

# *Citizenship, Community and Harm in World Politics*

## **An Interview with Andrew Linklater**

Andrew Linklater has been a leading figure in the development of a critical theory of world politics and international ethics. His wide-ranging scholarship, including work on citizenship, cosmopolitanism and the harm principle, has been highly influential in the 'normative turn' in International Relations (IR) theory.

After graduating from Aberdeen University, Andrew Linklater completed a postgraduate degree at Oxford and then a PhD at the London School of Economics. After teaching in Australia at the University of Tasmania and Monash University, he took up a professorship at Keele University before becoming the 10<sup>th</sup> Woodrow Wilson Professor at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, in 2000. He is a member of the Academy of Social Sciences, a Fellow of the British Academy, and a Founding Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales.

Andrew Linklater's doctoral research came to print in 1982 as *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations* (republished 1990), a work which engaged with the ethical obligations between citizens and non-citizens. In 1990, he published *Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations*, a book that discussed the fluid nature of moral community in world politics. His next major work, *The Transformation of Political Community* (1998), explored further this question by outlining potentialities for new forms of citizenship and community. In addition to this path-breaking work, Andrew Linklater co-authored, with Hidemi Suganami, an important commentary on *The English School of International Relations* (2006). He has also been the co-editor of a number of books, including *Boundaries in Question: New Direction in International Relations* (1995), *Theories of International Relations* (1996, 2002, 2005, 2009), *International Relations: Critical Concepts in Political Science* (2000), and *Political Loyalty and the Nation-State* (2003). His most influential essays have recently been collected in the volume *Critical Theory and World Politics* (2007). Andrew Linklater's forthcoming book *The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011) is the first of three volumes focusing on the harm principle as the starting point of a historically grounded critical-theoretical approach to world politics.

This interview was conducted with Shannon Brincat between April and June, 2009, at Aberystwyth University, United Kingdom.

### **Beyond Kant and Marx: themes and influences**

*When accompanying the evolution of your work, which spans more than thirty years, one is faced with the persistence of certain themes and interests that are, however, continuously pushed forward and even reformulated. What would you say are the main 'knowledge-constitutive interests' of your work, and what has changed since you began?*

I think it is fair to say that the defence of ethical universalism – and support for cosmopolitanism – has been a driving interest throughout. There have been changes of approach. I began with an essentially Kantian standpoint and developed through the Habermasian discourse ethics to the current defence of a global harm principle. Those are not fundamental

changes, however, because my recent argument for a harm principle integrates the earlier standpoints. Admittedly, more work is needed to show how the different themes fit together.

The other main change is a shift in focus, from the tension between citizenship and humanity in seventeenth and eighteenth century theories of the state and international law, to the question of the expansion and contraction of the boundaries of moral and political community. In this context, my work on the English School approach to international society served as a bridge to more recent work on harm in world politics, which draws on process sociology (based on Norbert Elias's writings) to reach a higher point of synthesis in the study of international relations.<sup>1</sup> In a nutshell, then: there has been a shift from the problem of citizenship, to the problem of community and to the problem of harm. I explained this in the introduction to *Critical Theory and World Politics*.

*How did these shifts relate to developments in world politics in the past thirty years?*

What is striking – and pleasing - from my perspective is the growing prominence of cosmopolitan ideas, both in political theory/international political theory and practice over the last few years. There has been an increase in the number of works that discuss cosmopolitanism in one form or another, and an increase in the number of people who are involved in, or broadly support, a cosmopolitan project of some kind. There has been an obvious increase in the number of people, both inside the academic world and beyond it, who recognise that rising levels of human interconnectedness require new 'post-national' institutions and ideas. Part of the challenge is to create a cosmopolitan vocabulary that addresses the challenges of global interconnectedness while respecting cultural and other differences between people. The proliferation of non-governmental organisations that are concerned with humanitarian issues (such as torture, land mines, poverty, environmental issues and so forth) illustrates the small but important shift in thinking about the relationship between citizenship and humanity in the recent period.

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<sup>1</sup> Since Norbert Elias's writings are not well known in IR, the following comments may be helpful. In *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, Blackwell: Oxford 2000, Elias developed an approach to long-term processes of change in Western European societies that focused on the interplay between state-building and war, urbanisation and capitalist economic development, and changing attitudes to the body and violence. The approach was not limited to explaining developments within the societies concerned but analysed developments in their external relations as part of a study of the transformation of human society as a whole. For further discussion, see A. Linklater, 'Process Sociology and International Relations', *Sociological Review*, forthcoming, and A. Linklater and S. Mennell, 'Retrospective: Norbert Elias, The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations', *History and Theory*, 2010, in press.

More and more people in different parts of the world are aware of how everyday conduct affects human possibilities and arrangements elsewhere. Whether we are looking at the academic world, social movements or everyday conduct, there have been some important advances. In this regard, for all their faults, the development of International Criminal Law and the formation of the International Criminal Court are important developments. That is not to underestimate the importance of countervailing forces and ideologies, or to assume that progress in cosmopolitan theory and practice is guaranteed. It is only to suggest that cosmopolitan ideas are now far more mainstream – in academic circles and in the broader culture than they were thirty to forty years ago when my own career began.

*Your first book, Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations, introduced a new angle into the study of world politics.<sup>2</sup> What influenced you to write this book? How did the question of ‘men and citizens’ become a problem for you?*

There are two answers to that question. First, quite by accident I came across, in the early 1970s, the Carnegie Foundation *Classics of International Law* series. Reading Pufendorf and Vattel’s writings on international law,<sup>3</sup> the theme that stood out was the relationship between the law of nature, which governed all human beings in the original state of nature, and public law – or the law of the state – pertaining to relations between citizens. Reading these texts led to an interest in the tension between the two moralities, and in what seemed to be a dilution of the laws of humanity once people were divided into separate states.

Second, when I was an undergraduate studying Politics and International Relations (an unusual combination at the time) at Aberdeen University in the late sixties and early seventies, I couldn’t quite understand why Political Theory and International Relations were not more closely connected. In those years, it is important to remember, there was almost no literature on what we now call ‘international political theory.’ However, two works on course reading lists encouraged me to think that there was something wrong about that state of affairs, something peculiar and puzzling: these were Arnold Wolfers’s *Discourse*

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew Linklater, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations*, London: Macmillan, 1982, republished with ‘Postscript on Habermas and Foucault’ in 1990.

<sup>3</sup> S. von Pufendorf, *The Two Books on the Duty of Man and Citizen According to Natural Law* (1682), (Trans. F.G. Moore) *Classics of International Law*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1927. E. de Vattel, *The Law of Nations or Principles of Natural Law Applied to the Conduct and to the Affairs of Nations and of Sovereigns* (1758), (Intro. A. de Lapradelle, Trans. C.G. Fenwick), *Classics of International Law*, Carnegie Institute, Washington, D.C, 1916.

