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Political thought, international relations and a Tale of Two Modernities

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In their book *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri develop a narrative about the transition from the mediaeval to the modern, secular, world, showing that there were two projects of modernity at first, but that one prevailed over the other. The prevailing modern worldview did not do away with a transcendental form of control. Instead, it offered a post-mediaeval view of transcendence, which was then imported into politics, leading to the state as a transcendental apparatus of control. This article applies their thesis to the analysis of the development of political thought on international relations. It is argued that modern international thought was constrained and enabled by the project of modernity which prevailed. It is far from clear whether contemporary international thought can rid itself of the notion of the Westphalian state as the transcendental apparatus of control, yet it is reluctant to accept the notion of a world state as the ultimate, natural, implication of the transcendental grounds for the modern state.

Keywords: Hardt and Negri; modernity; international political theory; sovereignty; contemporary political thought

1. The Westphalian problem

One of the most common misconceptions about the Peace of Westphalia (1648) in International Relations scholarship is that the treaties of Münster and Osnabrück generated the modern political system by creating state sovereignty out of thin air. This claim has obtained prominence throughout the history of the discipline. What was only a limited claim about an historical event leading to the establishment of a specific feature of modern politics (sovereignty) became a totalising narrative on modernity as a whole (Ruggie 1983). Sovereignty became the producer, not a product of modernity (Gross 1948). Critical contributions have offered alternative versions of the narrative focused on historical evidence and showing how unreasonable this received view is. Westphalia might have helped to spread the notion of sovereignty but it did not invent it (Krasner 1993; Carvalho and Leira 2011). It might have influenced an emerging body of political thought about the relations between multiple sovereigns in the realm of the 'outside', but it did not generate the world of modern international politics (Reus-Smit 1999: 87–121).

However, even the revisionist works that question the primacy ascribed to Westphalia in the making of modern international politics concede that the peace settlement provided a 'solution' for the problem of difference that led to the religious wars of the 16th and 17th Centuries with its influence on international law and on modern international thought (Krasner 1993: 242–243). In a certain sense, even revisionists contribute to the reification of Westphalian sovereignty as the solution for the so-called 'crisis of the seventeenth century'.¹ They question the relevance of the peace agreement as an historical and political marker in many respects but still insist that the politico-religious conflicts were, indeed, resolved by the settlement and its subsequent developments. As Naeem Inayatullah and David L Blaney (2004: 31) contend, a "crucial" point made in the literature is the "intimation that Westphalia and a nascent modernity represent initial but definitive steps toward a solution to the problem of difference". Such notion obscures two important facts. One is that even a superficial look at the subsequent era of colonialism, *Realpolitik*, the balance-of-power and war as the continuation of politics by other means begs for a re-evaluation of this narrative of progress. The other is that the Westphalian project was only a possible option that happened to prevail at that time. Consequently, "the received view of Westphalia tends to blind us to the creative responses to difference that were lost during this period" (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004: 31). Stephen Toulmin further advances the idea, pointing out that there was an alternative project in

1 The term was coined by Trevor-Roper (1967) in a well-known study of the multiple aspects of the crisis.

arts, science, politics and philosophy, a project that emphasised “urbane open-mindedness” and “respect for complexity and diversity” (1990: 25, 29). Modernity as we know it – Westphalian modernity – crushed this rival project and became the accepted worldview.

The picture that emerges is one of a clash between alternative sets of post-mediaeval ideas. In their narrative, Inayatullah and Blaney focus mostly on political practice but pay little attention to some of intellectual aspects of this tension stressed by Toulmin. A tentative assessment of this other side of the equation, in turn, may be found in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s work *Empire*. Hardt and Negri (2000: 69) interpret *modernity* as a conflict “between, on the one hand, the immanent forces of desire and association, the love of the community, and on the other, the strong hand of an overarching authority that imposes and enforces an order on the social field”. They argue that modernity, which is “neither unitary nor pacific”, is better defined as “struggle, conflict, and crisis” resulting from a clash between two worlds – “the revolutionary discovery of the plane of immanence”, or the first mode of modernity; and “the reaction against these immanent forces and the crisis in the form of authority” that eventually led to “formation of the modern state as a locus of sovereignty that transcends and mediates the plane of immanent forces”, or the second mode of modernity (Hardt and Negri 2000: 69-70).

