



The Double Outside of the Modern International*

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We live amidst competing claims about change and transformation, especially claims about globalisms, localisms, regionalisms and multiple challenges to the authority of the modern state. These challenges are intricately entwined with claims about new engagements with, and legitimations of, mass violence.

Perhaps the most disconcerting of these claims suggests that political life does not always occur where the traditions of the modern sovereign state tell us it *must* occur. This is ultimately what is at stake, for example, in claims that accounts of ‘the global’ or ‘the imperial’ provide a better ground on which to think about politics than do either the sovereign state or even the *polis*: the two models of a spatially bounded community within which we have come to assume that political possibility might head in the right direction, towards justice, towards enlightenment, towards emancipation, despite all setbacks, all corruptions, all disasters. Violence persists, but not in the forms in which we have come to expect it, and not, especially, in the supposedly obsolete forms enacted as wars between sovereign states.

Consequently, we suspect that what we call politics must be becoming something other than what we expect it to be as an expression of the necessities and possibilities of the sovereign state. If the location of political life is unclear, the character and perhaps the very possibility of political life is unclear also. This suggests, not least, that we are no longer who we have come to think we are: no longer simply the citizens of states that give us our primary political identity; no longer simply members of cultures or communities whose contours are sharply defined by the territorial borders of modern states; no longer political subjects with some expectation that our citizenships within such statist communities might enable us to be properly modern human beings despite the degree to which a modern statist politics expresses such profound antagonisms between claims to citizenship and claims to humanity.

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Almost all the hard questions of our time therefore converge on the status of borders: of boundaries, distinctions, discriminations, inclusions, exclusions, beginnings, endings, limitations and exceptions, and on their authorization by subjects who are always susceptible to inclusion or exclusion by the borders they are persuaded to authorize. We may know that borders are always complex places. We may know that the borders of any modern state are always more complicated than the clean lines of cartographic representation tend to suggest. Many sociological, economic, or cultural analyses can tell us this. The image of clean lines nevertheless prevails as a regulative ambition of modern political life. We belong here. You belong there. They belong elsewhere. We may let you in. They will be sent home. Everyone must know their place, not just in the hierarchies of status, class and social order, but literally in horizontal or territorial space.

That the established boundaries of modern political life are in trouble is an increasingly familiar cliché. Discussions of boundaries are especially shaped by clichéd claims about continuing presence or impending absence, by competing claims that the boundaries of the modern territorial state are likely to be with us for the imaginable future or are already disappearing as a consequence of movements and globalizations that make boundaries functionally redundant. Yet while many established boundaries may be less significant than they were, it is not at all obvious that boundaries are becoming any less significant in our political lives. Clichés of presence and absence only detract from our capacity to make sense of the increasing complexity, the spatiotemporal disarticulation and rearticulation, of borders, limits, practices of inclusion and exclusion and declaration of exceptions. We need to pay greater attention to the transformation of borders, and to be more sensitive to the relatively limited vocabulary and conceptual resources through which we try to make sense of our contemporary limitations.

Despite the clichés, we can be fairly certain that our futures will not be played out in ways enabled and governed by the convergence of the boundaries and limits of political life upon the territorial boundaries of the modern state, nor by any simple disappearance of such boundaries and limits in the white heat of some linear globalization. Indeed, we can be fairly sure that the boundaries and limits of modern political life will neither remain where, and as, they are assumed to have been, nor fade away. Nevertheless, we can also be fairly sure that the assumed convergence between boundaries in territorial space and boundaries in law – boundaries that together affirm the limits of political life within and between modern states – will come under increasing challenge. If this is the case, however, the changing relationship between politics and boundaries will require a lot more critical engagement, a lot more analysis of what boundaries and limits do, and a lot more analysis of what happens at those sites in space and in time where the modern political imagination has come to believe that hardly anything happens at all.

