Global Society, Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights

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Edited by

Vittorio Cotesta, Vincenzo Cicchelli and Mariella Nocenzi

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INTRODUCTION

1. The book *Global Society, Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights* is the outcome of a decade-long scholarly project.[1]

The point of convergence emerging from the analyses contained in this volume is that "global society", "cosmopolitanism" and "human rights" are likely to constitute the basis of present and future ways of life. The "project for humanity" of the future, while it rests on local social associations, will have "globality" as its reference.

The most important characteristic proper to "globality" is the growing *interdependence* existing between its various economic, social and cultural systems. Recent events—the economic and political crises of the western world, the abrupt eruption onto the international scene of the "emerging countries" and the growth of countries once defined as "developing"—make it superfluous to insist on demonstrating the existence of a strong interdependence between nation-states and within different areas of the world. It would appear more useful and a little more original, to try, rather, to understand the different "human projects" competing within the single field comprising *global society*.

As already stated by Peter L. Berger and Samuel P. Huntington (Berger and Huntington 2003), and, as erroneously posited in the 1990s by Francis Fukuyama (Fukuyama 1992), no sole idea of global society actually exists. Each civilisation forwards its own idea of "global society", its own "project for humanity". The very interdependence existing between areas of the world develops along different and contrasting lines, where economic conflict is entangled with political and cultural strife. A veritable *struggle for hegemony*, for economic, political and cultural predominance is taking place all over the world. Only the self-complacency of some greeted the fall of the Soviet Union as entry into an *Eden* of capitalism and American dominion.

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[1] In 2011 the Group for the study of Global Society, Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights organised two one-day seminars: the first in Paris (on the 17th of March), the second in Rome (on the 7th of June). Scholars from all over the following countries took part: Italy, France, Spain, Romania, Ukraine, Canada, Brazil, India and Hong Kong. This volume contains some of the papers presented on that occasion.

To avoid similar blunders, a deeper notion of "global society" is required. To counter the idea of globalisation that has emerged during the last few decades in particular, and conveyed by the Internet and other forms of global media, it is necessary to refer to historical studies in order to see how forms of global life evolved long before this era.

In particular, to grasp these aspects of global society it may be useful to consult *Global History* (Ponting 2001, Davis 2001, Beaujart et al. 2009) (or *World History* or even *Transnational History*);[2] further suggestions may be provided by the historiographical methodologies of Fernand Braudel and Arnold Toynbee, not to mention the classics of the Age of Reason (Voltaire, Montesquieu) or Antiquity (Herodotus, Polybius, Ammianus Marcellinus). In short, the idea is that if the nation-state cannot be the unit of analysis any longer, the historical-social processes we now call "globalisation", are to be found in periods of human history that precede modernity. Certainly, there is no comparison between the past and today either as regards scale or intensity, principally because of differences in the speed of communications systems: only roads, rivers and the sea in the past; now, also telephones, aeroplanes and the Internet. Every empire (Roman, Persian, Chinese, for example) set up postal services which were highly efficient in their day, especially if we consider the technologies of the past. In short, what we wish to suggest here is that globalisation experiences a number of different phases (Robertson 1992), characterised not so much by their different processes, as by their breadth, speed and depth.

As Immanuel Wallerstein's research points out, the discriminating factor between the ancient and modern forms of globalisation is what propels the processes: in ancient times, globalisation was driven by the strength of armies; in modern times it depends on the penetration power of goods, backed by military power. A large-scale market focused on the exchange of goods (silk and spices) already existed in antiquity and involved specific areas of the world (China, India, Central Asia, the Mediterranean). In modern times, the "world" market has been gradually enlarged to also include the American continent. Furthermore, if the "ancient" world commerce was conducted principally *over land*, the "modern" world market availed mostly of the sea. During the twentieth century and at present, the world market avails of an integrated land, sea and air transport system.

