

Introduction

A REDEFINITION OF *TIANXIA* AS A POLITICAL CONCEPT:
QUESTIONS, CONDITIONS, AND METHODS

WORLD AS POLITICAL SUBJECT

China is a story, but *tianxia* is a theory.

Globalization has entered into every aspect of all things. There is no outside of the globalization process to which one could escape. If we fail to see the nature of this new political situation, it is extremely difficult to even begin to deal with the problems of the present. This is not just a matter of political transformation but is also a total alteration of the very mode of being of the world. We can predict that the future world will need a fitting “order of being”—an order that emerges realistically from the immanent transformation of the world. This order I call the *tianxia* system. *Tianxia* is of course a concept from Chinese antiquity but is not a concept that applies only to China. The field of questions it opens up and alludes to transcends China and relates to the universal problems of the world.¹ *Tianxia* references “a cosmopolitan world.” If we understand *tianxia* as a dynamic and vital process, we get the sense of “the world-ing of the world.” The Zhou dynasty *tianxia* system is already long gone, but the traces of the concept have become one way of imagining future possibilities. Although the future cannot be known, still one cannot remain

silent because this kind of universal and ameliorative (善意) world order is really something that merits our best imaginative efforts.

The international political concepts as defined by ethnonational systems, imperialism, and hegemonic power struggles are receding in the reality of globalization as they are losing efficacy in dealing with current situations. If globalization hadn't affected such a reversal, the ethnonational state as the defining framework for the supreme power and its related international political games would eventually become a thing of the past. But the possibility of transcending modern geopolitical "systematized power" (系统化权力) and achieving globalized governance is something looming on the future temporal horizon.

The *tianxia* conceptual imagination anticipates a world system wherein the world comes to have its own political agency.² This would be an "order of coexistence" wherein the whole world is the basic unit of politics. Starting from *tianxia* to comprehend the world means that we take the entire world as the thinking unit for analyzing problems that allows us to conceive of the political order as that which matches the process of globalization. The previous and current imperialistic organization of the world order is grounded in a concept of nation-state and concomitant national interests where all those wishing to preserve the imperialistic system are too lazy to carefully distinguish between what they consider to be "the rest of the world" and simply take it as other places to be conquered. The worldview of imperialism views the world as an object to be conquered, dominated, and exploited—never recognizing the world as a political agency in its own right. "Thinking of the world" and a "thinking that emerges from the world" mean totally different things and are based on wholly different conceptual grammars. To take world understanding as either the subject or object of political discourse is decisive in the "to be or not to be a world" problem of politics. The starting point of the *tianxia* method takes the world as a political agency in its own right. This is in the same vein with both Guanzi and Laozi who highlighted a method of: "taking *tianxia* as *tianxia*" (以天下为天下)³ or "using *tianxia* to view *tianxia*"⁴—meaning that we must go above and beyond the nation-state as a horizon for understanding world politics. We need to take the world as a measure for defining political order and political legitimacy.

Taking the world as a measure for understanding the holistic political existence of the world is the “nothing outside *tianxia*” principle.⁵ This principle means that *tianxia* is the most expansive limit for any political world-ing. All political existence is encompassed within *tianxia*. The “nothing outside *tianxia*” principle depends upon a metaphysical reason. Because *tian* (or “Heaven”) is a holistic existence, *tianxia* (or “All under Heaven”) must also be a holistic existence. The capabilities of *tianxia* and that of *tian* are mutually entailing. This is what is meant by “*Tian* provides no private canopy, and earth provides no private conveyance.”⁶ The “nothing outside *tianxia*” principle is an a priori presupposition that the world is a holistic political concept. Therefore a *tianxia* system has only internality (内部性) and no externality (外部性). This also cancels out the semantic value of “foreigner” and “enemy” within political discourse. No persons can be construed as unacceptable foreigners, and no specific nation-state, ethnicity, or culture can be regarded as an incommensurable enemy. Any nation-state or geographic realm yet to be included within the *tianxia* system is always welcome to become part of *tianxia*’s order of coexistence. Theoretically, the *tianxia* concept a priori encompasses the entire world; but in reality, it does not exist. Three thousand years ago the Zhou dynasty *tianxia* system, even though only realized within a finite geographic realm, was able to provide a practical example of how the *tianxia* concept might transform externality into internality. This is the most important legacy of the ancient idea of *tianxia*.