Some come to this material empirically. I come to it with explicitly theoretical intentions; with a sense, that is, that if it is the case that statist forms of political life are being put into suspicion by the multiple dynamics that have made claims about the global and the imperial so plausible in some contexts, as at least markers of processes that remain vague and indeterminate, the statist categories to which contemporary political analysis remains so deeply indebted must be put into suspicion also. I also come to it through a specific cultural orientation, one concerned with accounts of boundaries and limits privileged by specifically modern traditions of political possibility

and necessity. This is not because of any insensitivity to the dangers of ethnocentrism when speaking about any form of political analysis that lays claim to be able to speak about the world, or the global, or the international – all much more difficult terms than they often made to seem. It is because of the importance of understanding how hegemonic discourses of modernity so easily seduce us into thinking that we can engage with others across the border only to leave us reproducing thoroughly modern accounts of what those others *must* be. While I am aware that modernity has come to be understood in relation to claims about the achievement of specific forms of subjectivity, it seems to me to be at least, and perhaps more, important to emphasise instead the way certain practices of distinction, discrimination, or ‘drawing the line’ have been authorized so as to produce what is on either side of the borders that modern political life has come to take for granted. Modern political analysis has become reasonably proficient in its accounts of what happens on either side of modern borders, but has preferred to take those borders for granted as the condition under which it might be reasonably proficient in its accounts of what happens on either side of them.

It is in this context that I want to make four broad points. First, I want to draw attention to the always doubled outsides that are at work in what we have come to call the international. This theme will be familiar to anyone who has examined the historical production of modern accounts of individual subjectivity, a subjectivity that produces its own exteriority as object but only on the condition that this subject capable of objectivity is first distinguished from any more general world outside of its subjective and objective self. The world of modern subjectivity and objectivity, or interiority and exteriority, already assumes its own distinction from some world outside of itself. There is consequently always an assumed outside to the production of modern subjectivities capable of objectivity, an outside that must be excluded so as to permit the modern self to know itself in relation to its own understanding of what objectivity, indeed the world as such, must be. This is a theme that really needs to be taken up in relation to the way modernity came to be constituted as a world apart from all other worlds, from all other ways of being and all other forms of authorization, in space and in time. Here, a few brief comments will have to suffice.¹

Second, while this doubled outside is most familiar in relation to the construction of specifically modern accounts of subjectivity and, in more explicitly political terms, to the framing of friends and enemies inside and outside the modern state, it also works in relation to what might be called the outside of the international. On the face of it, this is a phrase that makes little sense. Surely, it might be said, there can be nothing outside the international because the international encompasses everything that is within the modern world. International relations, in this view, is just a synonym for world politics. This is indeed a regulative assumption of modern political life. It expresses a claim that the world has now been brought within the world of modernity, that modernization, as a linear and teleological history, has turned everyone into modern subjectivities each subject to authorities enacted within the modern international. Nevertheless, even if we were to accept this reading of history as History, there must remain a nagging question about what, and whom, has been left outside of this process of internationalization as internalization.

1 For one recent engagement with this large theme, see Fasolt (2004).

Third, some of the most troubling questions about modern political life over the past century or so have been posed in relation to ways in which the doubled outside of the modern state generate logics of exceptionalism; that is, logics of politics at the limit of what is taken to be normal or legal. This is where questions about boundaries shift from simple geographical or administrative description, or philosophical elucidation, to questions about political authority, about sovereign capacities to authorize discriminations and to make judgements about the legitimacy of making an exception. Yet it is important to keep in mind that the limits of modern political life are articulated not only at the territorial boundaries of the modern state, as almost all modern critical political analysis has tended to assume, but at the boundaries of the modern international, even though it is far from clear where, or when, these boundaries are supposed to be.

Fourth, if, as everyone knows, the boundaries of modern political life are in trouble, then the relations between the limits of modern subjectivity, the modern state and the modern international must be undergoing rather profound spatiotemporal rearticulation. This is not a rearticulation that will be captured very easily by the kinds of linear and teleological accounts of modernization that find expression in most accounts of 'globalization' or 'empire.' Those accounts are precisely correlated with the production of an array of subjectivities that have been brought within the modern international, laid flat upon a spherical planet that has nevertheless been left outside the world of modern political life.