Globalisation processes, both in the ancient and modern worlds, do not affect all aspects of life. Some areas are more heavily involved; others

[2] On *Global History* see Conrad, Eckert and Freitag 2007.

less; some not at all. The same happens to certain geographical and cultural areas: some are interior to the processes and even propel them; others are outside of them or, even if inside, slow them down or even hamper them.[3] Therefore, analyses of the processes must avail of a multidimensional grid, including both "material" (military power, economy, technologies), and "spiritual" (the arts, culture, religions, civilisations, science) aspects. If one builds a theoretical model with at least three dimensions (power, economy, religion), one obtains an overall view of the global scenario as well as of the forms of competition already existing during the second half of the first millennium B.C. In this period, in fact, three "global" realities interacted with each other: the Chinese, the Indian and the Greco-Roman. During the following millennium to these propulsion forces of globalisation the Arabo-Islamic civilisation both erupted into the Roman and Mediterranean area and extended its dominion as far as India and China. At the beginning of the second millennium A.D. the mightiest global project was the Mongolian one when Genghis Khan built an empire stretching from China to the Mediterranean. In the centuries that followed, however, the *centre* of globalisation shifted first to Europe, then to North America. This phase—the capitalist phase of the globalisation process– witnessed the decline or crisis of the other "global projects" and the affirmation of the "western" one. Now, at the beginning of the third millennium, the "western project" appears to have entered a critical phase while the "Chinese", "Indian" and, to a certain extent, the

[3] Two cases are emblematic of the way public organisations can slow down or hamper globalisation processes. The first is the retreat to the north of China of the Ming Dynasty in the fifteenth century A.D. The geopolitical preoccupations generated by the threatening presence of the militarily strong "barbarians" led the Ming Dynasty to abandon the maritime expansionist policy it had pursued in the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries (the sea expeditions carried out by general Zheng He at the beginning of the fifteenth century are famous; during these excursions the Chinese fleet carried out scientific explorations of the Pacific during which they seem to have reached the west coast of America, before the Europeans, therefore) and withdraw inland, from then on submitting to the initiatives of the western powers who created the first "world" market; the other case is that where the Ottoman Empire prohibited the adoption of movable typesetting because – as the religious leaders had said–the word of God could not be printed. This strategic domestic option weakened the Ottoman Empire and within a few centuries excluded it from the worldwide political arena. Up to the end of the sixteenth century, the Empire was actually superior in some technological-economic sectors to the European countries and until the end of the eighteenth century there was still the problem of how to bridge the scientific and technological gap between the Ottomans and the west.

"Islamic", projects seem to be returning to the fore. These forms of globalisation create relationships involving interdependence, cooperation and conflict, all at once. The "global society" it generates is, therefore, characterised by some life styles of a similar and by others of a totally different kind. What appears interesting—and which goes beyond Samuel Huntington's theory of the "clash between civilisations"—is the fact that the different "global society projects" meet and clash *inside* each single civilisation. This conflict is often believed to stand somewhere between modernity and tradition. In reality it is a question of two projects for humanity hinged differently on ideas of freedom, equality and solidarity. In actual fact, if one takes each of these principles into account and verifies how they are applied internally to the single projects for a global society, one is able to explain some of the features of these different and divergent global-society projects:

a. Freedom. It is clear that this principle underscores the North American model. It is present also in other models (e.g. the European one), but in the USA it prevails over the values of equality and solidarity;
b. Equality. This principle appears to be the mainstay of European societies, although it may assume different forms—there is a marked and well-known difference to this regard between the Scandinavian and the southern and eastern European countries. There is no doubt that this principle exists alongside those of solidarity and freedom. The mix, however, is not fixed either within the single European societies or within the European scenario as a whole;
c. Solidarity. Here the issue becomes definitely more difficult. Some societies, in actual fact, address the issue of the redistribution of wealth directly, while others believe that individual freedom and the level of wealth achieved by each person in a lifetime is a more efficacious form of solidarity than any produced by so-called direct redistribution models. The "indirect" effects on individual egotism are such that by making opportunities available to all, they outstrip those effects of any kind of direct redistribution of wealth.