Since *tianxia* as a concept promises to transform all externality into internality, it also precludes the conceptual logic of mortal enemies, absolute otherness, aliens, and the idea of a “pagan.” In this regard, it differs profoundly from any monotheistic mode of thinking. Even if Christianity in Europe has largely declined into a mere spiritual symbolism and is no longer a comprehensive way of life, the concept of “pagan” has become sedimented in cultures as a mode of thinking and still influences current political narratives. If one cannot find an alien or enemy, Western politics seems to lose its weather vane and its driving passion as a motivating *raison d’être*. Carl Schmitt quite profoundly interprets the foundational distinction between enemies and friends as an eternal struggle at the heart of the concept of the political.⁷ No matter if it is a tension between Christianity and paganism, or an internal tension between Christian orthodoxy and

heterodoxy, or Hobbes's hypothetical state of nature or Marx's theory of class struggle, or a grounding in the ethnonationalist, nation-state system of international political theory or Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis—all of these oppositional conflicts presuppose the basic distinction between friend and enemy as being at the heart of all political concepts. In contrast to all of this, what the *tianxia* concept presupposes as a precondition for any mode of existence or political method, is that alterity can be transformed into a shared order of coexistence. Even if some alterity were to resist being encompassed by a *tianxia* system, it is still the case that the *tianxia* order must seek peaceful means of coexistence. Therefore under such an order any political entity maintaining externality must become a problem for reconciliation rather than remaining an object to be conquered or colonized.

Between the two political poles of oppositional conflict and a transformative process of internalizing the external, we can see a philosophical dichotomy between two distinct concepts of the political. I have tried to argue that what the political concept of oppositional conflict expresses cannot be the true nature of the political, but rather is essentially one of enmity or war. Conflict and enmity are a basic reality of human experience. But if politics is just a matter of researching how to carry out a struggle to its final conclusion, then there is no way to ultimately resolve the problem of conflict—rather, conflicts simply continue by other means or intensify. If a theory can only make the actual situation worse, we don't need this kind of theory. The political conception of oppositional conflict merely exacerbates existing problems and has nothing to offer by way of resolution. Therefore politics grounded in oppositional conflict are an instance of a “grammatical fallacy in theorizing” if not also an “ontological fallacy” that can only bring disaster on humanity. War and conflict indicate the ineffectiveness of politics. In other words, war and conflict signal the failure of politics. If politics aren't used to construct a shared social life of humanity or used to construct a peaceful world, wherein lies its significance? A politics of mere oppositional conflict fails to respect humanity and the world. Thus what is needed is a subversion of the centrality of conflict as part of a political concept, and to replace it with coexistence as a focal point of political conceptualization. In a word, politics *must* learn to reverence the world.

THE WORST AND THE BEST OF POSSIBLE WORLDS

Without a shared social life there can be no politics. In order to analyze and unlock the genetic secrets of the political, philosophers have hypothetically posited an experimental starting point for the practice of political theory. This is the so-called “original position.”⁸ If an original position includes the genetic core of the concept of the political, only then can it adequately explain the secret of politics. An original situation having overarching explanatory power must also be capable of encompassing all possibilities. This is why John Rawls’s “veil of ignorance” (or any similar hypothetical scenario) can’t be used as a hypothetical presupposition. This is because a veil of ignorance blocks out the worst possibilities (e.g., a Hobbesian state of nature) and mitigates the enabling conditions for the emergence of the political. Using a veil of ignorance does not provide a universal theory, but at best offers a political theory limited to contractual problems.⁹