The easiest way of thinking about relations between the commonalities and differences among people and peoples is to allow one's imagination to be guided by the equation of the claim to culture with the claim to nation, then by the equation of the claim to nation with the claim to the sovereign state, and then by the equation of state sovereignty with all forms of sovereignty. There are other starting points. We could start from various other claims about histories, ethnicities, traditions and ways of life, especially those involving the concept of 'civilization'; or with the way culture might be understood as a process rather than as an achieved condition, as a verb rather than a noun, as hybridization rather than pure form, as contingency rather than necessity, as a matter of cultivations rather than of naturally given essences. Nevertheless, the purchase of the claims of the modern nation state on all claims about culture and authorization have been overwhelming, and in many respects remain so.

They remain overwhelming even though it is not difficult to conclude that any pure form of nation state is difficult to find anywhere except, crucially, as the regulative ambition for a specifically modern form of political community. The empirical world is always untidy, messy, always in excess of what it is supposed to be. Still, claims about what it is supposed to be can never be underestimated, and the regulative ideal of the modern nation state certainly exerts considerable force upon all claims about what it means to speak about both culture and cultures, and the possibilities of cultivating

relations among them. Various things can be said about this model of modern cultural life.

It is, to begin with, the official position of states everywhere, the assumption that permits the state to give voice to its claims to subjectivity and authority, its claims to be able to speak on behalf of a particular people. It is, in effect, a possibility condition for any state to be able to participate in the modern system of states. At a minimum, states need to be recognised as states, as having an effective sovereignty (thus 'failed states' are not allowed), though the minimum is subject to fairly expansive interpretation (so that, say, only 'properly democratic' are states allowed). Different states may articulate the claim in different ways. Some speak as federal institutions, allowing differences in culture to be expressed through distinctions in territorial space. Some speak on behalf of culturally identified majorities while making special provision for ethnically identified minorities or peoples of aboriginal status. Some worry about the status of immigrants or the dangers of religious differentiation. Some could care less about questions of culture, or identity, as long as the claim to nation works as an efficient mechanism of state building and population control.

As the official position of states everywhere, this model gives expression to the most basic philosophical concepts and contradictions of modernity as a specific cultural form, in three primary respects. It expresses a specific framing of an opposition between matter and consciousness, and especially a framing of the state as an expression of 'power' that nevertheless gives rise to the expression of 'values,' the national values of a specific people or culture, in the singular. It thereby expresses a specific framing of all relations of universality and particularity, especially through the modern states system understood as the embodiment both of a universally conceived, or at least universalizing, expression of humanity, in the singular, and of the sovereign nation state as the pluralistic expression of particular peoples and cultures. It is in this sense, for example, that the Charter of the United Nations identifies us as "We the peoples of the United Nations," as the (potentially) one people, understood as humanity, encompassing many peoples/nations enabling their citizens to become properly human. Finally, it also expresses a specific spatiotemporality within which it is possible to imagine the framing of all relations of universality and particularity within a horizontal, territorialized array of sovereign nation-states within a system of states. Crucially, this framing of the spatiotemporality of modern political life involves a specific framing of the relationship between specifically modern ways of life and all its supposed others, whether this relationship is written as an historical break with the premodern, or as a geographical break with those others, the colonized or other civilizations, who must be brought in – and I emphasise this notion of bringing in, of subjectivization – to the authoritative structures of modern authorization. I say all this quickly while recognising that it is to say a lot; to say many things that need to be unpacked, and to demand an unpacking that would take some considerable time and expertise to unpack, not least in relation to Michel Foucault's distinction between 'classical' and 'biopolitical' forms of sovereignty, for example. However, my present purposes are quite limited, and this simpler formulation must suffice.

Putting these observations together – the notion that it is the state/nation that is the obvious expression of culture and that this notion expresses the philosophical and

political phenomenon we call modernity suggests – leads to a third set of claims. Namely that despite the heavily statist character of most accounts of modernity, this is a form of existence that has to be understood in relation to the claims of the modern international: as one modern world/many cultures, even though some of these cultures/states might be characterised as somehow ‘premodern’ or even ‘postmodern.’ While I would certainly admit, and even insist, that such a claim is much too simple, and that it overrides too many historical and geographical complexities, the modern international effectively expresses the prevailing ideology of our time.

