Danilo Zolo
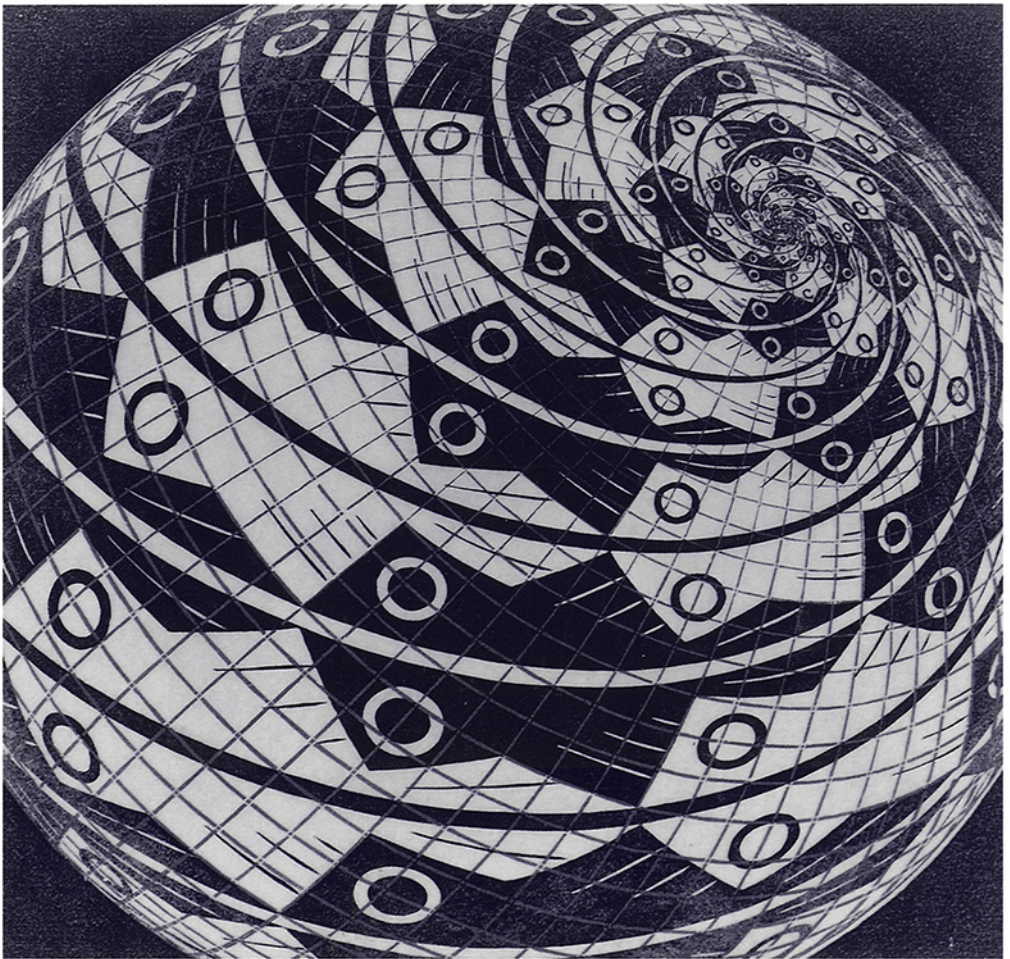
Cosmopolis

Prospects for World Government

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Contents

The Newtonian image of the state as a planetary system and the power of the sovereign as a counterpart of the central force of the sun, fleshed out and added details to Hobbes' basic picture. The stability of society required not just centralized force, but also a system of fixed orbits: a modern Cosmopolis.

In both science and philosophy the intellectual agenda today obliges us to pay less attention to *stability* and *system*, more attention to *function* and *adaptability*. This shift of attention has its counterpart in the social and political realms. The task is not to build new, larger, and yet more powerful powers, let alone a 'world state' having worldwide sovereignty.

<div align="right">S. Toulmin, Cosmopolis</div>

A forced conformity of cultures would cut back man's evolutionary prospects. Herein lies the greatest danger to any evolution planned and guided by us. As soon as we direct it to a definite goal, we run the risk of narrowing the spectrum of possibilities and thus setting in train a process of involution. Differentiation, many-sidedness, and openness to the world are human properties that must be retained.

<div align="right">I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, The Biology of Peace and War</div>

The opposite of war is not peace, the opposite of love is not hate, the opposite of collaboration is not harassment. Each of these dichotomous pairs is at the same end of the scale of mutual involvement and relatedness. At the opposite end of the scale lie separation, indifference, exclusion, and rejection.