The original position of an authentically realistic and universal explanatory framework must be something akin to what Hobbes and Xunzi hypothesized. Even though the state of nature that Hobbes posited was not realistic, it still included several key enabling factors of the political: (1) the concept of the political must include the worst possibilities as part of its deliberative schema, otherwise it cannot hope to provide universal explanatory scope; (2) security is the first necessity; and (3) any alterity should not be totally trusted. Hobbes’s hypothetical scenario is powerful in representing the constraints imposed of a worst possible world, but it also has a weak point in that it excludes the very genetic possibility of cooperation. If such a Hobbesian original position had been the case, humanity’s evolution from conflict to cooperation would lack any necessary reason. Hobbes’s Leviathan image plays the role of a method of explanation for the construction of a social order. But this hypothesis still has a significant vulnerability—namely, the Leviathan’s power to construct a social order can only be realized internally. How then can this Leviathan bring about social cooperation? If according to the Hobbesian presupposition all persons are mutual enemies, how can a cooperative order of trust in the Leviathan be realized? Obviously, conflict can’t spontaneously transform into cooperation unless originally there exists some sort of cooperative

gene.¹⁰ This transformative potential is what Hobbes overlooked in thinking through how conflict might transform into cooperation.

Xunzi was perhaps one of the earliest thinkers to discuss the problem of the original situation, preceding Hobbes by more than a millennium. Differing from Hobbes, though, Xunzi's original situation posits a cooperative gene by prioritizing the communal body over the individual body. Xunzi points out that in terms of the strength and capabilities of individuals, we are ever so weak, not even on par with cows or horses. But in terms of the cooperative capacities of the communal body, every person depends upon this as a precondition for their survival. Therefore cooperation must take precedence over conflict. This is what is meant by the expression "human life cannot persist without community."¹¹ I take this hypothetical evolution to be an ontological principle: social existence precedes individual existence. In other words, social existence is a precondition for individual existence. Xunzi analyzes the formation of political order from the perspective of economics:

People are born with desires. When desire is frustrated, there must be seeking. Seeking without limit leads to divisions. Thus, there cannot but be competition. Competition leads to disorder, and disorder leads to poverty. The previous kings despised disorder, so they instituted the distinctions based upon ritual and propriety.¹²

Xunzi discovered a seemingly paradoxical phenomenon: that is, cooperation leads to conflict. This is simply to say that cooperation creates surplus dividends, thereby giving rise to unfair distributions which leads to conflict. In order to bring about a stable and trustworthy cooperative schema, a cooperative gene must be institutionalized. Xunzi in presupposing this cooperative gene avoids Hobbes's particular difficulty, but such a hypothesis cannot resolve all of Hobbes's problems. Although a Hobbesian framework has difficulty in accounting for the internal conditions of social cooperation, with respect to anarchic situations of nongovernmental conflict it has quite a lot of explanatory power. Therefore the Xunzian and Hobbesian perspectives can complement each other, providing a more adequate theory of the original situation as a way of addressing the problems of the political. We can call this the Xunzian-Hobbesian hypothesis: an original

situation wherein a communal body realizes internal unity while at war with all external bodies.

The extensive magnitude of the political is a result of the space defined by the polar extremes of the worst and the best of all possible worlds. Hobbes already defined the worst possible world. How then are we to conceive of a best possible world? If the worst possible world defined by Hobbes is one extreme within “the set of possible worlds,” it stands to reason that the other extreme must have precisely the opposite characteristics. That is, it would be a world free from insecurity, mistrust, defiance, deficiencies, and loneliness. Interestingly, a person’s imagination, when directed at the best of possible worlds, is not the same as when it is directed toward the worst of possible worlds. People tend to long for the realization of a world of all good things—for example, freedom, equality, all-embracing love, justice, good will, peace, and material abundance, a world without negativity, without pressure, without class distinctions; a world wherein everyone can realize themselves as self-actualizing, a world without alienation, a world where everyone is happy. This mythologization of a world needs at the same time, though, to be reinforced by a historical myth of modern progress. The problem is that a perfect world is not a possible world. In fact, it is an impossible world. It is for this reason that the best of all possible worlds remains opaque.