The authors of *Empire* focus on sovereignty as the consolidation of ‘domestic’ authority in political philosophy, but they do not take international thought sufficiently into account. This becomes clearer when Martin Wight’s (2005: 143) widely accepted definition of international thought as “speculation about international relations” is brought to the table. Wight suggests a sharp contrast between ‘political theory’ and ‘international thought’. The former means simply “speculation about the state”, while the latter may be understood as “speculation about relations between states” (1966: 17).² With this framework in mind it can be said that Hardt and Negri’s analysis of modernity in political philosophy deals primarily with ‘political thought’ rather than ‘international thought’. What is lacking is a discussion of the impact of modernity on political thought about “relations between states” – particularly the literature in International Relations. There is a potential contribution in Hardt and Negri’s thesis about the two modes

2 Variations of this definition are widespread. For example, in a well-known work on the topic from a critical-theoretical perspective, R B J Walker (1993: 18) defines international thought as a set of “theories of relations across borders” (see also Knutsen 1997: 1-7).

of modernity as a reading of the development of international thought but there is also a need to flesh out this potential contribution.³

In this article, I attempt to show how Hardt and Negri's thesis about two modes of modernity may be applied to analyse the development of international thought. It is, indeed, possible to use their framework in order to consider how international thought is constrained and enabled by modernity. The object of 'relations between states' or 'international relations', taken in Wight's sense, is a function of Hardt and Negri's second mode of modernity because it depends on its transcendental apparatus. While it is possible to speak of international thought in terms of the framework offered by these authors, the terms of such application must differ from those of the original formulation that was intended to make sense of political thought as a presence in both modes of modernity. *Empire* makes sense of the struggle between two competing worldviews – each of them with a political project – and tells a story about how one triumphed over the other and became the overarching framework for politics in modernity. When it comes to international thought, however, a political project was enabled precisely by elements intrinsic to the second mode of modernity. International theory only makes sense within this worldview, as it depends on ideas embedded in its transcendental apparatus.⁴ International theory is, in fact, an attempt to solve, in universalising terms, the problem that arises from the Westphalian world of difference – a world of multiple, clashing, sovereignties.

2. Two modernities

By analysing key intellectual developments that occurred in Europe from 1200 to 1600, Hardt and Negri (2000: 69–90) argue that in its beginning modernity consisted in a 'revolution' that led Europe to discard transcendence and to embrace the plane of immanence in philosophy and political thought. This was the first proposal of rupture in relation to the mediaeval order, the first mode of modernity. However, in a counterrevolution, the second mode of modernity attempted to discard the plane of immanence by denouncing it as potential or actual crisis and by rescuing the idea of transcendental authority.

3 To be sure, Hardt and Negri do interact with authors outside the normal 'canon' of International Relations (e.g. Rosa Luxemburg) who have grappled in passing with problems of international politics.

4 This is not to say that only the second mode had a political project beyond the local level. The first mode of modernity attempted to portray politics beyond locality by turning the idea of an all-encompassing immanent plane in the celebration of multiple singularities. The idea of world politics is perfectly feasible in a world without borders. The *inter-national*, on the other hand, can only be conceived under the modern transcendental apparatus, as will be made clear below.

Without going back to the mediaeval idea of a *transcendent*, divine source of authority, knowledge and morality, the second mode of modernity brought back *transcendental* mediation into each of these spheres. In politics, this led to the legitimization of the transcendental apparatus of sovereignty.⁵

The first mode of modernity emerges as a revolution against the mediaeval worldview, caused by “a secularizing process that denied divine and transcendent authority over worldly affairs” (Hardt and Negri 2000: 71) and, more importantly, by “the affirmation of the powers of this world”, that is, “the discovery of the plane of immanence”.