If we consider how these principles are entwined in every form of civilisation with or in each of the "projects for a global society" on the world stage, we may distinguish between the following:

i. the "Western idea" of global society. The three principles—the liberty, equality, and solidarity of individuals–are profoundly interwoven

but also experience equally profound oscillations, to such an extent that it is possible to speak of a "European" and an "American" side to this project for a global society. The former includes in its social system larger quotas destined to cover solidarity and equality than the other; the other is clearly more oriented towards individual freedom. One should note, however, that, over the last few decades, inequality between people is increasing significantly in both areas of the western model;

ii. the "Islamic" idea of global society. This formula, which has nothing in common with the Al Qaeda project—which aims at the worldwide re-establishment of *umma* - but is based on a concept of society drawn up in the Islamic countries and introduced into "western" countries thanks to the proselytising work of various Islamic institutions and migrants. Generally speaking it has a strongly *asymmetric* vision of society, especially as far as the social roles of men and women are concerned. It is true that in many countries there is a thrust towards change (see, for example, the "Arab Spring"), but it is equally true, all told, that the conceptions considering women as subordinate to men are still predominant. Solidarity is undoubtedly stronger in the west, but within a framework characterised by social inequality. This idea of a global society rests on faith in Allah. The actors in this model of global society are the many immigrants of Islamic origin and, above all, from a religious, cultural and political point of view, Saudi Arabia and the Arab states of the Gulf, who have become rich thanks to their oil fields. These represent the *political motor* of the "Islamic" idea of a global society;

iii. the "Indian" idea of a global society. It is more difficult to pinpoint an "Indian" or "Hindu" idea of a global society. The reason is that India is riddled with intense conflict caused by opposing notions of society and civilisation. On the one hand, there are various "religious" ideas of society in India: Hindu, Islamic, Sikh and other minorities, like Christians or Buddhists; on the other, all of these are veined by a mixed model which brings together values acquired from the west and the Hindu tradition, conjugating capitalism, western capitalistic culture and the Indian tradition in different terms. The outcome is a strong inequality within the country and scarce attention, for religious reasons, to solidarity among individuals. Inequality between the sexes is still strongly rooted. This idea is conveyed both through the Indian migrants worldwide, and by the cultural hegemony of India in many areas of the Pacific Ocean;

iv. the "Confucian" idea of a global society. The society of China is undoubtedly highly complex and it is practically impossible to sum up its chief characteristics in a few lines. However, all we need do is return to the data produced by important historical, sociological and political research endeavours. For thousands of years, the Chinese spoke of their country as "all that exists under the sun" (*tian-xia*). Chinese society has always been characterised by a more or less strong central power, a territory which varied geographically according to external threats (in this, not very unlike the Roman Empire), a military sphere subordinate to the civil power, a centrally-run state-managed economy. After the end of the Qinq dynasty (1911) several ways of modernising the country were attempted: colonial, nationalist, socialist, the present mixed formula which unites the political control of society and that of the productive system which guarantees ample freedom of initiative to private enterprise (capitalism). China's life-style models are inspired by a mix of the Confucian tradition and western modernity. Furthermore, these are also the main cultural and political trends on the politico-cultural scene striving for hegemony. The prevalent life styles, especially those among the young, are marked by a traditional-modern, Confucian-western mix. Social inequality is still widespread; solidarity is still very much of a traditional kind and regards above all the family circle. This idea of society has spread to the rest of the world thanks to Chinese migrants but it is also important to recall the fact that in the various countries where they live, they remain rather aloof and do not try to "convert" the autochthonous populations to their way of life. The action of Chinese institutions at world level is far more efficacious. With the decline of the hegemony of the west, the Chinese way to global society may become the model for other countries like those of Latin America and non-Islamic Africa.

2. A world dominated by globalisation processes obliges the social actors, on the one hand, and the institutions, on the other, to consider matters regarding issues of belonging, social ties and areas of action that go well beyond the classical nation-state picture. One must therefore consider the fact that the transnational phenomena at present taking place (ranging from economic to migratory flows, from organised crime to terrorism, to cultural consumerism and the circulation of ideas and information) are building a world which, though plural in many ways, as we have had occasion to see, is becoming more and more *common.* Once the great geographical discoveries, today major planetary sporting events, nuclear and environmental catastrophes, protest movements, even revolt

and revolution, make it increasingly evident that we are living on a fragile, joint, finite terrestrial globe.