*and Collaboration* and Stanley Hoffmann's *The State of War*.<sup>4</sup> These books dealt with Rousseau and Kant on politics and ethics, in Hoffman's case, and with Weber on the ethics of conviction and responsibility, in Wolfers' case. They started me thinking about links between Political Theory and International Relations. Thanks to Hoffmann's book, for example, I learned about Rousseau's focus on the tension between how we treat each other within states and how we treat the members of other societies.

To go further, I was taught by Brian Midgley, a Thomist natural lawyer, who had worked on the ethical issues surrounding nuclear weapons and who was an expert in the just war tradition.<sup>5</sup> I received a great deal of encouragement from him about how to think about international ethics or international political theory. He made the inquiry seem entirely natural and legitimate at a time when there was considerable indifference – and some resistance – to that way of thinking.

Later, and as a result of reading many of Hegel and Marx's political writings (thanks to a postgraduate course at Oxford), the notion of tensions and contradictions in society started to fascinate me.

So by this odd route I ended up with the sense that there were contradictions in the way in which we manage obligations between citizens and duties to other human beings. I continue to work on that topic, but in ways that are now more influenced by sociological writings than by Political Theory.

*The theoretical argument of Men and Citizens was pushed forward and developed considerably in your following book, Beyond Realism and Marxism.*<sup>6</sup> *Could you tell us a bit more about the importance of Marx for the development of your thought?*

*Men and Citizens* tried to establish that there had been a degree of progress in social and political theory – and particularly in the Kantian tradition – in wrestling with the questions of sovereignty, citizenship and humanity. I was trying to show that there had been a degree of progressive thinking. Although this should not be mistaken for a linear process, nevertheless it seemed legitimate to point to advances in social and political thought. It was possible to compare, for example, ancient

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<sup>4</sup> Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays in International Politics*, London: The John Hopkins University Press 1965. Stanley Hoffmann, *The State of War: Essays on the Theory and Practice of International Politics*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965.

<sup>5</sup> E. B. F. Midgley, *The Natural Law Tradition and the Theory of International Relations*. London: Elek 1975.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Linklater, *Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations*, London: Macmillan, 1990.

Greek thinking, which was centred on the polis, and international relations thinking originating from the birth of modern, secular natural law – which seemed to be struggling, more than the Greeks ever did, with some notion of the moral equality of all people, an idea that is central to cosmopolitanism. Kant’s writing and his critique of the ‘miserable comforters’ were important influences in this regard.<sup>7</sup>

The reason for writing *Beyond Realism and Marxism* was that Marxism seemed to offer an alternative to the realist view that people are more or less bound to live in separate communities that compete for power and security. Marx offered a panoramic overview of how people have been drawn into larger social systems and global relations over the last few millennia. The tension between the anticipated socialist world order and the persistence of nationalism led to fascinating discussions about the boundaries of community, how they have changed over time, and how far obligations can extend beyond the nation (potentially embracing the whole species). My assumption was that comparing realism and Marxism could lead to a better conceptual framework with which to understand the problem of community in world politics.

Reading the Marxist literature also forced me to think about questions of method. When I was writing *Men and Citizens*, I was not particularly aware of Critical Theory – indeed, it did not really enter the IR discussion until Robert Cox published his renowned essays in *Millennium*.<sup>8</sup> In the late seventies, while teaching at the University of Tasmania, I spent a great deal of time in the company of sociologists. That led me to read works by Richard Bernstein, Brian Fay<sup>9</sup> and others who explained the critical alternative to positivism and hermeneutics. That also influenced the approach that was taken in *Beyond Realism and Marxism*, and the interest in immanent potentials that runs through my work on citizenship and community in the 1990s, and the current project on harm.

*Can we then consider Marx as the starting point for an effective critique of realism?*

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<sup>7</sup> Immanuel Kant, “Perpetual Peace”, in *Kant’s Political Writings*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (H.S Reiss Ed., H.B Nisbett Trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 1991, Second Definitive Article.

<sup>8</sup> Linklater is here referring to R.W. Cox, ‘Social forces, states and world orders: beyond international relations theory’, *Millennium*, 10(2), 1981 and R.W. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations”, *Millennium*, 12(2), 1983.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Bernstein, *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976. Brian Fay. *Social Theory and Political Practice*. London: Allen and Unwin., 1975.

I began working on *Beyond Realism and Marxism* because Marxism was an interesting way of thinking about the long-term patterns that had integrated the human species. It was also an interesting way to start thinking about the problem of community, and about the possibility of a cosmopolitan community.

Both realism and Marxism cast light on long-term developments in relations between societies; seen in conjunction, they emphasise the importance of war, geopolitics and production. However, neither approach focuses on the moral and cultural forces that shape the ideas people have about their bounded community: how exactly they are bound to it, what they believe their rights are in relation with other peoples, and what they think their duties are to the rest of the world.

Marxism did wrestle in interesting ways with the tensions between universalising processes, such as capitalism, and clashing tendencies such as loyalty to the nation. But there was little focus on the issue of rights and duties that people believe they have as members of specific communities, and little understanding of the need to focus on what English School theorists call the society of states. That realm is as important as war, geopolitics and production for historical sociology – although little work has been done on how those phenomena influence one another and shape the development of the species as a whole.

Marx was right in arguing that over human history there has been a long-term trend towards higher levels of interconnectedness. However, he did not devote much attention to the development of ever larger ‘survival units,’ as Norbert Elias put it.<sup>10</sup> Important passages in *The German Ideology* and elsewhere emphasised the importance of widening the scope of emotional identification to embrace the whole species – and the need to do that so that the species could gain control over the processes that have tied more and more people together. But the analysis suffered from presenting questions about emotional identification in class terms, a limitation that reflected Marx’s views that changes in forces and relations of production are the driving force in human history.<sup>11</sup>

*In this regard, Marx also seems to be influential by providing an understanding of human freedom centred on the capacity for self-creation. This has implications in the understanding of political community as something susceptible to transformation...*

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<sup>10</sup> Norbert Elias, *What is Sociology?*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

<sup>11</sup> See Andrew Linklater. ‘Human Interconnectedness’, *International Relations XXX* and Andrew Linklater, ‘Global Civilizing Processes and the Ambiguities of Interconnectedness’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 2010, forthcoming.

The crucial passage for me is in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*,<sup>12</sup> where Marx states that ‘men make their own history but not under conditions of their own choosing’ (this passage refers to ‘men,’ as thinkers did until quite recently, when they were really thinking about humanity or human beings). That is a remarkable statement: it captures the point that human beings are initiators, individually and collectively, of their history, and at the same time it shows that humans do not control many of their creations. History is human product but it has been made in ways that people do not necessarily understand and do not really control.

That is manifestly Marx’s view in the *Grundrisse*<sup>13</sup> – and elsewhere – where he discussed how relations of personal dependence in early societies gave way to relations of personal independence under capitalism. According to Marx, however, capital was what was really liberated. In modern societies, human beings became freer in some respects, but their freedoms came with subjection to impersonal forces and structures, which were clearly made by people but not necessarily consciously or with a real understanding of where their actions would lead.