Humans declared themselves masters of their own lives, producers of cities and history, and inventors of heavens. They inherited a dualistic consciousness, a hierarchical vision of society, and a metaphysical idea of science; but they handed down to future generations an experimental idea of science, a constituent conception of history and cities, and they posed being as an immanent terrain of knowledge and action (Hardt and Negri 2000: 70–71).

The revolutionary character of the first mode of modernity becomes clear in the case it presents against any kind of mediation in epistemology, ontology, ethics and politics. *Epistemologically*, the revolutionary plane of immanence

5 In *Empire* there is no concise definition of ‘transcendence’ and ‘immanence’. One has to infer the meanings from the usage of the terms throughout the first half of the book in light of its central argument. Hardt and Negri locate freedom and the journey of pursuit of human desire through the ‘multitude’ in the plane of immanence (2000: 52, 65–66). Transcendent control, conversely, hinders emancipation, not least because it is divisive (the assumption here, as Ernesto Laclau points out, is that for the authors freedom requires “an actual historical subject ... as the realization of a full immanence ... what [Hardt and Negri] call the ‘multitude’”, Laclau 2004: 24). The ‘multitude’ is defined as “productive, creative subjectivities ... in perpetual motion and they form constellations of singularities and events that impose continual global reconfigurations of the system” (Hardt and Negri 2000: 61). For Hardt and Negri the first chance to unleash the potential of truly immanent thought and praxis occurred in the end of the Middle Ages when the first mode of modernity was proposed. The mediaeval world was a society ordered and disciplined by an idea of “divine and transcendent authority worldly affairs” (2000: 71). The first mode of modernity articulated a worldview that would potentially do away with such transcendental control (2000: 73). The second mode, which prevailed by “playing on the anxiety and fear of the masses”, transposed transcendental control from the divine realm to the secular world (2000: 75; see 75–83). For Hardt and Negri, contemporary globalised politics marks a shift from modern transcendental control to a postmodern, immanent, form of order which, as a result, contains within itself “new possibilities to the forces of liberation” (2000: xv). For a critique of their narrative, see Laclau (2004: 22–26) and for a commentary on the role of transcendence and immanence in *Empire*, see Fitzpatrick (2004: 31–38).

stressed the possibility of direct apprehension of the world. The “human mind”, it is said, was turned “into a divine machine of knowledge” and “human knowledge became a doing, a practice of transforming nature” (Hardt and Negri 2000: 72; see Tarnas 2010: 191-199).⁶ As Hardt and Negri (2000: 73) state, “the powers of creation that had previously been consigned exclusively to the heavens are now brought down to earth”. *Ontologically*, this earlier stage of modernity denied any kind of sharp distinction between God and creation.⁷ It also challenged the prevailing Aristotelian division between particulars and universals and introduced, in its place, the idea of singularity of being (Hardt and Negri 2000: 71; see Dooyeweerd 2012: 137-154).⁸

This new epistemological and ontological direction brought forth by the first mode of modernity was mirrored by developments in *ethics* and *politics* which led to “the foundation of authority on the basis of a human universal and through the action of a multitude of singularities” (Hardt and Negri 2000: 73).⁹ By embracing an integral view of immanence, this revolution inevitably found, within the community itself, the source of ethical and political authority, leading to a “new understanding of power”, the culmination of which is to be found in Baruch Spinoza and his idea of absolute democracy.

By the time we arrive at Spinoza, in fact, the horizon of immanence and the horizon of the democratic political order coincide completely. The plane of immanence is the one on which the powers of singularity are realized and the one on which the truth of the new humanity is determined historically, technically, and politically. For this very fact, because there cannot be any external mediation, the singular is presented as the multitude (Hardt and Negri 2000: 73).

The project of the first mode of modernity, then, “defines a tendency toward a democratic politics, posing humanity and desire at the center of history” (Hardt and Negri 2000: 74). It celebrates singularity and immanence, on the one hand, with the adoption of the idea of ‘multitude’ as the key to understanding human community and, on the other, with the rejection of any form of mediation or transcendental power.

6 The main examples given are Pico della Mirandola, Galileo Galilei and Francis Bacon in their views of science.

7 The main example is Baruch Spinoza and his ontological argument. “it follows from Spinoza’s theory that God is not distinct from the world but identical with it” (Scruton 2002:51).