It is, therefore, opportune to try to understand how human communities, individuals, institutions, relate to globality and its outcomes, in particular, the *désenclavement (unlocking)* of the contemporary world.

"Cosmopolitanism" conjures up both a way of life and a mind set typical of those who live in a global society. As a way of life cosmopolitanism is characterised by forms of consumerism, aesthetic practices, and behavioural styles leading to the transnational circulation of cultural products, exchanges of ideas and information. Whether we like it or not, all human beings have to come to grips with this reality. Only some of them, however, establish open *social ties* with others, with more or less known or unknown people, and do not remain closed within relationships belonging to family, professional or local circles. This kind of openness regards, potentially, the whole of humanity, past, present and future. From the point of view of *mind set*, cosmopolitanism is, therefore, inclined to view world events in terms of connections.

These two aspects of the question—cosmopolitanism as a way of life and as a mind-set—do not necessarily coincide. Not all those who lead global life styles share the cosmopolitan way of being and mind set. Global inequality is symptomatic of the fact that, in this kind of society, some have all the chances in life; others, although involved in it, do not and are subjected to more or less brutal forms of exploitation. There exists, besides–very strong at present—an irresistible inclination, at times underestimated by scholars of *Global Studies*, to live within the "fences" of the older and newer "nations", even "regions"—it is sufficient to think of Europe and the United States—due to the growing thrust of globalisation processes. The "cosmopolitan" citizen of the world overlaps the "national" citizen. In short, it is possible to live in a global society without sharing the "cosmopolitan spirit" pervading it. In other words, the two aspects of the global society—structural and cultural—do not necessarily move in the same direction.

In order to understand the formation processes of a global society better we need to consider the different concepts of cosmopolitan and of human community that exist in the world. Every civilisation has its own idea of a universal community, of what we called above a "project for humanity". If, in fact, global society implies multi-dimensional realities, some of them may feature cooperation, others conflict. Or they may even feature cooperation and conflict at the same time. These traits, here mentioned in theoretical terms only, need to be verified case by case through empirical investigation whose topic is the global society.

However, the unlocking existing between the economic and cultural spheres of the global society is already evident. In actual fact, while economic processes always create greater interdependence between the various areas of the world, cultural processes produce and express various concepts of a *just* or *ideal* society. At this level the diverse ways of conceiving and practising cosmopolitanism—the different cosmopolitan spirits—interact the ones with one another to formulate a variety of projects for humanity.

Every civilisation, in fact, constructs its own conception of humanity and filters processes of integration with other societies, cultures and civilisation through its particular conception of humanity. Each civilisation's selective powers are capable of generating conflict between the structural and cultural forms of the global society. In actual fact, at structural level, forms of cooperation generate interdependence which may not proceed in the same direction as the cultural conception of humanity envisaged by each civilisation. Therefore, every civilisation requires an accommodation process in order to draw up a concept of humanity to propose or submit to the others.

This leads us, therefore, to another aspect of the cosmopolitan issue being examined, that regarding global *governance*, transnational regulation. In order to examine these aspects of our contemporary global society, it suffices to look at the *juridical* area. The question, in actual fact, regards the possibility of a world government for the whole of humanity. What law, or rather, which juridical model would be capable of producing *universal* norms—that is: agreed on and shared by all—to regulate relations between people at global level?

The answer to this question is not univocal. Not only does one not speak—and it would be unreal to do so today—of a political world government; different, if not opposite, proposals for the regulation of "international" relations are advanced by different global subjects.[4] In actual fact, on the one hand, we find the more or less hegemonic intentions of today's world powers, on the other, the different conceptions of civilisation of which they are an expression. From this stem the diverging proposals for a regulation of the global society.

[4] Regarding the question of a "political world government" an interesting debate is going on. On the one hand, some uphold the Kantian position—which inspires us too—which cannot envisage a world government; on the other, an increasingly larger group of intellectuals not only sustain the possibility but the need for a similar world government. For a collection of the various positions see Scheuerman 2012.

To make this geopolitical situation comprehensible one might, on the one hand, refer to debates concerning human rights conducted over the past ten years, on the other, to the minimum threshold identified at global level to guarantee such rights.