Human freedom is not sufficient to transcend the natural limits of human nature. From the viewpoint of Confucius, basic human feelings are the “field of the Sage Kings” (圣王之田).¹³ Only within the realm of human feelings can one engage in cultivating practices,¹⁴ and there is no way of transcending human affect in order to construct an impossible world. Cultivating practices within the field of human affect means that human feelings set the internal boundary for cultivation, and that such practices cannot run contrary to these feelings. Confucius was not an idealist, he was a realist. His envisioned best possible world was a world of *datong* 大同 or “Expansive Harmony”—a world with the highest level of well-being, in which everyone shares in mutual appreciation, mutual trust, and mutual assistance.¹⁵ This would be a harmonious and peaceful world in which strategies for competitive conflict have been invalidated:

The practice of the expansive way is to recognize “the world as common property” (天下为公). It is to prefer worthies and the capable [this is similar to Plato’s political imagination]. It is to teach trustworthiness and cultivate harmony [this is a secure situation opposite to the Hobbesian state of nature]. Thus, persons cannot just care for their own parents, they cannot just nurture their own children. It means that the elderly reach a dignified end of life, that the youthful and vigorous have proper employment, and that the young receive proper guidance in their growth. The orphans, bereaved, disabled, and ill all receive sufficient care. The men have their distinctions and the women have refuge. Goods hate being wasted on the ground, so there is no need to store them up for oneself; strength hates to leave the body, so there is no reason to exert energy in service to oneself. Thus, deceptive schemes are not hatched [this point is so important—if a sustainable social order can be realized in which strategies for competitive struggle have been invalidated, then there is certain to be a harmonious and peaceful world], thieving, looting, and rioting will not occur. The household gates need not be locked. This is called the Expansive Harmony (*datong* 大同).¹⁶

Even though this best of possible worlds has never been realized, it is still realistic and not an impossible aspiration. The world of Expansive Harmony concerns itself with the criteria of security, harmony and peace, mutual trust, mutual assistance, and the material conditions for a surviving and thriving life. But it doesn’t require a cultural or religious uniformity. This means that the world that Confucius envisioned recognizes a plurality of different ways of life, seeking diversity and pluralism as ideals without requiring uniformity. This calls to mind the *Focusing the Familiar* (中庸) passage:

Just as heaven and earth do not fail in conveying anything or sheltering anything. . . . the myriad things are nourished together and don’t harm each other. The diverse modes of proper way-making (道) proceed together without running contrary to each other.¹⁷

This means that a society should model its respect for diversity on the way that heaven and earth show respect for the myriad things. Here we have the positing of a metaphysical ideal: *heaven and earth are the horizontal limit concepts of all possibilities, and thus they are the ultimate axiological points of reference*. Since heaven and earth are all-inclusive, it follows that *tianxia* must embrace pluralism as a value. This is similar to how

Leibniz conceived of God's standards. Leibnizian "logic" deduces that God's standards are the very "compossibility" (共可能性) of all things.¹⁸

The future *tianxia* system that I am imagining would satisfy the standards of Confucian pluralism and Leibnizian compossibility. This *tianxia* system is not idealistic or utopian. It doesn't promise happiness for all, but rather hopes to vouchsafe a system of peace and security. The key of this institutionalized plan is to render strategies based in zero-sum competition and enmity null and void. More pointedly stated, a *tianxia* system aims to make any plan to annihilate an external Other null and void. Thus it can secure the conditions necessary for realizing a truly cooperative social order. Simply put, what the *tianxia* system anticipates is a world order based on a principle of coexistence.