<div align="right">H. L. Nieburg, Political Violence</div>

Preface

The opinion is rapidly gaining ground among political scientists both in
Europe and in the United States that conflict between the nation states
of the world will only cease when the situation of international anarchy
inherited from seventeenth-century Europe has been brought to an end.
Many believe this step to have been made all the more pressing by the
escalating globalization of the problems besetting government, econ-
omic development, the rational use of resources and control of the
world's ecology. They propose the dismantling of the system of sover-
eign states which was established in Europe by the Peace of Westphalia
and which, by the close of the nineteenth century, had become universal.
It was a system which enshrined the right of the nation state to exercise
exclusive power within its own boundaries and to claim absolute
independence from any external authority. In place of this 'Westphalian
model' it is argued that a new hierarchy of formally established and
legitimated international power is necessary. In other words, a form of
modern Cosmopolis is advocated, in which relations not only between
one state and another but also between a state and its citizens would
be subject to the control and interventive direction of a 'world
government'.

  According to this school of thought, political order rests on the
concentration of coercive power within centralized institutions. Within
each state these institutions have been used to contain centrifugal forces
and to remove conflict between particular interests, through recourse,
where necessary, to the use of force. Civil wars have habitually resulted
in the establishment of (new) central authorities empowered to exercise
this function. But institutions of this sort have never hitherto played a
part in the relations between states. Here, and for many centuries, the
figure at most of the mediator or arbitrator has appeared, but never
that of the judge or police official. Whenever and wherever they have
been able to do so, states have exercised their own form of justice by

resorting to war. For this reason, while individual citizens may not normally be permitted to carry arms, there is no state in the world which has not attempted to arm itself to the maximum possible extent.

At those times when peace between nations has been guaranteed, it has been effected by means of a balance either of power or of fear. If, however, the objective is to achieve a stable and lasting peace within an international system, then some form of *pactum subjectionis*, subordinating the power of self-defence of states to the control of an appropriately armed central authority, appears to be indispensable. A reform of existing international institutions in order to increase the powers and to enlarge the functions of the United Nations follows from this as an absolute necessity.

Even without invoking so cosmopolitan a viewpoint, however, I believe it to be difficult to argue that the 'Westphalian system' has not reached a point of crisis or to claim that the structuring (and democratization) of the international community has made any great progress in its passage from Holy Alliance to League of Nations to United Nations. The last two centuries have seen no significant increase in the efficacy or authority of international institutions. Neither the peace nor the 'just' world order which these institutions were officially brought into being to promote has in fact been achieved. And in the meantime the condition of the planet has taken on alarming aspects.

Today, as Hans Küng points out in his *Project Weltethos*, each minute the nations of the world spend nearly two million dollars on armaments, each hour 1,500 children die of malnutrition, each day an animal species becomes extinct, each week more people are imprisoned, tortured, murdered or forced to migrate, each month some eight billion dollars are added to the accumulated debt – now standing at 1,500 billion dollars – of the world's poorest countries, and each year an area of tropical rainforest roughly equivalent to the total ground area of Korea is destroyed. In addition, to be added to this list, the world population is increasing at a present rate of over ninety million a year, and is likely, in the course of the next half-century alone, to double, taking its current figure of five and a half billion to eleven billion or more.

It is this context which reveals the structural unsuitability of the United Nations not simply to guarantee peace but to operate effectively in securing the international protection of human rights, the economic and social development of impoverished and backward areas of the planet and the safety of the environment. Naturally responsibility for the remedying of this situation falls most heavily on the industrialized democracies, which are the only countries with sufficient power and economic resources to bring about reform of international institutions. Even democratic countries, however, operate according to methods

which are in many respects scarcely to be distinguished from those used
by autocratic and totalitarian regimes. These methods include recourse
to war, the imposition of tariff or non-tariff strategies which result in the
marginalizing of weaker countries and restrictive or conservative immi-
gration and environmental policies. Furthermore, as a result of the
growing interdependence of political decision-making, the situation of
disorder at international level appears to be exercising an increasing
influence on the functioning of democratic institutions and the exercise
of fundamental rights within individual countries. In other words, the
conditions of 'internal democracy' are becoming more and more depend-
ent upon the conditions of 'external democracy' and are influenced to
an ever-increasing degree by the quality of international relations.

