception* of unity, we watch the emergence of an *experiential* unity—a unity experienced from within dismemberment and *as* dismemberment.

On the subject of unity and dismemberment, I would like to outline a set of six theses:

(1) In the paradigm of global modernization, power and knowledge were associated with a world order that would speak, as it were, with the single voice of

Western modernism and rationalism. This paradigm was not that of the Enlightenment, but rather one focused on scientific and technological progress, and on the security and control achievable through modern institutions. This evolutionary paradigm of modernization presupposed that the world was becoming “westernized,” that the division between “the West and the rest” was disappearing. In many respects, however, the exact opposite has been the case. The globalization of industrial forms has abandoned the division of labor and the opposition between core and periphery. For example, in India and South Korea, in the Philippines and not least in China, highly developed islands of industry have appeared that refute the idea of core and periphery as separate realms. Everywhere the advance of industrialization has led to a resegmentation of the world, in which industrial centers of fast and concentrated growth exist alongside productive wastes—not only “out there” in Calcutta, Rio de Janeiro, or Kinshasa, but also in New York, London, and eastern Germany.

(2) Likewise violence—a not inconspicuous feature of modern life—has become uncontrollable as the clarity marking a century of world wars diminishes. Transnational terror networks, as no less a figure than Donald Rumsfeld has observed, are among our “unknown unknowns” and, therefore, I have been arguing, individual states, no matter how powerful, are no longer in a position to fulfill the basic promise to guarantee the safety of their citizens. At the same time, ubiquitous global problems are fusing the two hemispheres of our planet. The unity and dismemberment of the world are becoming equally palpable realities, as they span spatial, ethnic, political, and social distances and destroy the hope for a global order that was the basis of the first modernity.

(3) After some two centuries of expansive modernization, the claim that global modernization would result in orderly regimes within a unifying world has been proved false. Legitimacy and rule, which for Max Weber were united in the forms of accountability, responsibility, and democracy, are increasingly dissociated. The nation-state, in which legitimacy and rule are supposed to be combined, has yet to deal with the largely autonomous transnational practices of control within international organizations, networks, and movements, and within the system of banking and commerce, all of which elude the forms of national sovereignty.

(4) Global mobility has both undergone and contributed to dramatic reversals. In the early twentieth century, massive emigration from Europe to the Americas (and to a lesser extent to Africa, Asia, and elsewhere) served to maintain the existing order within as well as beyond Europe. For it was population growth that endangered the European order of the time. Since then, the direction of the flow has been reversed so that the world’s poor now head for Europe and have made it a locus for tensions that used to be sealed off from Europe geographically. Moreover, the European population has registered a general decline and under-

gone an aging process that both saps the foundations of social welfare programs and makes the “old Europe” appear really too old in the competition with newly rising peoples and countries of the world.

(5) In the twentieth century, national states were the tamers and mediators of globalization. It was precisely their promise to manage global dependency and integration within an ever more closely knit world that led to the heyday of national politics. Today, interestingly, smaller countries are more capable than large ones of managing their role in global politics, and large countries are more capable in some areas (ecology, technology) than in others (taxation, social policy). The usefulness of nation-states is brought into question now that genuine change occurs in networks and movements outside their control and now that states are unable to contain the risks generated by the process of globalization.

(6) Finally, movements of criticism and protest have fundamentally changed. Movements against the *very idea* of global integration have turned quietly into conflicts over the *conditions* for it. The issue is no longer *whether* to integrate the world but *how and through whom* the norms will be established to define the autonomy, loyalty, and identity of persons, countries, states, and even natures. Everywhere, the question is posed, whether implicitly or explicitly: how will cohesion be possible in a high-risk, unpredictable world of technologically constructed multiple modernities (and multiple antimodernities)?