As is known, as far back as the United Nations Charter of 1948, criticism was advanced claiming that the formulation of human rights was "western". There is no doubt that the results of the work carried out express the cultural hegemony of the West, even if it is not the European states (Great Britain, France, Germany) who speak in the name of the West, but the United States of America. During the final decades of the twentieth century, however, the Islamic world, the East (China, India, Japan) and Africa have suggested that human rights be intended in a more *universal* manner. On the one hand, we have the "western" character of the formulation of human rights contained in the United Nations Charter; on the other, the claim that a truly *universal* conception of human rights should include "Asian", "Islamic" or "African" conceptions. In all this one cannot fail to see a plea by the representatives of countries and civilisations dominated during the 1800-2000 period by western powers (colonialism and neo-colonialism) for recognition of their identities. But recognition of the identity of every culture, nation and civilisation leads to relativity of values. The question, at this point, is: if every civilisation expresses values authentically human and appropriate to humanity, how is it that concrete forms of life seem to go in a totally opposite direction? The following is a concrete example: if men and women are believed to have parity of dignity, why, in some societies, cultures, religions and civilisations is this equal dignity expressed, even today, as subordination of women to men? Does "parity of dignity" not mean, therefore, "equal dignity", but the possibility of living a life worthy of a man or a woman enjoying different rights and life chances? This seems to be, in actual fact, the nodal issue: the western conception (where the emphasis is on "conception" and not yet on reality) has constructed a conception of society where "parity of dignity" means "equal dignity". How can such diverging positions, on an issue of no minor importance, but one concerned with a fundamental way of interpreting humanity, be reconciled? When all comes to all, the bottom line is: are men and women equal? And if they are different, as many of their characteristics make it clear they are and ought to be, in which of these aspects *must they* be equal and in which, on the other hand, *must they* remain different? This is still a central point in the debate and dialogue among civilisations.

In the formulation of this problem one reads the glimmer of a solution. For the moment this glimmer is a matter of theory and not of praxis even if

in various parts of the world there are struggles going on for the recognition of equality between men and as citizens. Among the various formulations regarding human rights, amid the conspicuous divergences, a common point does emerge: the idea that men and women alike are entitled to live a life worthy of humanity to which they belong. This convergence is, however, rather evanescent. In actual fact, when explaining what is meant by "human dignity", theory and practice travel down very different paths.

Undoubtedly this state of affairs might engender pessimism. However, there are elements that one may already use to continue the human rights debate and pursue mutual understanding. It is the discussion and the debate surrounding the meaning of "human dignity" that brings to light important convergences between countries, states, cultures and civilisations. One of the most significant outcomes of this process is recognition, in the United Nations Millennium Programme, that a minimum level of economic and cultural (educational) resources is required before one can speak of living a life worthy of the human condition. The various poverty thresholds, even if they appear scandalous to most, seek to provide a picture of the minimum level possible beneath which no life is worthy of humanity.

If on this point a common grammar of human rights is being drawn up, what remains to be done is to intensify the work required to raise the threshold capable of guaranteeing and protecting them.

Then, it is on these minimum bases that differences may be dealt with. In actual fact, compared to the centuries-old debate on human rights, today's scenario offers one important novelty. Up to a few decades ago, by human rights was meant—especially as far as the "western" conception was concerned—the right to equality. Now, instead, equality needs to be interwoven with difference, without which particular identities would be denied. But an equal and diversified kind of right is hard to theorise. Above all, it is hard to render it applicable within institutionalised social practice. However, this seems to be the way by which to recognise the human specificity of all men and women.

3. This volume provides detailed analyses of some of the dominant traits of the global society: the principal dynamics of world unification, cosmopolitan lifestyles and mind sets and human rights as a form of regulation of human relations within this kind of society. The different articles are grouped according to their methodological features: the first part of the book is devoted to essays of a theoretical kind; the second to prevalently empirical studies.