The issue then is how humans can use their rational powers to understand and transform social systems so that people can live under conditions that they have chosen for themselves, rather than in conditions that have been forced on them. This theme is carried forward in Eliasian or process sociology, but without the partisanship that runs through Marxism and with a more comprehensive analysis of long-term patterns of change.

*The idea of an expansion of the moral community is central in your work. It would perhaps be interesting to discuss its intellectual origins a bit more. Could you explain the reasoning behind this idea, and how it draws on your Kantian and Marxist influences?*

The basic reasoning is as follows: the long-term trend towards larger territorial concentrations of power has affected the scope of emotional identification.<sup>14</sup> People can identify with millions – even hundreds of

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<sup>12</sup> Andrew Linklater is here referring to the famous passage from *The Eighteenth Brumaire*: “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past”. See Karl Marx, ‘The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte’, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: *Selected Works in Two Volumes*, Moscow: Foreign languages Press, 1950, Vol. I, 225.

<sup>13</sup> For an edited version of the *Grundrisse*, see David McLellan, *Marx’s Grundrisse*, Herts: Paladin, 1973.

millions of other people – in the same society. Many have a sense of solidarity with their contemporaries in other societies who have similar concerns – about the global environment, for example. More people are aware of the political implications of belonging to the human species. They are aware of how the lives of people in different societies have become more closely interwoven, and some support a politics that is concerned with the whole species. Of course, in general those identifications are weak in comparison with those that bind people to specific communities.

The idea of the expansion of moral horizons or the expansion of community is closely connected with the defence of freedom in Kant and Marx's thought. Despite their many differences, they broadly agreed that human beings can only really take control of their history and get rid of unnecessary force and surplus constraints if they co-operate in some kind of world-wide association – whether it is the association of republican states that Kant discussed, or whatever political form Marx thought was appropriate to the condition of socialised humanity. Even for Kant, expanding moral horizons was not just about being ethically correct. It was very much about gaining more control over social processes that have become global, that are beyond the control of existing institutions. It was about eradicating, as far as possible, 'barbaric' forces, in Kant's case, or false constraints, as Marxists are inclined to argue.

The 'triple transformation' of political community that I defend – a notion that encompasses a community that is more universalistic than its predecessors, but also more sensitive to cultural differences and more committed to reducing material inequalities – draws on themes from both Kant and Marx. The vision is Kantian up to a point. The Kantian republic of sovereign states is clearly limited, but it rested on the important point that the constitution or configuration of the state matters. As Kant argued, if the domestic constitution has, at its core, the notion of human rights, then society is committed by its own discourse to the view that all people have equal entitlements to moral consideration. An action that contradicts such principles is perhaps more likely to be opposed or to cause moral unease. A hurdle is placed in the way of acting entirely on self-interested grounds. It is strengthened, as Kant argued, when states are obliged to defend their actions in global fora. That is perhaps no longer a radical thought, but most states in the history of international relations have been free from that particular obligation.

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<sup>14</sup> See the discussion in Abram de Swaan, 'Widening Circles of Identification: Emotional Concerns in Sociogenetic Perspective', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 12 (2), 1995: pp. 25-39, and Stephen Mennell, 'The Formation of We-Images: A Process Theory'. In C. Calhoun (ed) *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

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Marx never addressed such issues about the state and international politics. Here Kant has the edge, although his weakness is the absence of a consideration of class inequalities, as well as the absence of any vision of a more equal distribution of economic and social power, or a restructuring of global relations that are not accountable to the people they affect. Certainly, in recent years thinkers in the Kantian or liberal tradition have placed questions of global justice at the centre of political theory. Marxists have provided more sophisticated analyses of global capitalist relations, but they have yet, as far I am aware, to confront the relevant ethical issues ‘head on.’

The insufficiencies of both Kant and Marx in this context explain why Habermas’s exercise in reconstructing historical materialism, and in developing a cosmopolitan ethical framework in the shape of a discourse theory of morality, featured prominently in works such as *The Transformation of Political Community*. But Elias’s writings now seem to me to be the real heir to the tradition to which Kant and Marx belonged.

### **The expansion of moral community and post-national citizenship**

*Let us explore in more detail the idea of the expansion of the moral community. You have argued that a major condition for the expansion of moral duties and commitments is the development of an estrangement, an uneasy feeling towards one’s own community...*

An old theme in political thought reveals what is at stake. Hegel argued that the life of the citizen in the ancient polis was unified or internally coherent. The citizen was, as he puts it somewhere, entirely ‘at home in the world.’<sup>15</sup> Whether he was entirely correct about that is another matter, but suffice it to say that Hegel, along with Schiller, believed that the unity of the polis had had to be shattered in order for the species to advance to a higher level of moral and political consciousness.<sup>16</sup> The important thing here is not to suggest that ancient Greeks were so at one with the polis that questions about the morality of its behaviour towards outsiders did not arise. At the same time, however, there does not seem to be any evidence that Greek political thinkers – or citizens for that matter – agonised about the relationship between duties to the polis and obligations to other people – in the way that Rousseau, Kant and others have done since the Enlightenment.

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<sup>15</sup> Georg H. W. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* (Trans. S. W. Dyde), New York: Cosimo, 2008 [1821].

<sup>16</sup> See R. Plant, *Hegel*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973.

I have no doubt that a sense of unease about how exactly one's community should behave towards the wider world is necessary for the development of wider solidarities. In order to move to a higher level, citizens have to go through a process of trying to establish the limits of their obligations to their community – the limits of its claims on them. A degree of agonising over those rights and obligations is necessary to make the transition to new forms of political community which can be more cosmopolitan than their predecessors but also more tolerant of various cultural and other differences within nation-states. This is complicated for many people who have strong attachments to the nation or state, settled views about their rights against and duties to people in other societies, and fears about new centres of power and authority.

*But how does this unease come about?*

Two closely related terms in sociology and social theory highlight the central issues. The first is Habermas's notion of *decentration*, which refers to standing back from one's own community, and understanding how its practices appear to others, and how its behaviour seems to outsiders who are affected by it.<sup>17</sup> The second concept is *detachment*, which Elias discusses in different contexts, including the relationship that people have with their community and the extent to which they can, as it were, see it from outside.<sup>18</sup>

Elias stressed how difficult detachment is for many people. At the same time, he has emphasized that the capacity for detachment has 'survival value' for the species and makes it possible to adapt to new circumstances such as the demands of the high levels of global interconnectedness that exist today. From that standpoint, the tension between 'involvement' in particular communities – identification with them and the sense of a personal stake in their success – and 'detachment' is likely to become more intense under those conditions.