8 This is also part of Spinoza’s ontology, but Duns Scotus is an earlier example. On the centrality of ontology in Western worldviews, see Quigley (1961: 342-348).

9 Multitude is “a plurality which persists as such in the public scene (...), without converging into a One” (Virno 2004: 22. See Negri 2002: 36-37 for a discussion).

The second mode of modernity, in turn, “was a counterrevolution (...) constructed to wage war against the new forces and establish an overarching power to dominate them” (Hardt and Negri 2000: 74). While it kept some distance from the mediaeval worldview and its organisation around the idea of transcendence, this counterrevolution nevertheless rejected the full plane of immanence and looked for another kind of transcendental foundation.

Although it was not possible to go back to the way things were, it was nonetheless possible to re-establish ideologies of command and authority, and thus deploy a new transcendent power by playing on the anxiety and fear of the masses, their desire to reduce the uncertainty of life and increase security (Hardt and Negri 2000: 75).

The second mode of modernity involved both a negative and a positive project in opposition to the first mode. Negatively, it turned immanence and singularity into a situation of permanent crisis. “The demand for peace becomes paramount (...) whenever the fruits of the revolution appeared in all their splendor.” That is, a peace which reduces itself to “the mere condition of survival, the extreme urgency of escaping death” (Hardt and Negri 2000:75). On the positive side, it urged for new forms of mediation in order to replace the plane of immanence embedded in the revolutionary worldview (Kok 1998: 110-141).

The counterrevolution returned to mediation in *epistemology* by denying the possibility of direct apprehension of natural facts with the idea that “[n]ature and experience are unrecognizable except through *the filter of phenomena*” (Hardt and Negri 2000: 78) and that “human knowledge cannot be achieved except through *the reflection of the intellect*”. *Ontologically*, the second mode of modernity postulated what *Empire* calls a “functional duality”, that is, a return to the world of particulars and universals and to the possibility of the ‘transcendental’, but, this time, with a secular mask. This has also been reflected in the reactionary reformation of *ethics* that led to “the neutralization of ethical action in the schematism of reason” (Hardt and Negri 2000: 81). Mediation, however, has not restricted itself to these spheres. On the contrary, it has become even more evident in the development of the transcendental political apparatus “that could impose order on the multitude and prevent it from organizing itself spontaneously and expressing its creativity autonomously” (Hardt and Negri 2000: 83).

The counterrevolutionary worldview brought (as a concrete expression of that transcendental apparatus) the Westphalian sovereign state into the sphere of *politics*. Discourses legitimising the state reproduced both negative and positive projects of the second mode of modernity. Negatively, the idea of a free multitude became an abomination, portrayed as the root of modern socio-political evils

(Virno 2004: 25-26). “For the seventeenth-century apologists of sovereign power, ‘multitude’ was a purely negative defining concept: a regurgitation of the state of nature within civil society, a continuing but somewhat unformed leftover, a metaphor of possible crisis” (Virno 1996: 200). Positively, the transcendental political apparatus became one of the most important tales of modernity, depicting the sovereign state as the adequate response to an inherently troublesome ‘state of nature’ (Virno 1996: 199-203). Sovereignty emerged as the transcendental, ‘functionally dual’ solution. It is transcendental, because “the representation that functions to legitimate this sovereign power also alienates it completely from the multitude of subjects”; and ‘functionally dual’, because this new separation between immanence and transcendence is “founded not on an external theological support but only on the immanent logic of human relations” (Hardt and Negri 2000: 84). The notion of sovereignty as a central political feature bringing together other relevant points of the counterrevolutionary worldview (including the ontological issue) is clearer in R B J Walker’s (1993: 64) comment:

[Sovereignty] is a very powerful, even elegant answer to the deeply provocative question as to how political life is possible at all. Building on a complex intellectual heritage that responds to the rearticulation of political life in the late mediaeval era, it offers an account of the spatial differentiation of political communities through a spatial resolution of the primary ontological question about the relation between universality and particularity. As an answer, the principle of state sovereignty already expresses a theory of ethics, one in which ontological and political puzzles are resolved simultaneously. It affirms that the good life, guided by universal principles, can only occur within particularistic political communities.