To say this is also to say a lot. Not least is it to offer an indictment of most of the academic disciplines that have worked so hard either to exclude questions about the international or, perhaps worse, to assume that they can deal with the international simply by thinking of the international as something like a state but on a bigger scale, with the literature on globalization offering many prominent examples. To make matters worse, while there is a discipline or sub-discipline that deals explicitly with the international, this has largely been pre-occupied with the specific concerns of American foreign policy as well as extremist forms of positivistic epistemology and utilitarian axiology. Indeed it is worth reflecting on the ways in which modern academic disciplines express claims about the international, so that the disciplines of the inside, especially political theory and sociology, seem to be radically disconnected from the disciplines of the outside, from international relations as the discipline of externality and alterity in space and anthropology as the discipline of externality and alterity in time. Such distinctions seem increasingly archaic as we begin to come to terms with uncertainties about where is in and where is out.

The modern international offers four fairly obvious ways in which to think about relations among cultures and peoples. First, it suggests that the primary form taken by differences in culture is the friend/enemy relation that is said to characterise relations between states: the existentialist or essentialist assertion of self and its negation that we might find theorised in, say, Max Weber’s account of a nationalist power-state, Carl Schmitt’s account of sovereignty as a capacity to decide exceptions, or Edward Said’s account of the production of orientalisms. Difference is understood as a dialectical relation between reason and unreason, norm and exception or affirmation and negation, a relation that can be driven to the limit condition at which lines are drawn and violence is deemed necessary. Second, as a response to the dangers of such moves, relations between cultures can be understood as a site of diplomatic mediation between friends and enemies, a mediation involving recognition, dialogue, hermeneutics, negotiation and accommodation, though one that is always open to a form of exceptionalism that declares certain forms of cultural life to be beyond the bounds of acceptability. Cultures, like states, we might say, have to be of a certain form in order to have status within the community of diplomats. Third, there must be no reduction of (legitimate) differences in order to attain universality, for otherwise we arrive not at a states system, an international, but at an empire, whether understood as ‘humanity’ or ‘imperium.’ The point of the modern international, crucially, is to allow for diversity within unity, not

the erasure of diversity so as to attain unity. In this sense, the modern international is part of the construction of the modern subject, the subject that is supposedly free because it is subject to the authority that makes its supposed freedom possible, to the state that is sovereign because it is subject to the necessities of systemic behaviour that make state sovereignty possible. Finally, it affirms that the regulative ambition for attaining self-determination, for attaining freedom in the Kantian sense, must be achieved through History as a universalizing teleology; or through resistance to such a universalizing teleology. The key theorist of the modern international in this sense is not Hobbes, the usual culprit, but Kant, the Kant who offers a vision of autonomy, of the possibility of thinking and therefore being for oneself, on the condition that universal reason is internalized within the modern subject, and that everyone comes into the world of modernity, becomes the mature creatures capable of recognizing and realizing the universal within themselves.

Kant is often seen as the nice guy, the apostle of a possible peace among nations. Kant, I would rather say, is an uncertain and ambivalent figure but in some of his guises represents not a hope for the future but precisely the problem expressed by claims about the modern international. One crucial reason for this is that Kant expresses the highest hopes of modern reason, and especially for a particular conception of human freedom. But unlike some of the most influential claimants to a Kantian heritage, Kant is at least upfront about the conditions under which this freedom might be achieved. Condition one, we might say, is the necessity for conflict between potentially free sovereign jurisdictions (so that war is understood to be a force driving modern subjectivities towards a perpetual peace). Condition two is the double necessity of bringing the universal into the particular within the modern and the bringing into the modern of all other peoples/people who can then come to maturity, to a modern subjecthood of universality within particularity, in History. This is the famous linear history that brings us modernization, the teleology that might eventually lead to the modern international as an expression of peace rather than of war – the condition not of diplomacy so much as of the parallel universes of similarity in difference, of autonomous subjectivities, that is the regulative narrative of the modern international.

I am putting the matter this way in the hope that it will convey a sense that there is a rather large conceptual problem here. It is a problem that is both obvious and yet difficult to take seriously. The general problem is that claims about the international work as if they are claims about the world as such, or at least about the totality of humanity that is to be found all over the world. This problem finds two primary expressions, both involving quite profound contradictions, and adding up to the way international relations cannot in fact be a synonym for world politics.