But, as I noted earlier, various social movements have acquired a degree of detachment from their own communities; they are more alert to the problems that confront the species as a whole, including future generations who may be unfairly burdened by current structures and attitudes, and by failures to deal issues such climate change. Those social movements are more responsive to notions of post-national citizenship.

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<sup>17</sup> See the discussion in A. Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era*. Cambridge: Polity Press 1998, ch. 3.

<sup>18</sup> See, in this respect, Norbert Elias, *Involvement and Detachment*, University College Dublin Press: Dublin 2007.

*Let us follow that cue. Citizenship is a central concept for you, and you have argued that we are witnessing the rise of notions of citizenship that go beyond the remit of the nation-state...*

The development of post-national citizenship is central for the emergence of new social and political systems that address the global problems that I mentioned. It is interesting that citizenship is a concept that is often used in that context – examples are notions of world or cosmopolitan citizenship, good international citizenship and environmental citizenship.<sup>19</sup>

In *The Transformation of Political Community*, I argued that there has been some movement towards creating what Habermas calls post-national citizenship and post-national communities. That means that there are new sensitivities to the various forms of suffering incurred by distant strangers, and there is the whole realm of NGO activity that is concerned with reducing transnational harm. A central claim was that the universalistic and egalitarian ideology that is central to modern political life provides cultural resources that various groups can harness to emancipatory causes that are transnational in focus.

Notions such as world citizenship are an extension of the dominant ideas about the relationship between the citizen and the state, and an attempt to equip modern peoples with the conceptual resources – which already exist within the relations that tie them together – that are necessary to deal with global challenges.

*Is that the role you see post-national notions of citizenship playing in the current context?*

Yes. Notions of post-national citizenship, whether encapsulated in the idea of world citizenship or good international citizenship, are important attempts to develop a vocabulary that prepares communities for the challenges of rising levels of interconnectedness. They express the view that the modern sovereign states-system is a dead end. They suggest how, over time, people can weave more inclusive notions of community into their lives.

The idea of post-national citizenship is significant because it relies on one of the great achievements of modern democratic societies: the

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<sup>19</sup> See Andrew Linklater, “Cosmopolitan Political Communities in International Relations”, *International Relations*, 16(1), 2002, 135-150; Andrew Linklater, “What is a good international citizen”, in *Critical Theory and World Politics: Citizenship, sovereignty and humanity*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2007.

establishment of a web of legal, political and economic rights. Over approximately the last two hundred years, there has been an overall trend towards universalising citizenship – in other words, towards the extension of rights to more and more social strata, and to deepening the meaning of these rights so that they address the political concerns of the more vulnerable members of society.

This is no more than an overall trend – many will emphasise that social and economic rights, for example, have been weakened with the advance of market liberalism, as have civil rights since 9/11. Even so, there was, early on, an emancipatory dimension to the language of citizenship that creates the possibility of a bridge from the nation to the world, from national citizenship to good international or cosmopolitan citizenship. The idea of citizenship, notwithstanding its historical fusion with sovereignty, territoriality and nationality, provides the cultural resources that make it easier to grasp the outlines of new forms of political community that are essential to deal with global problems. Those issues have made the question of whether people can balance national and international loyalties – and overcome the old conflicts between humanity and citizenship, between ‘men’ and ‘citizens,’ – a fundamental political problem and not just an interesting philosophical matter. In sum, citizenship can be a moral resource in the quest to reduce violent and non-violent harm in world politics.

*Yet, citizenship is still seen as implying an allegiance to a bounded community. Is your use of the notion of post-national citizenship an attempt to balance utopianism and realism in your analysis?<sup>20</sup>*

In my view, it is not surprising that citizenship functions in a post-national vocabulary. True, in some sense of the word citizenship secures certain privileges for some people while depriving others of the same advantages. However, it must be noted that modern notions of citizenship have been strongly influenced by universalistic and egalitarian ideas. Visions of post-national citizenship might be regarded as an attempt to release those ideas from national constraints, thereby promoting some features of civility – a civilizing process, if you want – in world affairs. For Elias, taking the standpoint of the civilizing process entails studying how more and more people have become more and more interdependent – leading to new rules of etiquette and manners, to other civil

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<sup>20</sup> See, in this respect, Andrew Linklater, “Introduction”, in *Critical Theory and World Politics: Citizenship, Sovereignty and Humanity*, Abingdon:Routledge 2007.

obligations.<sup>21</sup> He doesn't put it quite this way, but it is in actual fact a study of how moral life changes, how cultural transformation takes place through changed interdependencies between peoples. Constructivists take note!

Whether that is best described as balancing utopian and realist aspirations is another matter. Carr's point about avoiding the naivety of utopianism and the sterility of realism was well made.<sup>22</sup> But he seems at times to suggest that realism and utopianism run along entirely separate track-lines that have to be brought together. Frankfurt School theory, on the other hand, and the idea of immanent critique, suggests that it is important to understand how they develop within the same set of social relations, each influencing the other. This is also strongly suggested by process sociology. The question, then, is whether the utopian element can actually be seen as essential for the preservation of the social system or for adapting it to deal with new challenges.

*What happens to separate communities like nation-states, when such understandings of citizenship are developed?*

Everything hinges here on the nature of the separateness of communities, specifically whether separateness entails the right to privilege the interests of insiders over outsiders – a frame of mind that has dominated modern political life since the fusion of sovereignty, territoriality, citizenship and nationality. Separateness need not be linked with such characteristics.

In the European Union, for example, states continue to value their separateness in many ways, but without the traditional emphasis on the moral significance of distinctions between insiders and outsiders. The EU has broken with that old 'totalizing project' without surrendering the sense of national loyalties. It is an interesting experiment in combining post-national loyalties with attachments to existing national and indeed sub-state groups. As such, it provides some insights into how citizenship can find new expression 'above' and 'below' the state, and also into the nature of the obstacles to reconfiguring political communities.

The question, then, is how societies balance such loyalties with attachments to wider political associations. It is interesting that in academic circles there are now important discussions about the principles that the EU should observe in its relations with other people – and specifically discussions about the role it can play in defending human

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<sup>21</sup> Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners*, volume I, Oxford: Blackwell, 1969 and *The Civilizing Process: State Formation and Civilization*, volume II, Oxford: Blackwell, 1982.

<sup>22</sup> See Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Year Crisis: 1919-1939*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, p.12.

rights and democratic governance, in promoting conflict resolution and in encouraging multilateralism.<sup>23</sup> We seem to be witnessing a ‘locking in’ of cosmopolitan attachments, as they are embedded in institutions and in everyday life.

*And what is the role of civil society in this context?*

One of the criticisms of the *Transformation of Political Community* was that there was too much focus on the state and too little consideration of civil society actors and organisations. There was a tendency in some of the social movement literature in the 1980s to argue that we should bypass the state – the assumption being that popular movements could secure fundamental change by their own efforts. In my view, the question is rather how to transform the state so that its powers and resources are used to promote cosmopolitan as well as national purposes.