     In the face of such formidable problems it is hardly surprising that
the establishment of a 'global government' is presented by those whom
Hedley Bull terms 'Western globalists' as the sole available alternative
not simply to war and international disorder but, absolutely, to the
planet's destruction and the extinction of human beings as a species:
only in the Cosmopolis are world peace and environmental salvation to
be found. But, as I shall attempt to argue, this is a view which the
growing complexity and turbulence of international relations are ren-
dering increasingly facile.

     My own interest in this range of theoretical problems received a strong
impetus from the issues raised by the Gulf War in 1991. This is a war
which western public opinion has succeeded in allowing to fade rapidly
from its consciousness, but one which, in terms of its importance for
international organization, I personally hold to be among the most
significant events of this century. Sadly, however, this importance lies in
entirely negative directions. I remember the sharp jolt of surprise I
received when, on the morning of 17 January 1991, the Italian news-
papers announced not only that 'Operation Desert Storm' had been
unleashed during the night but that the political philosopher Norberto
Bobbio, in an interview in Milan, had declared the war to be 'just'.
Immediately I wrote an article expressing my profound disagreement
with Bobbio. Neither the theory of the 'just war', I held, nor, more
broadly, theories of ethics in international relations could provide any
justification for this war and, in particular, for the actions of the United
Nations. In modern warfare, quite apart from the now techologically
defunct distinction between conventional and nuclear attack, ethical
and legal considerations had ceased to have any commensurability.
What was needed, I concluded, was a realistic – rather than a moralistic
or legalistic – evaluation of the international political situation following
the collapse of the Soviet empire and the end of bipolarism.

Bobbio made his reply, and as a result further discussion took place between us, both in public and in an exchange of letters. In the end, the distance between our positions had appreciably narrowed, and I was left with a clear impression of the intellectual honesty and sense of public responsibility of my distinguished opponent, a man for whom my personal respect remains undiminished.

But that early shock was far from being the only disappointment I was to suffer. I was grieved by the tacit acquiescence of numerous intellectuals who for years past had argued, sometimes even against me, for the moral, even more than political, necessity of judging politics in the light of public ethics. From that point on, silence appears to have acquired something of the force of habit even across a broad spectrum of the left. There is particular cause for concern about this in that the events of the years succeeding the Gulf War have served only to lend stability and legitimacy to the political and military practices which that war established. These events may seem small in themselves but they are in my view indicative of a profound shift in international politics and balances of power. Among these I include the restrictions imposed on Iraqi territorial sovereignty by the western powers with the tacit approval of the United Nations, but quite without any formal legitimation, and the bombings of Iraq carried out on the personal orders of the United States President for reasons either of internal politics or of outright revenge. In addition there have followed the 'humanitarian' intervention of certain western powers in Somalia in 1993, the neocolonial expedition by France in Rwanda in 1994 and, in September of the same year, the invasion of Haiti by the United States, which was authorized by the entire Security Council with the sole abstention of China.

These last three instances seem to me to be typical of the institutional confusion which characterized the Gulf War and which has in succeeding years become a matter of course. This is the confusion between the powers of the formalized organs of the United Nations, the powers of national governments taking part in military intervention, and, extending over all of these, the powers of the United States. A result of this confusion has been that the 'Blue Helmets' sent into Somalia for humanitarian reasons ended by firing on defenceless crowds, while some hundreds of civilians were killed by fire from United States helicopters which had not been formally incorporated into the United Nations military force. In turn, innocent western journalists were killed at the hands of angry Somali mobs, and captured United States soldiers were subjected to torture. In Rwanda 'Operation Turquoise' repeated the model adopted by the United States in Somalia: French soldiers fought, not under the flag and military command of the United Nations, but as

an autonomous force 'authorized' by the Security Council. This fol-
lowed diplomatic pressure applied by France in direct opposition to the
Organization for African Unity. Clearly the interests of France went
beyond the simple alleviation of the sufferings of the population of
Rwanda, and included promotion of its own hegemony in the region.
This coincided largely with the interests of the dictatorial Hutu regime,
which France had itself supported both politically and militarily.