3. Modernity and international thought

By ‘domesticating’ political life, sovereignty has provided a crucial condition of possibility for thinking about the ‘international’. International thought, it is suggested below, is a product of, and relates to, the second mode of modernity.

The achievements of the second mode of modernity were so broad that those who dedicate themselves to the study of politics got used to connecting ‘political life’ to life *within* states as a result of the alleged victory of modernity over the crisis of life under anarchy. We have constantly been reminded that, when it comes to relations *between* states, we must still speak of unresolved crisis. Whether we see it as an anarchical (underdeveloped) society or as a mere system of interacting political units, the ‘international’ remains a mirror

of that (domestic) state of nature which was finally controlled by modernity's transcendental apparatus.

One might speak of interstate or international *relations*, but *politics* is supposed to be something that can occur only within the secure boundaries of sovereign states. This is why the history of Western political thought has been written as a tale of two traditions. The most familiar part of the story is a celebration of the polis and, subsequently, of the state. It tells of the establishment of a secure basis for political community – and thus the possibility of freedom, industry, and progress within states. The less familiar and less edifying part tells us of the consequences of an absence of political community, and thus of mere relations, fragile accommodations, and, inevitably, war (Walker and Mendlovitz 1990: 4).

International thought is, then, at the same time, a lament for the 'tragedy of Great Power politics' – to borrow the phrase from a famous political neorealist (Mearsheimer 2001) – and, in a less pessimistic and more liberal tone, the quest for the conditions that would resolve this crisis. International thought has reflected the same basic features of the prevailing type of modernity by (1) taking the state for granted, (2) projecting the modern argument about the state of nature to the international realm and (3) trying to deal with the crisis of the international realm by resorting to an analogy with domestic society.

First of all, international thought has reified the argument for the political transcendental apparatus by assuming mainstream justifications for sovereign power embedded in the second mode of modernity. It has taken a world of multiple sovereign states for granted. This started with the idea of foreign policy as directly connected to the establishment of domestic order by the sovereign (Esteves 2006: 29–30). At a later stage, Westphalian sovereignty became a hidden presupposition or even a necessary condition for international thought, or a "political fact", in the words of classical realist theorist Hans Morgenthau (1963: 312) – a fact which renders possible any speculation about foreign policy. In a core piece in the neorealist tradition, Kenneth Waltz (1990: 26) establishes an artificial division between political science on the one hand and international politics on the other. The state may be instrumentally taken as an ahistorical, self-contained and rational actor for the sake of theorising about the 'international'.¹⁰ He believes that this division leads to the establishment of International Relations as a separate discipline, while the problem of 'domestic' order must be left to

10 Cf. the well-known words of Thomas Hobbes (1996: 147), defining Leviathan as an "Artificiall Man, which we call a Common-wealth".

Political Science (Waltz 1990: 29-32). What is generally understood as just a useful assumption may even become an unequivocal reality for those who, like Alexander Wendt, have to face the problem of conceptualising agency in international society. States turn into *real people* (1999: 215ff).¹¹ “The categories and concepts we have learnt to use with such facility, almost without thinking, come to appear natural and inevitable. Their contested history is soon forgotten” (Walker 1989: 172). Since its beginning international thought has increasingly relied upon from ‘political theory’ by reflecting “the belief in the sovereign state as the consummation of political experience and activity which has marked Western [modern] political thought” (Wight 1966: 21). As Richard Ashley (1995: 98) puts it, “international theory, relying upon one or another model of domesticated order, becomes a parasite of the theories by which this modern culture knows itself to be the unique and universal source of truth in history”.

Then, secondly, international thought has been projecting that anarchical state of nature ‘stabilised’ by sovereignty to the clash of sovereigns under no central authority. “It has become natural to think of international politics as the untidy fringe of domestic politics” (Wight 1966: 21). Long ago, Thomas Hobbes (1996: 149) had articulated this view:

For as amongst masterlesse men, there is perpetuall war, of every man against his neighbour (...); So in States, and Commonwealths not dependent on one another, every Commonwealth (not every man) had an absolute Libertie, to doe what it shall judge (...) most conducing to their benefit. But withall, they live in the condition of a perpetuall war, and upon the confines of battel, with their frontiers armed, and canons planted against their neighbours round about.