The idea of the good international citizenship is significant here. The landmines treaty is an example of how civil society groups can be successful in persuading states to support humanitarian objectives. It has been argued that there is an element of ‘complementarity’ between civil society and international society – a degree of interpenetration perhaps – in which states endeavour to benefit from the resources that civil society actors possess while attempting to preserve their dominance in world affairs.<sup>24</sup> In that process, NGOs have helped shape political agendas and, in conjunction, they have had some impact on the structure of human loyalties and on modes of identification with others.

What is important to note here is role of civil society in the dissemination of ideas about how people in very different parts of the world have come to be interconnected, and in promoting a greater realisation of the need for justice in relations between distant strangers. There have been subtle shifts in that domain in what is perhaps still a very early stage in the development of human interconnectedness. States are increasingly immersed in complex global relations with a variety of international actors that have reduced their ability to socialise people into national outlooks. People now have a variety of moral reference-points and diverse sources of information that have weakened national attachments to some degree. Again it is important not to overstate the point – only to identify trends that, even if reversible, are encouraging from a cosmopolitan perspective.

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<sup>23</sup> See C. J. Hill and M. Smith (eds) *The International Relations of the European Union*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005 (second edition in press) and specifically A. Linklater, ‘A European Civilizing Process?’ in that volume.

<sup>24</sup> Ian Clark, *Legitimacy and World Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007.

## Harm and the emancipatory commitment

*Your more recent work has focused on cosmopolitan harm conventions and the harm principle. One of your aims is to research how far members of particular communities have historically believed that people have an obligation to avoid harm to others. How did this project start?*

The immediate interest for focusing on harm was Marx's belief that a major transformation was under way in Europe, which would eventually affect the whole world. According to Marx in *The Communist Manifesto* and elsewhere, as a result of capitalism, violent harm between national populations was probably in decline – but only to be overshadowed by non-violent harm in the shape of the world-wide exploitation of vulnerable people. That comment raised the question of whether the most industrialised societies were caught up in a longer-term pacifying trend – as many liberals from the nineteenth century to the present day have argued. If so, the modern states-system may avoid the conflicts that eventually destroyed earlier states-systems. Marx's standpoint raised questions for me about how many forms of harm exist in world politics, and about how to understand them. I realised that there is no tradition of thought and no body of literature that analyses the place of harm – the development of more ingenious ways of harming other people as well as efforts to rein in that power – in the history of humanity.

Another important resource in this regard was Wight's sociology of states-systems, which is a major contribution to efforts to build new connections between historical sociology and International Relations.<sup>25</sup> I am presently in the process of trying to link Wight's project with the study of harm in world politics. This is perhaps best understood as an extension of existing Grotian themes, since various members of the English School have stated, in one form or another, that the society of states is principally concerned with restraining the capacity to harm other societies. At times, reference is made to the 'civilizing' role of the society of states, which brings to mind Elias's claim in *The Germans* that the civilizing process places restraints on people within the same society so that they do not demean, injure and in other ways harm each other time and time again.<sup>26</sup> Stumbling across that passage led to me to think that the

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<sup>25</sup> Martin Wight, *Systems of States*, Leicester: University of Leicester Press, 1979.

<sup>26</sup> Norbert Elias, *The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Cambridge: Polity Press 1996, 31.

study of harm in world politics is best regarded as a comparison of civilizing processes in different forms of world political organisation.

*What exactly does the recognition of the harm principle entail? Are we talking about negative duties of refraining from injury, or positive duties of assistance?*

A few years ago I came across a discussion of Simone Weil's reflections on a basic obligation of rescue.<sup>27</sup> Her argument was that almost anybody encountering a complete stranger who is suffering from the effects of drought in a desert will share their canteen of water – assuming there is enough to share. There was a theological dimension to that argument which I leave to one side here, preferring instead to focus on the empirical claim that many people in many societies and in most periods of time would assist in that way. All that Weil was arguing was that most or at least many would assist – she did not go beyond that claim since she was undoubtedly aware of all sorts of reasons people can have for leaving adversaries, the members of 'culturally polluted' groups and so forth to die.

The important point is that people do not have to belong to the same community to believe they have duties of rescue of that kind – nor do they have to speak the same language. All that may matter is that they belong to the same species. Of course, many may believe that the duty is to some deity rather than to another person *per se*. But either way the question may arise for them of whether the failure to help might constitute harm.

Writers in the area of moral and legal philosophy have discussed the relevant issues in significant detail. A crucial text is Feinberg's *Harm to Others*, which argues that the obligation to avoid harm extends from the more obvious proscriptions - regarding killing, assault, exploiting the vulnerable and so forth – to actually rescuing others, when there is no serious risk to the potential rescuer.<sup>28</sup> Feinberg regards the failure to rescue as a potentially punishable offence and not, as some philosophers have argued, as a legitimate entitlement to withhold a benefit. It is a punishable offence, he argues, when a potential rescuer is in the position to decide whether or not a person survives and chooses to do nothing.

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<sup>27</sup> See the discussion in A. Linklater, "Towards a sociology of global morals with an 'emancipatory intent'", in *Critical Theory and World Politics: Citizenship, Sovereignty and Humanity*, Abingdon: Routledge.

<sup>28</sup> Joel Feinberg, *Harm to Others: The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Thomas Pogge's book on world poverty<sup>29</sup> is also important since he argues that the so-called negative obligation to avoid harm generates a positive responsibility to dismantle what he calls 'global coercive regimes' that disadvantage the global poor. Similarly, Onora O'Neil published an essay on transnational justice where she argues that all people have the right to protest against the way in which they are bound together.<sup>30</sup> It is possible to anchor that claim in the 'harm principle'.

In short, then, the negative obligation not to injure others has radical implications under conditions of global interconnectedness, where people in one part of the world affect the interests of 'distant strangers' in profound ways. This can all be connected with studies of cosmopolitan democracy, transnational public spheres and so forth.<sup>31</sup> As a result, the 'negative' obligations that are usually associated with the harm principle do not stand alone, but come with some 'positive' obligations – exactly how far they extend is, however, a controversial matter.

Let me just add that it is important not to claim too much for the harm principle – so that it seems to cover the whole of morality – or so little that it involves simply refraining from various forms of violent and non-violent harm.

*Could you elaborate on the limits to the principle of harm? It is possible to become 'pathological' in meeting its requirements – for example, fearing to leave the house in case of harming something or, alternatively, acting with brazen heroism to save others?*

In Jainism, I gather, monks wear masks and strain their drinking water lest they kill insects unintentionally. Some allegedly carry small brushes to clear the path ahead them so they avoid killing unseen insects. They are also said to refrain from lighting fires or lamps in case insects are drawn towards them and destroyed. What is striking here is the high level of self-restraint – or self-limiting – compared with the dominant ideas in the West in recent centuries. This is a matter I will discuss in more detail in the second volume on harm, where the emphasis is on various efforts to place limitations on the power to harm – recognising that the capacity to harm more and more people over greater distances in more and more

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, Second Edition, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Onora O'Neil, 'Transnational Justice'. In D. Held (ed) *Political Theory Today*, Cambridge: Polity Press 1991.