The first section, *Theoretical Perspectives on Global Society, Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights*, opens with an essay by Vittorio Cotesta on "Multiple Modernities and Global Society". In this essay the author examines the debates of the past few years surrounding the theory of modernity in the era of global society. The assumptions underscoring his theoretical approach view modernity as a complex and plural reality. This frees the debate from the presumed superiority of western over other human cultures and allows us to read the present world as the product of the contribution of various cultures and civilisations and invites us to examine the thorny issue of the achievement of convergence of views on a universalist concept like human rights.

In the first part of his work, Cotesta reviews Max Weber's modernist theory and discusses the positions of a number of Weberian critics like J. Goody and K. Pomeranz. J. Goody's critique addresses the basic assumptions of Weber's theory and advocates scientific objectivity in opposition to the method pursued by Weber, who, according to Goody, exalted the singularity, exceptionality and uniqueness of Europe and the West a-critically. Goody then states that a methodology not blinded by ideological claims of western superiority over other civilisations, would have sought the common points of contact existing between the different civilisations from the Bronze Age on. Goody also states that, contrary to what Weber posits, the "grand divergence" between East and West occurred only at the end of the eighteenth century with the industrial revolution, which started in England and then spread to the rest of the world, and not thanks to the Protestant revolution and its impact on modern capitalism. According to Cotesta, Goody does not grasp the Weberian position, and fails to understand either his theory of modernity or his methodology. The Weberian discourse, in actual fact, while illustrating the uniqueness of the West also describes the uniqueness of other civilisations. His comparative analysis brings to light the specific characteristics of each one of the cases he compares. East and West are both *unique* and the uniqueness of each emerges only through comparison with the other. As to Weber's modernity, the author holds, it contains a multidimensional and structural conception that Goody fails to grasp. This aspect is understood, however, by Eisenstadt who holds that not all the traits of modernity identified by Weber need appear in all of the cases presented; some, like the science-technology-production trait, are not necessarily conjugated with democracy. An eloquent example is the development of capitalism in China which, on the one hand, demonstrated the limitations of the conceptual structure of Weberian modernity, and on the other, the hermeneutic usefulness of the concepts modernity and

modernisation. According to Eisenstadt, rather than a sole modernity one ought to speak of a "family of modern societies" and of multiple modernities in the age of globalisation.

K. Pomeranz's criticism of Max Weber echoes some of Goody's objections. Although hinged on a comparative study of England and some areas of China between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the limitation of Pomeranz's critique lies in the fact that it is uni-dimensional—or, at most, bi-dimensional—all focused on the economic dimension. As if economic development did not depend on other factors like culture, religion, the law, art, etc. Only through a social theory that claims that development is the product of the economy and technology, such as Goody's and Pomeranz's, is it possible to collocate the "grand divergence" within the period of the English Industrial revolution. In brief, they overlook the long period of "preparation" for the industrial revolution in Europe, because, otherwise, they would not be able "exalt" the role of Britain. And this referred to authors who condemned Max Weber's Euro-centrism.

The author then goes on to examine the "reform" of the Weberian theory proposed by Eisenstadt with his concept of Multiple Modernities in an Era of Globalisation. If Weber's theory reflects a historical period when the project for modernity was still based on the idea of a single notion, the concept of Multiple Modernities expresses the plurality of images of the world and of "projects for humanity" typical of the twenty-first century.

Summing up, the author shows how the construction of a concept of modernity cannot disregard Weber's teaching and, at the same time, that a theory of a global society needs to be developed seeking a structure common to all civilisations and their specific differences.

Áron Telegdi-Csetri's paper claims autonomous disciplinary status for cosmopolitan studies, on the grounds of their present level of development; he starts from the definition, novel at the time, provided by the philosopher Kant when he dealt with concepts of national sovereignty and citizenship. In his 1795 essay *Zum ewigen Frieden* ("For perpetual peace"), Kant posited a League of regulated peoples availing of a worldwide juridical order (*Weltbürgerrecht*), based on recognition of human beings as rational and free social actors, linked to the specific cultural context they lived in. Notwithstanding differences in historical and social conditions, each culture tends to try to assure the happiness of its people and, thus, solve the heterogeneousness of history, the clash between orders, the autonomy of the individual in a cosmopolitan and universal formula.