International Relations scholarship has adopted a similar approach. John Mearsheimer (2001), for example, follows Hobbes when he portrays international politics as a ‘tragedy’ that occurs due to the absence of a central authority capable of imposing itself over the states of the international system. Less pessimistic examples could be mentioned. Liberal theorists like Robert Keohane (1984) assume international relations to be a set of sub-optimal interactions because there is no provider of global public goods. In their view, the international system mirrors a Lockean state of nature in which cooperation is possible but a central authority would considerably improve social life (see Locke 1988: 265ff). One way or another, wherever the modern justification for a ‘domestic’ transcendental apparatus is assumed, there is also some kind of association between those crises

11 For a critical discussion of Wendt’s view of the state as a person, see Colin Wight’s (2004: 270-279) reply.

which preceded modern order and the character of international politics. In short, by portraying the 'international' as a mirror of the state of nature, international thought has reproduced the negative discourse of the second mode of modernity at a different, supra-national realm (Bartelson 1995: 211–213; Walker 2006).

Besides the relocation of the counterrevolutionary discourse of crisis at another level, and as a consequence of it, international thought has led to the formulation of “a sharp dichotomy (...) between the nature of life within sovereign states and the interactions that occur between such states” (Walker 1984: 186). The second mode of modernity plays a key role in this aspect too. Jens Bartelson (1995: 89) points out that “any talk of something international” before modern sovereignty “is unwarranted, if international is taken to mean something (...) ontologically distinguishable from individual states (...). To distinguish what was *within states* and what was *between states* was not fully possible, either in theory, or in practice”. By enabling this distinction, the modern transcendental apparatus provided the required basis for “knowledge and theory” about the ‘international’ (see Foucault 2002: xxii). The distinction between inside and outside has now become one of the “core assumptions of international relations theory” (Bigo and Walker 2007a: 4).

[T]heoretical discourse on the anarchy problematique starts from the premise that there are at any time a multiplicity of states and domestic societies, where the paradigmatic differences between state and society and between domestic society and anarchy are not questioned but simply assimilated as part of the premise (Ashley 1995: 115).

The constitutive binaries of international thought – domestic/international, inside/outside, hierarchical/anarchical – are, therefore, inseparable from the second mode of modernity.

Finally, international thought has called for a solution for the permanent state of international crisis by means of a domestic analogy. That is, besides projecting the modern assumption of crisis to international life, the study of international relations has also been reflecting the language of modern transcendental apparatus in the way it envisages stability in world politics (Bull 1966: 40–44). In short, the rationale of the second mode of modernity is mimicked by both diagnosis and treatment for what occurs between states. That this is not a full copy (but rather a quite ambiguous expression of mimicry) becomes clear when we scrutinise the main kinds of proposals for stability in international politics. If the ‘international’ is conceived as analogous to the ‘domestic’, then it follows that a transcendental apparatus similar to domestic government is required in a worldwide scale. However, this poses a major problem. The long-lasting

solution offered by modern political thought for the crisis of (domestic) anarchy cannot be entirely 'transposed' to the 'international pitch', so to speak, because the defining properties of the transcendental apparatus (for example, *exclusive* authority within territorial limits) are inherently incompatible with the new 'pitch'. All international theorists can do is formulate a weak, imperfect imitation of that apparatus at the supra-national level (Ashley 1986: 278; Bull 1966: 45-50). It is exactly around this problem that key developments have emerged in international thought.