POLITICAL UNITS

The problem of any politics hinges upon the identification of "existing political units." Political units (as systems or entities) determine the internal and external nature of political existence. They decide the scope of political problems, the calculative methods for deciding political benefits, and the general deployment of rights discourse and practice. For example, in current discourse the individual is the most basic political unit. This unit determines individual benefits and individual rights. Such a conception of individuals takes an exclusive (egoist) conception of benefits in order to calculate how to deal with any salient political problems. On many different levels, political units establish the very framework of politics and determines the space of the political. Political units decide what sorts of political actions and political problems are possible or impossible within any given emergent framework.

In the framework of traditional Chinese political philosophy political units have three levels: *tianxia*, state, and family (天下一国一家). In this framework the individual is just a biological unit, and in part a unit of economic calculation, but *not* a political unit. Therefore ancient China never produced political liberalism and individual rights as political issues.¹⁹ Only now with modern China importing the Western concept of individualism has "the individual" become a political unit. In the politi-

cal framework of *tianxia*, state, and family, *tianxia* is not only the greatest measure of any political unit, but moreover it is the ultimate principle of explanation for the entire framework. This means that *tianxia* defines political discourse and all political problems as interpreted within a conceptual constellation focused by *tianxia*. In such political space a political interpretation of “*tianxia*—state—family” constitutes an “inclusive order.” And the ethical interpretation of “family—state—*tianxia*” is an “extending order.” Both of these interpretive trajectories create a mutually entailing hermeneutic circle.

The mainstream modern political framework follows an “individual—community—ethno-nation-state” (个人—共同体—民族国家) definitional structure. The ethno-nation-state is the largest scale of a sovereign political unit. In this model there can be no world political subject trumping the nation-state. The individual is the foundation of the modern political framework and is simultaneously the ultimate explanatory factor in any comprehensive political structure. This is precisely the opposite of the way in which “All under Heaven” serves as the ultimate factor in a *tianxia* system of political theory. The conceptual space between the political systems of “individual—community—ethno-nation-state” and the political system of “*tianxia*—state—family” creates a gear-like misalignment that might serve as a kind of structural complementarity. This kind of complementarity can expand the capacity and scope of the world political and can be helpful in constructing a new concept of the political. If the level of the “individual” is missing, then the “autonomy” of all such individuals has no political safeguards. If the level of “*tianxia*” is lacking, then the institutional order of the world political has no basis, and as such there is no way of transcending anarchic situations in order to achieve world peace and harmony. This is especially the case under the conditions of globalization in which national governments and international governmental bodies are increasingly at a loss to face the challenges brought on by new powers. If a world order can’t be established to meet the demands of realizing a possible global governance, then world politics might just become powerless in exercising any control over the risky games being played by irresponsible global actors.

Modern politics gives rise to two types of political problems: namely, *national politics* and *international politics*. The characteristics, goals,

and rules of national politics are already quite clearly understood. However, the characteristics, goals, and rules of international politics harbor within them profound uncertainties, even to the point of casting real doubt upon the very capability of international politics to resolve conflicts and disputes between nation-states. This is a result of the lurking suspicion that, as an existing discourse, international politics might be causing more harm than good. International politics has no distinctive aims or ideal aspirations of its own. Rather, it has only been an extension of national politics and serves only as a set of external strategies for promoting national interests. Therefore international politics are just an auxiliary of national politics. Immanuel Kant put forth a most admirable idea—he thought that war could not solve the conflict of competing interests between nation-states, and thus a proposal for perpetual peace was necessary. But at the same time, Kant thought that the “alliance of free nations” could not transcend the ethnonationalist foundations that any concept of international politics was based upon. Kant’s proposal was not only unable to address what Samuel Huntington later pointed out as the problem of a “clash of civilizations,” but also was even unable to secure the very possibility of a stable and trustworthy mode of realizing international alliance. Given an isomorphism holding between the sovereign nation-states seeking exclusive and optimum benefits and the optimization of private profits for individuals, even if the survival conditions for a stable and trustworthy mutual alliance aimed at shared interest are present as possibilities, it would remain impossible to realize international alliances even between relatively similar cultures.²⁰

