
GLOBALISATION AND ALTERGLOBALISATION IN THE HYPERPOLITICAL ERA*

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A- In speaking of *hyperpolitics* we need to distinguish between three different phenomena
TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The author's original distinction is between *mundialización*, *globalización* and *universalización de valores*. Although it is the first of these that perhaps most closely corresponds to the meaning of the English term "globalisation" (and the French "mondialisation"), there is no clear equivalent for the second term, and thus I have used English cognates for the three terms to avoid confusion. :

1- "Mondialisation"

I have borrowed this term from the French, *mondialisation*, to refer to the "planetarisation" of communication, cultural relations and mass migration; the revolution in transport and communications, powered by electricity, of the late nineteenth and the twentieth century. Its ontology: physical space and time are shortened by increased speed. Its extension: the entire planet.

2- Globalisation

Anglo-Saxon writers speak of *globalisation*, the creation of a spatial and temporal globality which extends beyond "mondialisation", although founded on and supported by it: without the *mondialisation* of electricity and transport, globalisation could not have been as effective as it has. The key to its success lies in tele-technology. Much of its ontology is physical (the entire base of the underlying *mondialisation*) but another part is virtual: cyberspace/cyber-time. Cyberspace is no longer the same as physical space: you can chat to someone in Argentina and someone else in Australia at the same time. And when we chat we are neither in Argentina nor in Australia. This is a new space, a cyber ubiquity, almost. Cyber-time comes close to cyber-cyber-simultaneity or instantaneity. I can send an e-mail to 300 recipients in a tenth of a second. This ontology is unprecedented; it is not that of the physical world.

3- Universalisation of values

Rights are proclaimed to be universal (human rights, the rights of children, of women, of old people; the right to a home, to work, to freedom of speech). These are atemporal and transcultural rights because they are worthy and fitting of any being considering him/herself to be human. Universal rights, however, have been championed on previous occasions in history. They received a great impetus in the late eighteenth century (with the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen against monarchical authoritarianism), but they were really consolidated in the second half of the nineteenth century (in opposition to unbridled industrial capitalism) and in the twentieth century and thus far in the twenty-first (coming into confrontation with colonialism, totalitarianism, racism, militarism, sexism, economic/ecological exploitation and homophobia). But rights can be overburdened with western values and this can cause conflicts in other societies.

b- The result is the rise of *hyperpolitical imperatives*:

1- The categorical imperative of the human purpose in itself

Kant summarised the universal nature of the categorical imperative in the formula: "There is therefore a single categorical imperative and it is this: *Act so that you can will that the maxim of your action be made the principle of universal law*".

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And he added to the universality of the imperative the kingdom of human beings as ends in themselves, their non-instrumentalisation and objectification:

“The practical imperative will thus be as follows: *act to treat humanity, whether yourself or another, as an end-in-itself and never as a means*”.

It constitutes the first religion of man and for man. Marx highlighted this in a materialist precept: “The criticism of religion leads to the doctrine according to which: *man is, for man, the supreme being*; therefore it reaches the *categorical imperative of overthrowing all relationships* in which man is a degraded, enslaved, abandoned, contemptible being”.

It is a foretaste of Dussel's precept which reformulates it in a principle of liberation: *The imperative is enunciated in these terms: Liberate the unjustly treated person in the oppressed other!*

2- Ecological imperative

The Kantian imperative needs to be updated to meet the needs of this century. It does not address our relationship with non-humans, with our earthly surroundings, with other species and with the sustainable future that is to be bequeathed to posterity. Hans Jonas proposed renovating Kant's *human ethic of the present* with a *planetary ethic of the future*, which would anticipate the principle of precaution from a position of responsibility. Its imperative would be:

Act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life.

Or expressed in negative terms:

Act in such a way that the effects of your action are not destructive for the future possibility of that life.

Or:

Do not compromise the conditions for an indefinite continuation of humanity on earth.

Or: *In your present choices, include the future wholeness of Man among the objects of your will.*

Boff has synthesised it as:

Act in such a way that your actions do not contribute to destroying the common home, the Earth, and anything that lives and coexists with us on it.

Or:

Use and consume responsibly those things that you need, so that things can continue to exist and to satisfy our needs, those of future generations and those of all other living beings, who share with us a right to consume and to live.

Or: *Look after everything attentively, because care makes everything last much longer, protects and provides security.*

3- Antitotalitarian imperative

In addition to the enlightenment imperative and the eco-ethical imperative, there is also an imperative to oppose all totalitarianism. Hannah Arendt warned of the distorted use of Kant made by totalitarianists in her chronicle of the Eichmann trial. At the trial in Jerusalem, this man—who had committed genocide—acknowledged that he was an assiduous reader of Kant. The attorney then inquired in what sense he interpreted the writer, and the defendant answered:

I meant by this that the principle of my volition and the principle of my life must be such that it could at any time be raised to be the principle of general legislation.

Arendt noted that the accused had altered the initial formulation of Kant's imperative in that “period of state-legalised crime” as Eichmann himself referred to the Reich. The Nazi's reworked formulation was something along the lines of:

Behave as if the principle of your acts were the same as that of the acts of the legislator or that of common law.

This was Hitler's way of viewing ethics. Indeed, the Third Reich's formula of the categorical imperative, derived from Franck, which Eichmann may have known, states:

Act in such a way that if the Führer saw you he would approve of your deeds.

Adorno re-worked this formula to give it an anti-totalitarian twist:

Hitler has imposed on men a new imperative for their present state of slavery: that of orienting their thought and deeds in such a way that Auschwitz is not repeated, that nothing similar can ever happen again. This imperative is as opposed to any foundation as the factual character of the Kantian imperative was. It would be a crime to treat it discursively: in it the additional factor involved in the ethical becomes tangible.

He took it as the imperative of the future:

The very first demand on education is that there must not be another Auschwitz

And he clarifies:

Men who for better or worse accept binds are reduced to a state of permanently needing orders. The only true force against the principle of Auschwitz is autonomy, if I may be permitted to use the Kantian expression; the force of reflection, of self-determination, of not entering into the game of the other.

4- Alterglobalising imperative

Today, I would propose an **all-embracing other world imperative** covering fair dealings with people above markets, the conservation of the planet on a sustainable base and the rejection of imperialism, colonialism, totalitarianism, discrimination of all types (racial, sexual, religious, classist), and any *Lager* or *Gulag*: *Act in such a way that human beings (men and women) are treated as ends and not as means, as free beings and not as oppressed and degraded ones, guaranteeing the future survival of life on the planet and preventing a repetition of Auschwitz or Kolyma or Hiroshima or Guernica or Bhopal or Chernobyl or Guantanamo, or any other extermination camp or place for the annihilation of human life.* Kant left us as his enlightenment maxim the following formula:

Reason as much as you like and above all as much as you please, as long as you obey!
Alterglobalisation postulates:

Disobey as much as you like and above all as much as you please, as long as you reason!

* This text forms part of a wider research into alterglobalisation and hyperpolitics.