The reference to Kant's theoretical path introduces the alternative methodologies advanced by Fabio Introini regarding the possibility of designing a new sociological paradigm to analyse contemporary society, with a view to freeing it from the centrality of globalisation. The author imagines theoretical models of complexity capable of releasing sociological theory from the modern bonds that continue to transpire, in an evident manner, in discourses concerning the global. In particular Introini refers to those theories of complexity developed recently on epistemological bases, especially by Bruno Latour, according to whom the global and the local exist only within the reality of networks and links where collectives assemble, seeing that no container is an *a priori* datum. This is a novel paradigm also because it invites sociologists to respond to basic issues such as the identification of guiding criteria capable of orienting research in a common direction, seeing that the old criteria of exclusion/inclusion are no longer applicable. In this sense, theories of complexity sanction the liberation of the differences characterising contemporary society, without making the process intrinsic to that of globalisation.

Francesco Villa's paper focusses on the dialogical coexistence of cultural differences and homogeneity gauged in terms of human rights in a global society. The author provides a series of answers assuming the existence of circular relations between the basic concepts presented here: cosmopolitanism, globalisation, democracy and human rights. His aim is that of finding a point of encounter between these concepts, passing through their many dimensions—political, economic, cultural, communicative—and, therefore, accepting Beck's suggestion that a privileged observation point for similar relations is the human rights issue, in particular with regard to the environment and the European context. The very creation of a planetary order based on human rights is the ultimate priority of the cosmopolitan kind of globalisation, which, the author fears, can never be achieved unless Europe makes its dream of union come true and the United States abandon their claim to superiority in terms of values and interest compared to the rest of the world.

Jean-Loup Amselle enhances the "western confrontation" between Europe and the United States by examining the hypothesis that the African continent produced the first documents sanctioning human rights prior even to agreements like the *Magna Charta* and the *Bill of Rights* were stipulated. The French author provides, in the first part of his work, an in-depth analysis of the distinctive elements of African and Western–European and USA—cultures, related to definitions of human rights. In particular, Amselle dwells on the issue of the "invention of tradition" and

the "model" which western literature used to create clearly unilateral views of the African cultural heritage. In the second part, he goes on to trace the elements shared by African and western cultures, following theoretical paths like those of Michel Foucault. The philosopher, in actual fact, draws a parallel, "rewarding" African culture, between the theory of natural law and the social contract, legitimising the sovereignty of the European matrix, and the theory of "the war between the two races" by which to read events, treaties and the value orientations regarding human rights in Africa. These allow us to interpret last year's "Rebirth" of the "Arab Spring" not as a reflection of western values, but as an expression of the natural need to obtain human rights that all humans feel.

Finally, a challenge to the affirmation of human rights in a global society, is provided by the paradox presented by Massimo Conte, according to which we often witness an extension of human, civil and social rights, but at the same time a denial of collective and individual employment rights, the right to a dignified life, health care and a home. This state of affairs is one of the results of the transition of sovereign states from the classical bio-political model envisaged by Foucault where human rights are a priority, to a model of contacted rights (women, the young, the unemployed, temporarily employed, foreigners, cultural minorities, etc.) which reduces personal guarantees. This, in reality, is the "other side of the coin" showing that, in a cosmopolitan society which still gives priority to personal security, exchanging it for liberty, one too easily renounces the right to participate in the social and the political, the collective dimension, in citizenship and issues regarding territorial membership.

The second part of the volume *Empirical Studies on Global Society, Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights,* opens with a paper by Enrico Gargiulo. The author examines the challenge—not always successful —involved in implementing human rights in a global social context. He examines the issue of citizens' rights both at supra-state and local levels and discovers, above all in the case of the latter, many factors that exclude those not granted residential status, therefore limiting their rights. It is a matter, according to the analysis carried out by the author, of the level of citizenship to which all the principles of *de facto* universal rights apply but which only national and local bodies are entitled to concede, despite the fact that universal rights should be enjoyed regardless of nationality.