<sup>31</sup> See David Held, *Democracy and World Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance*. Cambridge: Polity 1995, and Nancy Fraser, 'Transnationalizing the Public Sphere: On the Legitimacy and Efficacy of Public Opinion in a Post-Westphalian World', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 24 (4), 7-30. See also Andrew Linklater, "Public Spheres and Civilizing Processes", *Theory, Culture and Society*, 24, 4, 2007, pp. 31-7.

destructive ways has run ahead of the capacity to curb that power. Sensitivity to harm in other cultures and in various world religions provides an interesting contrast to the dominant attitudes towards nature and towards the members of other societies in the West.

Realists will argue that states have been caught up in geopolitical relations that have made it essential to work out how to 'out-injure' actual or potential adversaries. Jainism is a luxury that states cannot afford if they intend to remain in business. Liberals have long argued that it is important to balance the duty not to harm with the right to live freely, that is, without being burdened with responsibilities or with fears about the consequences of causing harm inadvertently. The question then is where the balance lies between right to liberty and duties to avoid harming others.

Liberals themselves have disagreed about the right balance – free market liberals and welfare liberals continue to debate the limits of state power and the extent of personal freedoms. The disputes extend to notions of corporate responsibility, and to how limited or extensive those should be. These disputes have become more complicated with the rise of the so-called 'global risk society' and the realisation that current generations, unless there is a change of course, may harm future generations or burden them unfairly, and thereby reduce their freedom of action.<sup>32</sup> Some defend the precautionary principle on the grounds that certain liberties should be withdrawn because of possible dangers and risks; others resent what they regard as an attempt to reduce liberties. They are concerned that the harm principle may lead to some of the pathological qualities that you mention in your question.

By itself, the harm principle cannot reconcile those political differences. But the notion of harm is useful for any discussion about the establishment of limits upon human action. This is particularly important given the revolutionary developments in the capacity to harm that have taken place over the last few decades. I refer here not only to revolutions in military technology, but also to the growth of unintended and often invisible harm to the environment. All those developments create pressures to think about the multiple sources of various forms of harm, and to reflect on limits to human action that have become essential for future well-being, and possibly for human survival.

*What seems to underlie your concern with the harm principle is an attempt to ascertain what each member of humankind may reasonably*

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<sup>32</sup> Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society*, London: Sage 1984.

*claim from others. This was already present in your book Man and Citizens.*<sup>33</sup>

Cicero argued that the main obligation we have to all other humans is to refrain from harming them, adding that anyone who causes unnecessary harm is an enemy of the human race.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, that idea runs through the natural law tradition, and is evident in the writings of Pufendorf, Vattel and Kant, and specifically on their reflections on the relationship between duties to the state and obligations to the rest of humanity. Of the three, Kant was alone in arguing that individuals and societies have an obligation to enter into a civil condition with anyone they might injure.<sup>35</sup>

Of course, complex issues arise about the reasonable claims that people can make in their relations with each other – or about the limits on action that they need to observe if they are to live together. There is a basic distinction between not harming others and acting heroically – in a way that involves putting one’s life at risk. Philosophers will continue to debate how far the harm principle extends. All I want to argue is that the ‘harm principle’ is now central to global efforts to establish principles of co-existence. It is central to international legal conventions that prohibit ‘serious bodily and mental harm.’<sup>36</sup> It is at the heart of a global discourse – still at an early phase of development – about how to balance the rights and obligations that people have as members of particular sovereign states with the rights and obligations they have as members of the human race.

*How does harm fit into the emancipatory project? Does your focus on the harm principle represent a retreat from emancipation to harm minimisation as the goal of a critical theory of IR?*

It is perhaps worth saying that those who have focused on harm have tended to offer a negative utopia – in other words, they have sometimes envisaged a future in which people are no longer subject to various forms of violent and non-violent harm. Here we appear to be a long way from the socialist utopia, which was defended in Marx’s and in later Marxist

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<sup>33</sup> Andrew Linklater, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations*, London: Macmillan, 1982, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Cicero, *On Duty (De Officiis)*, (Eds. M.T. Griffin, E.M. Atkins), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, Book I, 99.

<sup>35</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*. In M. G. Forsyth, M. Keens-Soper, and P. Savigear (eds) *The Theory of International Relations: Selected Texts from Gentili to Treitschke*, London: Allen and Unwin 1970, 206.

<sup>36</sup> See Andrew Linklater, “Citizenship, Humanity and Cosmopolitan Harm Conventions”, *International Political Science Review*, special issue, 2001, 22, 3, pp. 261-77.

writings. It is probably fair to say that those who have focused on reducing harm regard the loftier goals that Marx advocated as naively utopian.

There is probably something of the same negative outlook in Elias's writings, despite some parallels with Marx's belief that social science can enable people to take more control over processes that appear to stand over them. For Elias, the pacification of social and political relations appears to have been a core ideal, but that would represent the contraction of the Marxist emancipatory project.

It is important to stress, however, that Elias would have rejected that way of formulating the central issue. One of his laments about sociology was that analysis often lags behind diagnosis and prognosis. The 'reality-congruent knowledge' that could in time enable people to have more control over social process could only be produced through the rigorous 'detachment' from political positions. Some of the issues are set out in a lecture on Adorno, which emphasises the latter's failure to break with Marxist visions.<sup>37</sup> Elias did have a clear normative position, which is evident in his hopes for a world in which people who violate human rights are regarded as either 'criminal or insane.'<sup>38</sup> Indeed, at one point he suggests that the purpose of social inquiry is to understand the forms of restraint that are perhaps more or less necessary for any society to function, and those that have no other purpose than protecting dominant interests.<sup>39</sup>

I do not see my research on harm as a retreat from the emancipatory project of critical theory. At its core is the question of how people can live without the burden of violent and non-violent harm including exploitation, humiliation and so forth. Elias's work, for example, has obvious parallels with Horkheimer's conception of critical theory. Whether Horkheimer and Adorno had any influence on Elias – and vice versa – is not entirely clear although the Institute of Social Research and the Department of Sociology shared the same building at the University of Frankfurt. In some recent writings, I have tried to suggest that critical theory and process sociology can be brought more closely together.<sup>40</sup> That is partly driven by an interest in certain parallels in their ethical orientation. It also reflects my belief that the efforts that Frankfurt School theorists have made to build on, or transcend, historical

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<sup>37</sup> Norbert Elias, 'Address on Adorno: Respect and Critique', in N. Elias, *Essays III: On Sociology and the Humanities*, Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Norbert Elias, *Involvement and Detachment*, Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2007: 13.