Even more was at issue in the authorization by the Security Council
of the invasion of Haiti by the United States in order to re-establish
democracy (*Uphold Democracy* being the name given to the operation
by the Pentagon). On a formal level this was a matter of unprecedented
seriousness. For the first time the world's supreme international insti-
tution, in total disregard of the provisions of its own Charter, gave
legitimacy to the *Realpolitik* traditionally practised by the United
States in the Caribbean and Central America and known as the 'Monroe
Doctrine'. It is now easy to predict that in the near future, notwithstand-
ing the evident mistakes and failings of this strategy for the enforcement
of peace and the promotion of democracy, analogous 'humanitarian
interventions' will be undertaken in the countries of Central and sub-
Saharan Africa, over and beyond, naturally, further 'traditional' incur-
sions in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Nor does the new 'global security' strategy devised by the western
powers and Japan provide any less cause for concern. Following the end
of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire, the security of
industrialized nations, it is argued, is now threatened by the explosion
of nationalism and the growing danger of anarchy. Defensive military
strategies, developed in accordance with an earlier minimalist concep-
tion of collective security and international regulation, now appear
inadequate. The situation of increased economic and technological inter-
dependence requires the political stability of the planet to be guaranteed
by intervention of a kind which will meet the needs of collective security
both quickly and flexibly. Such intervention, greatly exceeding the tra-
ditional geographical limitation of NATO, is intended to focus above all
on crisis hotspots which emerge in the non-industrialized world.

For it is from this region, it is argued, that there arises the greatest
likelihood of conflict and of danger to peace as a result of the increasing
economic differentials between undeveloped countries, the population
explosion, climatic upheavals, ethnic warfare and terrorism. The poorest
areas of the world, more than any others, are held to pose the greatest
threat to the regular movement of energy resources, the security of air
and sea transport, the stability of financial markets and the commitment
of industrialized countries to restricting the proliferation of chemical,
biological and nuclear weapons.

More questionable still, however, is the emerging cosmopolitan philosophy which, based on Kant far more than on Grotius, aims to give theoretical justification to the new strategy of the industrial powers and the role which international institutions must inevitably play in it. My fear is that 'globalistic' theoretical outlooks such as those advanced respectively by Richard Falk and David Held (or, in Italy, by Norberto Bobbio and Antonio Cassese) will be found to give unwitting support to just this type of political philosophy. They are liable, for instance, to lend justification to the theory of 'humanitarian intervention' by the great powers in the political, economic and social problems of other states, even against the wishes of their governments or of majorities or minorities within those countries. Still less confidence is inspired by ethical theories which, in the name of a moral obligation or planetary responsibility which they attribute to the United States or the West, are all too ready to produce justificatory arguments for the actions and undertakings of the 'Christian armies'.

Paradoxically, however, the concept of world government suggests itself, even to writers who have declared themselves opposed over these last years to military intervention by the great powers in countries such as Iraq, Somalia or Bosnia, as the most suitable means of engendering a more peaceful and just international order. For this reason they have declared their support for 'democratic reform' which aims to legitimize the United Nations as a provider of compulsory worldwide justice and an international police force.

The present work arises from my opposition to this view of political philosophy, an opposition which is rooted in my unwillingness to subscribe to the ethical and juridical theories on which it is based. It is intended, therefore, to be what Günther Anders would describe as a work of iconoclasm. Iconoclasm, understood as active obedience to the precept 'thou shall not make unto thee any graven image', lies for Anders at the very heart of any non-academic philosophy. In my own case it is more a matter of breaking an image – that of the moral, legal and political rationality of world government – which, despite its entirely regressive nature, or perhaps precisely because of it, has come to assume for us all the overbearing dominance of an idol. It is as if the old dream of *monarchie universelle*, criticized by Hume as well as Montesquieu, were coming to life once more after centuries of obscurity. It should cause no surprise to recall that the need for a higher political authority is a cause dear to the heart of the Catholic Church.

In contrast to this dream of old Europe, which undoubtedly underlies the organization itself of the United Nations (and accounts also for its failures), my own endeavour has been to achieve a conception of international relations which takes account of their 'complex' – that is

to say, pluralistic, dynamic and conflictual – nature. I have attempted also to sketch out the elements of a theory of peacemaking which assimilates the results of recent research into human ethology and the ethology of war. It is an attempt – no more than an attempt, I fully recognize – to develop a theory which not only takes account of the growing complexity of international relations but also aims to take realistic advantage of the contributions that moral and legal philosophy have to offer.

From my own standpoint, therefore, diversity, change and differentiation should be conceived as the rule, rather than the exception, in the conduct of international relations of a kind which are capable of 'reducing fear' without attempting to remove conflict through the use of centralized and superior military force. Such relations, without claiming in the slightest to be able to eradicate war once and for all, would at least promote less destructive expressions of human aggression. The process looks, needless to say, very much towards the long term, and is subject to a multiplicity of conditions which may not be easy to realize. But its object is to take us, in Stephen Toulmin's apt phrase, away from the logic of the Leviathan to the logic of the many small chains of Lilliput. We would move, in other words, away from the logic of hierarchical centralizing which so dominates the Charter of the United Nations and towards the logic of a 'weak interventionism' – and hence of a 'weak pacifism' – which sets greater store by self-organization, co-ordination and negotiation.