First, the international cannot be considered to be an expression of any totality of humanity in any political sense in that what we understand politics to be is famously statist, nationalist, a matter of the *polis*, the specific political community. One might talk about Plato and Aristotle in this respect, or try to find much about anything other

than the state in the writings of the canonical political theorists from Machiavelli to Weber, or even to Foucault. Less obviously, one might try to come to terms with the struggle between the competing claims of state sovereignty as the most principled modern expression of this canonical understanding of where and what politics must be, on the one hand, and the claims of systemic necessity expressed in international law, on the other; a necessity that finds contemporary expression in claims about humanitarian intervention and so on, as well as in the more sinister claims about the necessity of empire that have emerged from the current US administration.

At the heart of modern politics is a classical *aporia*, an undecidability, and thus a negotiation about how precisely the competing claims of state sovereignty and systemic necessity are to be resolved, with many of the key articles of the UN Charter offering the standard account of what this resolution must look like. The details become complex here, and probably need to be understood in relation both to sixteenth and seventeenth century accounts of the contradictory relations between claims to human and claims to humanity and to the reworking of these contradictions found in the contrasting positions expressed by Schmitt and Hans Kelsen in the 1920s and 1930s.² It is at the very least necessary to understand that what we have with the modern international is not an easy identification of the international with all the people's of the world, an easy synonym of international relations and world politics, but a massive contestation over whether it is the international (international law as law, in Kelsen's terms) that has authority over sovereign states or sovereign states that are to be seen as the highest authority within their own territory (as having the capacity to decide the exception within the particularity of statist law, in Schmittean terms). Any analysis of modern politics that is concerned with only one side of this aporetic relationship must fail to understand the dynamics of modern politics, and will consequently either pose a dualistic choice between particularity and universality or tell us stories about the way we are already embarked on a journey from particularity to universality, or to cosmopolis, or to globalization, or to empire.

Given the aporetic relation between state sovereignty and the demands of the states system that makes any claim to state sovereignty possible, such a journey is impossible. International relations cannot be read simply as a structure of particularities that might eventually be transformed into a universalizing world politics. If the international is under challenge, as I certainly think it is, it is because the relationship between universality and particularity that it expresses is under challenge, and it is this relationship – and the boundaries through which its contradictory form is negotiated – that must be in question. The standard stories about an historical shift from the particularities of state sovereignty to the universality of some sort of world or global politics simply play out a metaphysics centred on the presence or absence of the state and ignore the existence of the international entirely.

Second, while much of what we so easily call the world has been brought into the modern international, this has only been achieved through powerful processes of exclusion. We talk easily about 'the expansion of international society,' much as we

2 I am thinking here especially of formulations expressed in Schmitt (1922) and Kelsen (1974; 1992).

still talk easily about ‘development’ in³ much the same way that Cold War ideologues once spoke about ‘the stages of economic growth.’⁴

In this context, it is worth recalling the way Thomas Hobbes constructed his famous account of the contractual constitution of the modern sovereign state, the constitution that so many have taken to be the paradigmatic expression of what it means to engage with the world of international relations. It is worth recalling because it is so firmly rooted in an account of the here and now, in accounts of what it means to speak of the free and equal modern man whose troubles Hobbes nevertheless projects to some other time and place in order to construct both a myth of origins and a narrative about how humanity might be turned into properly modern subjects, brought back into the world of the modern sovereign state in another form.⁵

Starting with a radical account of the present, Hobbes projects back in space and time. Yet this projection never reaches quite as far as infinity, never quite as far as an absolute origin or an absolute alterity. In this way, he leaves an outside to the space and time that is projected out as the limit of the modern world. This story is then run backwards, though apparently forwards, from back then and out there on to the here and now of the modern sovereign state. Serious logical puzzles beset this curious yet rhetorically elegant move. If it is possible to imagine contractual agreement among modern men who are in the impossible condition in which he portrays them, then the initial condition could not possibly be as impossible as he claims. Conversely, if the initial condition really was as impossible as he suggests, then contractual agreement seems equally impossible, unless some quite extraordinary conditionality is imposed, some mixture of reason and fear applied in the mere moment in time when impossibility turns to possibility, and modern history as a leap from anarchy to order is affirmed as a story of origins that enables the sovereign authorization of all origins, all limits and everything that must come in between.