<sup>39</sup> See N. Elias 'An Interview in Amsterdam'. In J. Goudsblom and S. Mennell (eds) *The Norbert Elias Reader*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1998, 145.

<sup>40</sup> Andrew Linklater, "Towards a Sociology of Global Morals with an Emancipatory Intent", *Review of International Studies*, 21, 1, 2007, 135-50.

materialism fall short of the explanation of long-term processes of change that can be found in process sociology.

*What kind of notion of emancipation would you suggest?*

The question is whether or not there is a rolling back of the grander aspirations that one finds, for example, in Marx's writings. What is suggested here is a utopia of limited aspirations, one that is the direct product of what Charles Taylor calls the Enlightenment 'affirmation of ordinary life.'<sup>41</sup> It is a vision of 'ordinary virtues' that has appealed to many thinkers – from Montaigne and Montesquieu, Horkheimer and Adorno, Shklar and Rorty, and Primo Levi to mention just a few. It rests on a humanistic ethic but, as noted earlier, one that supports not only negative but also positive obligations. The correct balance between them – as well as between personal or collective rights and duties – is still in the process of being worked out, as we can see from many of the forms of cooperation and conflict that dominate world politics.

### **Critical Theory in world politics: challenges and future**

*In an answer to a previous question, you talked about the expansion of the moral community as a matter of moving 'to a higher level.' This resonates with a passage in your book *Men and Citizens*, in which you talk about the possibility of placing 'different social formations upon a scale of ascending types in accordance with the extent to which each approximates the conditions of realised human freedom.'<sup>42</sup> For many critics, this means subscribing to the modern narrative of progress and Western superiority...*

The idea of the scale of forms was designed to highlight two things: on the one hand, the different levels of emancipation from the constraints of particular, or particularistic, social groups; on the other, different positions in relation to a cosmopolitan ethic that stressed the moral equality of people. The idea of a scale of forms, which I borrowed from Collingwood,<sup>43</sup> was a useful heuristic device at the time of writing *Men*

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<sup>41</sup> Linklater is here referring to the third part of Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

<sup>42</sup> Andrew Linklater, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations*, London: Macmillan, 1982, xi, 160.

<sup>43</sup> See especially "III. The Scale of Forms" in Collingwood, *An Essay on Philosophical Method* (1933), Oxford University Press: 2005, 54-60.

*and Citizens*. I have not used it since, in part because it smacks of nineteenth century ideas about a natural hierarchy of peoples, or about natural distinctions between the ‘civilized’ and the less ‘advanced.’

Nevertheless, I would still argue that it is possible – to use an unfashionable claim – to analyse forms of collective learning. The reference here is to Elias’s comment that modern humans are still at the beginning of what may be a long collective learning process in which people within their respective groups and in their relations with others find ways of living together more harmoniously.<sup>44</sup> It is certainly possible, as Kant, argued, to ask what different societies contributed to ideas of world citizenship. The implication here is that different peoples might indeed be located on a scale of forms, some having contributed more than others to political ideas and institutions that can promote a more cosmopolitan world order.

Problems set in if it is assumed that some contributed more than others because of some natural qualities and endowments. Elias maintains that the idea of collective social learning is worth defending, but it should not be accompanied by the assumption that earlier peoples faced a choice between ‘their values or ours,’ and made the wrong choice through some defect in their reasoning or some deficiency. Any discussion of collective learning has to be conscious of that point.

The idea of a scale of forms was not constructed with that thought in mind. It had the heuristic purpose of emphasising important changes in the relationship between conceptions of the state, citizenship and humanity that marked movement towards more cosmopolitan forms of reasoning.

*How does this notion of collective learning relate to your earlier points on harm?*

In this context, the idea of collective learning refers to advances in understanding how humans can co-exist without the forms of violent and non-violent harm that have dominated much of their history thus far. It refers to identifying the most accessible forms of solidarity between strangers who belong to different ways of life and have competing conceptions of how they should live. Amidst the differences there are certain shared vulnerabilities and common aversions to pain and suffering that can provide the basis for advances in learning how to live together more amicably.

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<sup>44</sup> Norbert Elias, *The Society of Individuals*, London: Continuum 2001.

*Your cautious approach suggests that, when thinking about the expansion of moral commitments or civilising processes, we need to temper optimism with an awareness of the dangers of modernity...*

There is indeed a ‘dark side of modernity’ – visible, for example, in extraordinary state powers as expressed in total warfare, genocide and so forth. It is only in more recent times that I have discovered the language that seems to capture those different dynamics rather well. I am thinking of the Elias’s argument, when he emphasizes in *The Germans* and elsewhere that civilising processes and de-civilising processes always develop in tandem.<sup>45</sup> The question is which has the upper hand at any particular moment.

This strikes me as a particularly effective way of trying to capture those tensions within modern societies – that there are latent potentialities for more cosmopolitan communities in the way in which modern societies are constructed but, at the same time, they come up against various forms of power, domination and resistance. As Elias puts it, the pressures to become sensitive to the needs and interests of people over greater distances have increased, but most people remain firmly wedded to a particular state, and to the belief that the interests of co-nationals or fellow-citizens come first. So there is still a major imbalance in the way we think about obligations to our own societies and to other peoples.

It is also crucial to add that those emancipatory ideals can sometimes serve – as the post-structuralist critique of ‘enlightenment thinking’ has shown – the ‘dark side.’ Various social movements – Marxist most obviously – harnessed the language of liberty and fraternity to commit terrible acts against other human beings. This is also part of the internal tensions within modern societies. All those points could be described as raising questions about the ‘material’ context in which, for example, the tensions between citizenship and humanity arise and are played out. That is to say, they are designed to focus on how those tensions arose in conjunction with particular patterns of state-formation, economic development, demands to become better attuned to other people over greater distances and so forth.

*How would you respond to the postmodern injunction to be sensitive to diversity, difference and plurality?*

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<sup>45</sup> See the discussion in J. Fletcher *Violence and Civilisation: An Introduction to the Work of Norbert Elias*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997.

The standard view is that Critical Theory (capital ‘C’ and ‘T’) is embedded in the Enlightenment project of creating universal arrangements, whereas postmodernism/poststructuralism, which is sensitive to threats to difference, takes issue with Enlightenment Reason. Foucault famously claimed that there is no need to be either for or against the Enlightenment, which was in any case a complex mixture of ideas rather than one movement or way of thinking.<sup>46</sup>

More fundamentally with respect to your question, postmodernism itself defends a universal claim which is a claim *for* difference, or for a sensitivity to forms of social organisation, modes of discourse and so forth that marginalize and exclude other groups. Indeed, arguments about sensitivity to difference raise a universal claim. In Foucault’s essay on Enlightenment, his comments on the Vietnamese boat people,<sup>47</sup> or Derrida’s work on Marx and his comments on the European Union,<sup>48</sup> there are unmistakable universalist claims that resonate with Frankfurt School critical theory.