The aim of this book is to present a realist approach to international politics and the problem of peace and war. The approach will, however, be found to have little in common with the classic international realism of Niebuhr, Morgenthau or Carr, but is closer, all told, to the neo-realist stance of Robert Keohane and, in some important respects, to that of a Grotian neo-realist such as Hedley Bull. If it is possible to follow Martin Wight in identifying three distinct traditions within the European philosophy of internationalism – the Hobbesian–Machiavellian, the Grotian and the Kantian – then my own position approximates most closely to the first. This will be seen in at least the sense that I find no practical value in the idea of the spiritual unity of humankind that lies at the heart of the Kantian position and exercises influence also on the Grotian. I am, moreover, little inclined to accept that Rawlsian theories of justice or Kelsenian metaphysics of law are able to offer any assistance in formulating the problems of peace and war. Nor, finally, am I able to place much confidence in the ethics of international relations.

This 'Machiavellian' realism is likely to have its roots more in my

early political experiences than in my later philosophical inquiries, and is, at least in part, a reaction to those experiences. My interest in international relations derives from the early 1960s and my collaboration at that time with Giorgio La Pira, Mayor of Florence, who involved me in his mission of unofficial diplomacy in the service of world peace which concentrated in those years on Israel, Egypt and the Arab countries of north Africa.

My final commission for him took me to Tunis, where I was to take a private message to the President of the Tunisian Republic, Habib Bourguiba. The assistance of the Italian ambassador, a personal friend of La Pira, succeeded in obtaining for me a meeting with the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Escorted by the ambassador, I was received in a room splendidly decorated in Moorish style. There I spoke with passion on the opportunity to strengthen cultural links between countries lying on the shores of the Mediterranean, on the dialogue which could be held between the three great monotheistic religions which adjoin one another in that region and on the need to build spiritual bases from which to resolve the conflict between Arab and Israeli (I had been in Israel shortly before, and my conversation on the matter with Martin Buber was fresh in my mind). I advanced in particular the idea of an Islamic Council – Vatican II was then coming to an end in Rome – to be held in Tunis or the holy city of Kairouan and to be freely attended by Christian and Jewish observers. Such an initiative, I added, would receive a warm reception in Italian Catholic circles.

So far my Arabian host had heard me through with gracious courtesy, but, on hearing this, he interrupted me with a tiny gesture of impatience: 'We have long', he said, 'been interested in having good relations with the Catholic Church. That is shown by the contracts which we have recently exchanged with the Vatican regarding substantial investment in the housing sector here in Tunis. If you and your friend Professor La Pira, thanks to your influence with the Vatican, could succeed in increasing this investment for us in future years, we would be most grateful to you and very happy to make manifest our gratitude in some concrete way. As for the other matters, however, I will tell you frankly that they are not ones which hold great interest for us. *Cher monsieur, en politique nous sommes cartésiens, nous sommes réalistes . . .*'

Acknowledgements

1 The Cosmopolitan Model of the Holy Alliance

> The international government of the United Nations is iden-
> tical with the international government of the Security Coun-
> cil. The Security Council appears, as it were, as the Holy
> Alliance of our time. And the five permanent members of
> the Security Council are, as it were, a Holy Alliance within a
> Holy Alliance.
>
> H. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*

A Modern Cosmopolis

For two centuries now the winners of large-scale continental or world
wars have set in motion ambitious schemes to ensure the subsequent
preservation of peace. The result has not been, however, that a
depletion of the military arsenals of these powers has in any way
matched the growth of their schemes. On the contrary, the accumulation
of weaponry has continued unimpeded and threats to use it have often
been made. It would be facile, nevertheless, to conclude from this that
war has all along remained the secret agenda of the great nineteenth-
and twentieth-century powers. What their repeated attempts in fact
amount to is pursuit of a modern Cosmopolis in which peace and
stability are to be guaranteed by a legitimized power hierarchy.[1] Peace,
as Bert Röling has observed, has gradually taken over from Christian
and other notions of civilization in the role of a central criterion which
is used to justify not only the existence of an international juridical
system but also its continued expansion and the preservation of its
pyramidical structure.[2]

But war has in no sense been ended by these means, nor have its
intensity and violence been at all reduced. If anything, the precise
opposite has been the result. Analyses of the long-term dynamics of
'global power' – such as those of Modelski, Gilpin or Wallerstein –