4. From transcendental apparatus to global politics?

The closest imitation of the modern transcendental apparatus at the international level is the set of ideas related to the World State. Immanuel Kant (2003), for example, portrayed international politics as interaction based on rivalry and sub-optimal exchange. Perpetual peace and better trade conditions should to be achieved by a World Federation of republics that would share moral principles based on universal categorical imperatives – the same transcendental sources of authority proposed as mediation in Kant's general ethics (see Hardt and Negri 2000: 80-82). Later on, a further argument for an international transcendental apparatus was added to the picture of an overwhelming need for order: that of historical inevitability. In the beginnings of International Relations as an academic discipline, David Mitrany tried to portray emerging formal international organisations as a (desirable) World State in its embryonic form. Ernst Haas added to this teleological view an explanation of political integration as a result of an increasing spiral of cooperation from less politicised issues to the highest level of security policy (see Anderson 1998). More recently, Wendt (2003) has provided an astounding argument for the inevitability of a World State as the next stage in the history of international political practice. Paradoxically, a World State is understood as both a necessary tool against the enduring crisis of international politics and, at the same time, a result of gradual/inevitable cooperation. Hence, the attempt of a close imitation of the modern predicament for domestic society also carries within itself its own antithesis. Crisis will be overcome before, not after, the establishment of an international transcendental apparatus. International thought thus reproduces the modern diagnosis about the state of nature but cannot replicate its predicament.

Those who portray international politics as a clash of self-interested actors in an anarchical environment where values do not matter as much as the amount of power states have at their disposal tend to be highly sceptical about any prospects for cooperation. International anarchy, according to them, may only be attenuated, but never resolved. In this world of egoistically-oriented

actors, we should content ourselves with a fragile stability based on balance-of-power alliances, according to realists and neorealists (Waltz 1979: 121-122) or, at most, with limited and imperfect cooperation through regimes and international organisations (Keohane and Nye 1977). This, of course, is modernity at its worst – acknowledging its lack of ability to deal with the crisis of the ‘international’, while, at the same time, refusing to consider the development of any alternative outside the cage of sovereignty. We are told that one such crisis is enough, that the modern state has adequately dealt with ‘domestic’ problems since its mythical beginnings in Westphalia, and that we should trust in it as the provider of a minimum of welfare and security within this framework of delicate stability. A double-faced transcendental basis for coordination is employed which functions as the discourse of international political mediation. Citizens are supposed to believe that their governments will pursue the ‘national interest’ in foreign policy and rival states, in turn, are assured of cooperation with no other basis than the assumption that all parties are rational in their pursuit of survival (as suggested by balance-of-power theorists) or, perhaps, some sort of mutual contract (as presupposed by those who see the ‘international’ as a weak kind of society).¹² If the true transcendental apparatus of sovereignty cannot impose an overarching international order in the form of a World State, then we are left either with a second-best settlement of ‘global governance’ – an imperfect replica of the ‘true’ solution – or with no response at all.¹³

But just such an ‘either... or’ rationale clings to the regulative spatial dichotomy of the modern world as it came to be. It is inseparable from sovereignty, which is the basis for the inside/outside binary that entails the ‘international’. It also cannot be dissociated from the new binaries of the modern ‘international’ – inside/order and outside/crisis. In fact, by postulating both predicament and solution in terms of such dichotomies, this ‘either... or’ rationale acts as a disciplining boundary of international thought. If there is a crisis of sovereignty, if ‘global governance’ seems to be a false promise and if the World State is untenable, then what is required is not yet another approach constrained or enabled by the modern character of international thought. Instead, by following Hardt and Negri in a critique of international thought, one is led to the suggestion of a new ontology, or a new language that, in the resemblance of that long-lost first mode of modernity, is capable of making novel sense of world politics by resisting the

12 See, respectively, Francis Bacon (1985: 116-117) and Samuel Pufendorf (2007) for early attempts, and Hedley Bull (2002) for a more recent combination of both perspectives.

13 Current trends pay close attention to the violation of borders (with transnational flows) while still assuming that there were concrete borders at any point. In order to think of a flow that violates Westphalian logic it is necessary to assume this logic in the first place (Bigo and Walker 2007b).

Westphalian disciplinary cage.¹⁴ Pauline Rosenau (1990: 98) once remarked that “International Relations would need to be dramatically re-created if we were to eliminate all modernist presumptions about history”. A reformulation of the field that would turn *international* theory into *global* political thought is, arguably, the most intriguing challenge facing the field’s theorists now.

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