The consequence of Hobbes’ narrative is not only one of the key legitimization stories of the modern state but a story that both produces and rests upon a double outside. There is the world that is constructed as the spatiotemporal other of the here and now, the world that Hobbes imagines as a negation of the prototypical modern (liberal) man; and the world that always lies outside this specific construction of man and its constitutive negations. Hobbes, like most accounts of international relations, seems to affirm a highly spatialized and structuralist account of the modern world, but in the first instance they both affirm a theory of history, a process of bringing the world into the modern while only tacitly acknowledging some world beyond from which the world might be envisaged within the world of the modern. The international is precisely modern in the sense that it reproduces the doubled outsides of all modern subjectivities. It is a pattern we might recognise from the ways in which ‘nature’ has been excluded (been disenchanted, in Weberian terms) and then constructed as a category within modern cultures of (scientific) understanding, or from the force of Kant’s sceptical stance

3 Bull and Watson (1984)

4 Rostow (1960).

5 Hobbes (1991); especially chapters 11, 13 and 1.

towards the world of phenomena that can be known only through the imposition of subjectivity, whether transcendently guaranteed or not.

Thus in the most abstract terms, the modern international works through the authorization of three sites of authorized discrimination: at the boundary of the modern individual subject, at the boundary of the modern sovereign state, and at the boundary of the modern system of sovereign states. Contemporary critical analysis is quite familiar with the boundaries of the subject and the state. Yet there are also times, places and subjectivities that, theories of modernization insist, must be brought back in from their exclusions from a modernity expressed in the sovereign state and system of sovereign states, even though that state and system work only because modern sovereignty affirms the necessity of exclusion. As with Hobbes' narrative about spatiotemporal origins constructed from an assumed present, or Kant's aspiration for a perpetual peace enabled by a distinction between the mature and the immature, claims about state sovereignty and the system of sovereign states only work because they affirm an absence that guarantees their assumed presence.⁶

It is easy enough to conclude that this is scarcely of any contemporary relevance. Surely modernization and globalization have proceeded apace. Surely we now are all one humanity. Surely we have all come in. Surely there is no longer an outside to modernity, and its internal outside has become coextensive with the world as such. Surely it is no longer legitimate for colonial states to intervene in their colonies just because the colonies are not yet mature enough to determine their own fate. Surely the gap between the finite and the infinite expressed in modern thinkers like Hobbes and Kant could only be of distinctly esoteric theoretical interest. Such assumptions are no doubt entirely persuasive as long as linear accounts of history and the self-affirmation of modernity as distinct from all its others are taken for granted. This is, after all, the official story, one that entire literatures of critical analysis are quite happy to endorse. Nevertheless, such assumptions are, I think, a matter for considerable concern. They are of concern in conceptual, empirical and ethical terms, and now perhaps especially in terms of uncertainties about where the boundaries of the modern world are to be located, and how those boundaries now work.

6 One of the key achievements of Hobbes' story about a shift from a state of nature to a political society is to enable a conflation of the two modes of alterity framed as civilization/barbarism, on the one hand, and friend/enemy on the other. A related conflation is effected by the primary tropes of modern nationalism, as Weber's account of the play of reason and ungrounded decision, and neo-Weberian accounts of 'the invention of tradition', suggest very persuasively. In effect, a logic of colonization, of the relations between those societies that are modern enough to be included within a modern system of states and those which are not, is superimposed on the logic of the modern states system itself. Paradoxically, resistance to colonization has largely involved various appeals to a statist nationalism, which Partha Chatterjee has rightly identified as a 'coopted discourse' involving, in Ashis Nandy's terms, 'intimate enemies.' See Chatterjee (1986); and Nandy (1983).

It is significant conceptually because while claims about the problems and possibilities inherent in what we now call the international are usually understood in terms of a spatially defined pattern of conflict or anarchy, they must be understood first in terms of a specific temporality, a theory of history as a process of internalization, of subjectivization, as the process of bringing the world into the world of the modern while excluding all other worlds. Attempts to think about 'change' in this context invariably deploy claims about temporality against claims about a dominant spatiality, whereas the international already expresses an account of a temporality that enables claims about a spatiality. To try to think about what it might mean to envisage change is presumably to challenge a specific articulation of spatiotemporal relations, and not least the account of a linear and internalizing history that is at work in the modern international. There are thus serious conceptual problems involved in trying to find a way 'outside' of a modern politics that has been constituted through an ambition to bring the world 'inside' while largely refusing to acknowledge the logical impossibility of a pure theory of internalization.