### *How artificial is the distinction then?*

Giddens made the point that postmodernism is a ‘radicalisation of modernity,’ which might be taken to involve a greater questioning of the forms of exclusion that are central to modern ways of life.<sup>49</sup> It is possible to take this further by bringing into the discussion Elias’s distinction between ‘the established’ and ‘the outsiders,’ as well as his remarks about the changing balance of power between members of those strata in recent years – between men and women, adults and children, the former imperial powers and the former colonies, and so forth.<sup>50</sup>

In this context, the postmodern defence of difference can be seen as an expression of a long-term trend towards redefining the relationship between established and outsider groups. To that extent, postmodernism continues the so-called Enlightenment project or the project of emancipation – although many of its adherents would probably recoil at

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<sup>46</sup> See Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?”, in *The Foucault Reader*, London: Penguin 1984, 32-50.

<sup>47</sup> Michel Foucault, “Face aux governments, les droits de l’Homme”, a document written and read by Foucault at a press conference in June, 1981, on the plight of the Vietnamese boat people, first printed in *Libération*, June 30-July 1, 1984.

<sup>48</sup> Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, “February 15, or What Binds Europe Together: A Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, Beginning in the Core of Europe”, *Constellations*, 10(3), 2003, 291-297.

<sup>49</sup> For Anthony Giddens’s discussions of modernity, see Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990 and Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

<sup>50</sup> See N. Elias and J. Scotson, *The Established and the Outsiders*, Dublin: University College Dublin Press 2008. N. Elias, *The Germans*, 25.

this description. At that level, then, Critical Theory and postmodernism are not at odds, despite some efforts to drive a wedge between the two.

*This idea that Critical Theory is not at odds with the postmodern concern with difference was, in fact, already present in your postscript to Men and Citizens, in which you argued that Foucault's work can be "harnessed to the task of developing a critical theory of international relations" ...*<sup>51</sup>

It seemed to me that was striking about Foucault's thought – and largely missing from Frankfurt School writings that I knew about – was the analysis of how the development of the modern subject was dependent on notions of irrationality, madness and criminality – in short, on negative representations of others. As far as I know, Foucault had little to say about International Relations, but as Said and others have argued, the approach can be applied to distinctions between the 'civilized' and the 'uncivilized' world.<sup>52</sup> Foucault did speak out against distinctions of that kind and at least in one interview, when discussing the Vietnamese boat people, he defended the notion of being a citizen of the world who is opposed to efforts to place sovereignty above the interests of particular people.

There was at the same time an emphasis on the dangers of ethical universalism or cosmopolitanism – a stress on how such standpoints can become the basis for violence against those who are different, and who are seen as being parochial. As a result of reading Foucault and various poststructuralist writings, my work of community and citizenship in the 1990s was, I would like to think, more sensitive to the question of difference. That does not mean giving up the commitment to ethical universalism or cosmopolitanism. My approach to the universalization of citizenship rights argues that these can develop alongside the devolution of power to local communities and alongside the greater public recognition of cultural differences. Those can be seen as different sides of the same coin.

The question, then, is how to reformulate the defence of universalism so that respect for the different is a central ethical ideal. That was one of the central aims of *The Transformation of Political Community*.

*Which, in your view, are the future tasks of Critical Theory?*

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<sup>51</sup> Andrew Linklater, "Postscript, On Habermas and Foucault", in *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations*, Second Edition, London: Macmillan, 1990, 209.

<sup>52</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage, 1979.

Going back to Kant and Marx, I believe there are three parts to it. Firstly, the normative dimension, which is concerned with ethical ideas and their philosophical justification. Secondly, the sociological dimension, which analyses how people are simultaneously bound together in specific communities and divided from other peoples, how more and more people have become more and more interconnected over time, and how the tensions between loyalties to particular communities and pressures to develop ‘post-national’ practices and loyalties are played out. The sociological dimension is where I think there is still an enormous amount to be done; however, the issues are slowly moving to the centre of the discipline. Finally, there is the praxeological dimension, which enquires into the moral and cultural resources that can be harnessed to the project of enabling people to live together amicably, with the minimum of violent and non-violent harm and with an increased capacity to cooperate in dealing with global problems that are in danger of spiralling out of control.

This is what I call the tripartite structure of Critical Theory. It comes down to us from Kant and Marx and, in my view, has not been surpassed.

*A final question: what political role can the critical theorist have in the world today?*

For some, the central question is whether academics should be overtly aligned with particular political objectives and ideal states of affairs. The dominant strand of thinking in IR has long been suspicious of value claims and committed to striving for objectivity, even though complete value-neutrality is impossible.

The so-called ‘post-positivist’ movement, however, argued that all forms of knowledge have political implications: they support or contest, however unintentionally, particular distributions of power and wealth, particular images of how societies should be organised, and how they can best conduct their external affairs. Cox’s argument that ‘theory is always for someone and some purpose’ is the most influential statement of the relationship between theory and practice.<sup>53</sup>

Of course, others claimed that theory is too remote from questions of policy – which led Booth and Smith to argue that critical forms of scholarship are addressed in part to the more progressive elements of

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<sup>53</sup> R. W. Cox, ‘Social forces, states and world orders: beyond international relations theory’, *Millennium*, 10(2), 1981, 128.

global civil society.<sup>54</sup> For example, I stand by the Habermasian argument that the commitment to dialogue between equals is central to cosmopolitanism and to the idea of justice between all peoples. For me, that is not just theoretically interesting but has significance for practical matters that arise in relations within and between societies, and indeed in our everyday lives. But I understand the criticism that this ethic seems remote from many practical concerns. Jean Bethke Elshtain criticized *The Transformation of Political Community* because it said little about violence; Norman Geras argued that all humans have certain basic needs and interests, and that there is an easier way to cosmopolitanism than through support for discourse ethics.<sup>55</sup> Their criticisms have influenced my recent work on harm in world politics.

It is important to leave to one side international political theory and international ethics, which are explicitly concerned with the case for and against particular value-judgments. As for more empirical inquiries, scholars face a choice: whether or not to embrace any specific normative standpoint. Those who chose not to should perhaps consider ways in which their approach may contribute to the perpetuation of social arrangements which some find unjust – even if the main task is explanation or understanding. Those who do align themselves with ethical standpoints need to engage with competing perspectives and confront what may be unpalatable facts. For critical theorists, the aim is not to side with contemporary political movements necessarily, but rather to take the long-term view by thinking about alternative forms of world political organisation and the prospects for realising them.

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<sup>54</sup> Ken Booth, 'Discussion: Reply to Wallace', *Review of International Studies* 23 (3) 2007 and Steve Smith, 'Power and Truth: A Reply to William Wallace', *Review of International Studies* 23 (4) 2007.

<sup>55</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Really Existing Communities", *Review of International Studies*, 25(1), (Jan, 1999), 141-146. Norman Geras, "The View from Everywhere", *Review of International Studies*, 25(1), (Jan. 1999), 157-163.