II

This unpredicted mix of unification and dismemberment is not the only new condition that realistic cosmopolitans like myself (and Bruno Latour?) must now face. The cosmopolitanism that apparently leads to recognition and protection of the rights of others makes war more likely by giving it the imprimatur of virtue. At the end of the bipolar world order, it was hoped that a cosmopolitan idyll would ensue and that the nations would join hands in peaceful coexistence beneath the canopy of international law. Today, at the beginning of the third millennium, such hopes have collapsed: not peace and legal order but unregulated small-scale violence marks our emergent second modernity. Instead of the Cold War, we have terrorism, the war on terror, and wars in the name of human rights. We have stepped into a trap entailing double blackmail. If you are against humanitarian intervention, then you are for ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. If you are against ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, you must approve of the new “peace wars.” Ours is now a military humanism.

The law of reflexive modernization also applies to the dynamic of violence. The boundaries between what seemed to be anthropologically secure dualities—peace and war, civil society and armed forces, friend and enemy, crime and war, police and military—have become confused. Instead of *either-ors*, we now have

*both-and*s: war and peace simultaneously, the military acting as police, and the police defending national security, operations definable as both crimes and acts of war, civilians behaving like soldiers, and soldiers doing civilian jobs. War (if war is what we have now) is becoming postnational and blurs familiar boundaries: human rights are defended by invading national armies on foreign soil, and the control of global terror is in the hands of individual nation-states.

Humanitarian law empowers the powerless within individual states, but it also exposes powerless states to attack by powerful ones. Weber dealt with political legitimacy only in the state's internal context. But the human rights regime now transcends the boundary between internal and external: a state's internal actions can be questioned and deemed illegitimate by other states. The human rights regime overrules the standard of exclusive legitimation within the context of individual countries and overrules as well the standard of exclusive state legitimation. A new *both/and* is introduced: state action must achieve legitimacy both through internal (national) and external (international) consent, yet the criteria applicable in external relations differ from those that apply to internal relations. The human rights regime thus produces a human rights geography—a new geography of power.

In everyday Western vocabulary, a variety of perverse concepts is in circulation. The “disarming of states” means wars for disarmament. A “just war” is only a war to end wars. The concept of “humanitarian intervention” is meant to act as a tranquilizer; those who swallow it forget that even a war for peace will have to be *fought*. The term “global police” is soothing to some because domestic police in the West guarantee that internal peace is maintained through the rule of law and the carefully measured application of force. But the players in what must be termed “global internal politics” are different from those in domestic politics. The role of “world policeman” is played by an alliance of states that now views what states have always done—wage war on each other—as merely a “police function.”

What these apparent anomalies add up to is that the antinomy of war and peace is no longer sustainable. The right to banish war can be asserted only by means of war. Many have raised the demand that disarmament should begin with the arms industry. An excellent idea, but who is to enforce it? Who is to ensure that the arms industry actually would be disarmed, and that weapons production would be prosecuted as a criminal act? The demand that states should be disarmed is incoherent: states and international organizations must arm themselves in order to disarm other states. Does not disarming a state entail necessarily that the plural state monopoly on violence be cancelled by violent means? And is not that plural state monopoly then replaced with a centralized global monopoly on force—a force that, circumstances permitting, enjoys the legitimacy of a global army represented as a “world police force” against which all resistance

is excluded? The distinction that we need to draw between emancipatory and despotic cosmopolitanism is problematic, to say the least. What begins as cosmopolitanism can turn easily into its opposite: the anticosmopolitan claim that the interests of others, properly understood, can and must be asserted against their own understanding and preference.

I agree with Latour that the peace formulas associated with cosmopolitanism disclose that cosmopolitan thinking is at the present time shallow. The theory of cosmopolitics has been formulated in moral and legal philosophy much more than in political theory, and not at all in ecological theory or the theory of relations between nature and society. This disciplinary matrix helps explain the shallowness of cosmopolitan thinking up until now, as well as a second defect: the positing of the world of states as largely invariant. The ideas of political and normative cosmopolitanism can never be realized through mere addition, as though they formed the superstructure on a hypothetically invariant base. And yet icing is all that superficial cosmopolitanism intends to be. The distinction between philosophical and realistic cosmopolitanism that I develop in my recent book *Der kosmopolitische Blick* might take us a little farther here. In any case, the cosmopolitanism that I outlined and recommended in “The Truth of the Other” is not—I hope that Bruno Latour will understand—the cosmopolitanism whose ramifications we have until now faced in political and normative philosophy and theory.