It is significant in more empirical terms because so much of humanity is in some sense outside the modern inside/outside of the international. The story of modern politics is a story of a pattern of inclusion and exclusion within a modern system of states, within the international. We are all the same, as humanity, but all different, as members of different national cultures: We are the ambivalent people/peoples of the United Nations. But this story of inclusion and exclusion enabling a story about universality and particularity has been possible only as a consequence of differentiating the modern from the non-modern, and authorizing that differentiation through an appeal to a teleology of a universalizing history. Some people, we know all too well, are not treated as properly modern, even as not properly human. In this context, we might think about, say, those indigenous peoples who are driven to seek sovereignty over territory but are encouraged to seek the kind of sovereignty expressed by the modern state that works precisely as a demand for inclusion in a specifically modern system of inclusions/exclusions; or about cultural, ethnic and other sorts of⁷ communities that are encouraged either to emulate the nation state as the only serious political expression of cultural politicization or to find some subordinate status within an acceptable pattern of statist nationalisms; or about those who are effectively marginalized as mere objects of state power rather than as citizens of states by virtue of their poverty and irrelevance to modern capitalist forms of production, distribution and exchange; or about those who are effectively marginalized as negations of the officially sanctioned ideal of the modern citizen understood as the universally rational man.

Add up the populations that are claimed to live within the jurisdictions of the modern international and the claim that the international gives expression to the whole of humanity has some plausibility. Engage in any more sophisticated calculation of who precisely gets to participate in the world of the modern international and the picture is anything but clear-cut. Of course, the usual story is that we will all get there eventually, that all will be included, all made properly modern citizens: that modernity will eventually trickle down in economic terms even if Kantian aspirations for a world of morally autonomous subjectivities is assumed to be a bit too ambitious unless good

7 Shaw (2002); Inayatullah and Blaney (2004); Fabian (1983).

modern liberals use force to ensure that everyone enjoys a freedom to be modern. This is the promise of modernization as universal history. Yet any story of inclusion implies a story of exclusion, both stories hinging on the authorization of discriminations, of decisions about who should be in and who should be out, and under what conditions. The official stories all tell tales of inclusion. But official stories about the inclusions of the sovereign state and system of sovereign states systematically erase the complex patterns of exclusion that have enabled official stories of inclusion. Perhaps one would not expect them to do anything else, but then we might say that scholarly analyses of political life hardly count as scholarly if they simply take the official stories at their word.

It is significant in more ethical terms precisely because historical forms of and assumptions about exclusion work so as to constitute specific forms of inclusion. The constitution of modern subjects who aspire to a Kantian form of autonomy as a regulative ideal may well express the most inspiring ambition of modern political life, but it is an aspiration that works not only within the limits of states within a system of ostensibly free and equal states but also as a claim to historical and moral superiority over those who have been excluded. At the statist limits of Kantian ambition we meet Schmitt. Legal provisions may be derogated or suspended within the rule of law, but the rule of law may itself be suspended through a decision of the sovereign power that acts both within and without the law. At the systemic limits of Kantian ambition we meet all the residual – and constitutive – discriminations marking modernity as a self-affirming but necessarily parochial way of being in but not of being coextensive with the world.

Perhaps it is most significant in contemporary circumstances, however, in that it is no longer quite so easy to keep apart the spatial framing of a politics of friend-enemy relations between sovereign states within a system of states and a temporal framing of a politics of modernity and its others at the edge of the modern international. Indeed, the spatial and the temporal framings of modern politics have become increasingly blurred. In this respect, the so called Global War on Terror has been characterized by a distinctively sovereign capacity to declare exceptions, but the singularity expressed in the terms global, war and terror obscures the multiplicities and complexities of conflicts in which spatial and temporal tropes are deployed in ever more disconcerting ways.⁸

It matters, this is to say, because we seem to be in the midst of some rearticulation of the international. By this I am not referring to ‘globalization,’ a term that I take to be less than helpful as a way of understanding contemporary trajectories, but to a serious destabilization of the assumption that the international does indeed enclose the world of humanity, and that the teleology of modernization expresses a legitimate story about the way that enclosure has been enacted and sustained.