Equally problematic is the issue addressed by Silvia Sorana who illustrates the consequences of arms traffic between Italy and South American countries. The international community "tolerates" everything in the name of its own economic interests, including the massacre of men and women; one emblematic case being that of the Desaparecidos in

Argentina. This permissive policy is an expression of how commercial relations (in this case the sale of weapons) are maintained and shows how economic interests often override interventions in favour of human rights by those very countries where human rights were born. For this reason the upholders of human rights have proposed the adoption of more stringent international norms forbidding the sale of arms to countries under dictatorship, a position which confirms the need to draw up guiding principles shared at international level capable of governing the transfer of arms. Now, finally—and it is necessary to point out that the law is frequently bypassed—the international community has assumed the violation of human rights as a restrictive parameter regulating the concession of permission to export.

Angela Maria Zocchi's paper examines the contribution of the global media towards the affirmation of human rights, especially when they draw public attention to significant events, but contain the debate within precise limits. In contrast to events regarding more or less recent history, the author counterbalances the action undertaken by independent media and the Internet to avoid information control in cases of violation of human rights. This allows spectators to measure the efficacy of the will to censure, but also attitudes towards cultural stereotypes that persist and inhibit sensitivity towards issues of human rights. Other dangers encountered by spectators are the information *overload* and "compassion fatigue" which can make them indifferent and passive.

Eugenia De Rosa, in turn, pushes the issue to the extent of appraising the translation into practice of the basic principles underscoring the pronouncement of human rights. To this end, the author avails of Benhabib's assumption according to which human rights are a sociological category, a social practice used to identify the cognitive potential of a similar approach and for considering how the rhetoric associated with human rights may interact with normative processes. The schematic representation of some of the rhetorical cases examined—including that for the construction of a European area of no discrimination and promotion of human rights promoted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights – allows to underline similarities and differences, to compare the methodologies used and, as a result, to hypothesis the main critical areas and challenges for sociological theory and research.

Finally, the papers presented by Bruno Meini study the effects of the social exclusion of persons suffering from HIV. Following the alarmist campaign regarding the syndrome which began in the 1980s, today pervasive stigmatisation of those affected by the virus as well as of those who practice potentially risky habits still remains: it consists in norms and

awareness campaigns organised by many states which provoke "moral panic" in society and the criminalisation of the sick, even to the extent of limiting some of their fundamental rights such as sexual freedom. This way, in the world of globality and risk, the false impression is created that criminalising norms are able to solve the "AIDS issue", and that states can seize the right to promote discrete principles and values.

The case study submitted by Vincenzo Cicchelli is more detailed, dwelling as it does on the ways cosmopolitan practices and identities take shape in a global society. The latter is intended as a phenomenon characterised by a dimension where states no longer constitute the exclusive unit for analysis and where it is increasingly possible to detect the presence of a cosmopolitan awareness, which the author found, among others, among students taking part in the Erasmus Project. In particular, Cicchelli denotes within the testimonies of the students interviewed a sense of cultural pluralism and diffused nationality which may be called *Cosmopolitan Bildung,* which might be assumed as a new paradigm for the analysis of both inter-individual and inter-cultural relations. The new social phenomena occurring in the global world require adequate conceptual categories by which to interpret them, beginning with the topic of social inequality, particularly in the light of comparison with other practices one can note within the global society and which the Erasmus students, like every other global citizen can experience first hand.

Finally, Paolo de Nardis and Luca Alteri, propose a critical analysis of the global society, from the point of view of the Italian cultural left, in terms of how both its parliamentary and non-parliamentary organisations consider the Europeanisation process. Following a pathway of theoretical comparison and empirical investigation, the authors describe the transition from an attitude of indifference to one of profound scepticism regarding Europe that the Italian left matured before reaching its more recent "no" and "new global" stance. Not surprisingly, also finds traces of these movements' tendency towards *multilevel governance* in the position the European Union has promoted and applied to present social dynamics, in which global movements take part in a sociologically significant manner.

The route proposed by *Global Society, Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights* tends, therefore, to touch on some of the most critical aspects of the global society and the affirmation of human rights; critical because inherited from crises produced by preceding societies and their still-present dynamics, with a view to providing sociological research with tools capable of reading and interpreting cosmopolitan issues which may no longer be addressed on the basis of classical Euro-centric categories, beginning with the unavoidable question of human rights.

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