It is rather striking that to the extent that critical analysis of the relationship between territorial boundaries and the limits that are expressed as a capacity to decide exceptions has been broached in the recent critical literature, it has done so in a way that falls back on an entirely statist account of modern politics. Symptomatically, for example, both Giorgio Agamben and Hardt and Negri, have managed to reconstitute an opposition

8 Walker (2003).

between a Schmittean account of the specific exception enacted with the law of a particular sovereign state and an account of a generalized exceptionalism predicated on a more or less apocalyptic vision of contemporary spatiotemporalities of the kind once expressed by Walter Benjamin, among many others. The revival of a concern with practices of exceptionalism does seem to me to be very important, especially as a way of thinking about what is happening to contemporary boundaries and claims about the limits of modern liberal aspiration. But the specific forms taken by this sort of revival misses two very large points.

First, in posing a simple opposition between the particular and the general, it continues to fetishize the claims of the modern state while ignoring the systemic conditions under which those claims are possible. The consequent debate is thus drawn into a familiar ritual of presence and absence. Both the state and its boundaries are either here today or gone tomorrow. Liberal traditions have been busy with this sort of story for a long time, in a way that betrays many liberal hopes for the abolition of politics and its replacement with some sort of ethics or some sort of market governmentality. Quite why analysis of a capacity to decide exceptions should imitate this sort of story is not entirely clear, but the repudiation of politics it implies strikes me as similarly dangerous.

Second, both the modern sovereign state and the modern system of states, with all their antagonisms and contrapuntal exceptionalisms, presuppose a prior exceptionalism at the border of the states system, at the border of modernity. The modern game of war and peace among states, and the framing of otherness as a matter of friends and enemies in a states system is enabled by an exceptionalism at the edge of the states system; hence the continuing significance of Kant's treatment of rationality as norm and immaturity as exception, and Hobbes account of the present as norm and the spatiotemporally distant as the exception that must be overcome by a return to the eternal yet perfectible present.

Modern political life has been expressed through two tropes working in tandem but in two different contexts. There has been the trope of friend and enemy *within* the international: the trope of war and peace among those sovereign states that are mature enough to engage in such things. And there has been the trope of civilized and barbarian that can be applied to colonial or developing states who ought to be coming into the international. At the height of the Cold War, remember, the reigning categories appealed to an East and West conceived as Schmittean friends and enemies, on the one hand, and to North and South conceived as a progressivist continuum, and journey, from the developing to the developed societies. These two tropes can still be distinguished, but they have increasingly become fused, and deployable anywhere. This does not suggest, for example, that the so called war of terror can be understood as a shift to a condition of a generalized exceptionalism, though nor does it affirm the Schmittean account of a specific exceptionalism enacted with singular sovereign states. Indeed, the analysis of contemporary political boundaries and limits needs to be rescued from the analytical boundaries that have been erected between particular and generalized forms of exceptionalism understood as expressions of the limits of modern political possibility and impossibility.

The discourses of presence and absence that express modern statist accounts of the origins and limits of modern political life are extraordinarily adept at affirming that

boundaries are both simple, and are either where they are supposed to be or are becoming dangerously absent. Borders are not this simple, nor should we expect to find them where they are supposed to be. Still less should we expect to be able to understand contemporary borders, and the political possibilities and impossibilities they imply, where the discourses of either the sovereign state or the system of sovereign states insist they must or must not be. The spatial tropes of friend and enemy and the temporal tropes of civilized and barbarian will become increasingly interchangeable. The capacity to declare exceptions will become more difficult to map using the cartographies of territorial spaces and spatialized territorialities. Without some such mapping, however, statist discourses of presence and absence will continue to bemuse anyone who suspects, I think correctly, that boundaries, exceptionalisms and sovereignties will continue to enable and delimit our political possibilities, though not in ways ordained by the idealization of the limits of the sovereign state acting within a system of sovereign states.

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