The high level of technological and economic achievements realized asymmetrically in the modern world have led to a dominating and exploitative “other world locations” ideology that is used as an imperialistic “dominating strategy” by powerful nations. An oppressive and exploitative world can only bring about temporary successes, as imperialism cannot totally eradicate resistance and cannot possibly prohibit the imitative strategies of competitors. Hence imperialism can never be a sustainable strategy for flourishing. Marx revealed to us how capitalism inevitably produces its own gravediggers, and it would seem that something similar can be said about imperialism. But the Marxian ideal of “internationalism” based on a theory of class conflict is also untenable. In the dynamic of

competition set by the nation-state system, the conflicts existing between the various proletariat classes of separate nation-states actually exceeds the experienced contradictions imposed by the various capitalist classes within each nation-state. Therefore the possibility of organizing a self-conscious international proletariat is always vaguer and harder to realize than the possibility of organizing an international capitalist class. Unless the existing world order were to undergo a substantial transformation, there is no way to resolve these international contradictions. We cannot expect that current geographical politics and its concomitant “cultural hegemony” based as it is upon an international political order of domination, containment, sanctions, intervention, and war, and only a notional equality among states, to be providing effective strategies for resolving international conflicts. In fact, we should only expect that such an order will be increasing and intensifying international contradictions. And we have no grounds for hoping for the realization of cosmopolitanism or internationalism as some sort of moral utopia, since such ethical idealisms are powerless to change the self-interested choices of actors within the current paradigm of the political. Such idealisms can at best serve to make the absurdity and futility of life in the present world order all the more apparent. For before the world becomes a universal and shared world order, how can a world citizenry exist? Where could they exist? We have to imagine the future, but we can’t determine it in advance.

Currently, international politics are not only powerless in resolving international conflicts, but moreover continue to research policies aimed at totally defeating enemies. This strange phenomenon is really not that peculiar. Since within the ethnonationalist system of national politics there is no optimal method for resolving conflicts, we are only left to carry out struggle to the fullest extent possible. The current strategies of international politics are not in the least bit foolish; in fact, they are all too cunning. Here is precisely the problem. Why is it that with sufficient intelligence in theory, strategies, and experience, there is still not the slightest reason to hope for conflict resolution at the international level? With the exception of those who would claim that such theoretical pessimism is just so much ado about nothing, it would seem that not a single international conflict has been meaningfully resolved. For instance, consider the Palestinian-Israel conflict, problems in the Middle East, the West and

Russia conflicts, and the various contradictions between the United States and China. Political analysts can point to all sorts of contingent reasons for why this or that political failure has occurred, and all such explanations have a certain merit, but the truly fatal reason for all international political failures is that the competitive strategies of adversarial parties are equally intelligent.

Many cunning international political strategies have already become “common knowledge,” and thus the deadlock of conflict is hard to avoid. As long as competitors are not stupid, nor naively good, and are roughly equal in terms of implementing intelligent strategies, then any temporary advantages will depend entirely upon the successes or failures of the tactics and strategies of adversaries. The tactical, strategic, and theoretical level of international politics has already reached its zenith. It is not that we are waiting to develop better tactics and strategies in this paradigm, but rather no matter how intelligently we struggle using this set of tactics and strategies there will inevitably be loss and failure. This phenomenon is indicative of the limitations of the current global political order and signifies the fact that the concept of international politics is currently receding in the face of all this failure. Under the conditions of globalization, international political theory can only shrink into the finite realm of a theory of conflict and is already clearly incapable of addressing the entire range of world political problems.

Globalization changes the mode of being of the world and the ways of life afforded to humanity. And as such globalization must also alter the nature and scope of political problems. It is precisely with the advent of globalization that the limitations of international politics have become patently clear. International politics are powerless to address the new problems brought about by globalization and can't even begin to address the problems of globalization itself. The concept of shared, communal life is assumed to be merely the province of ethnonationalist nation-states and part of an internal dynamic to natural communities themselves. Moreover, the concept of a shared way of life is becoming increasingly rare as a possibility in this current world order. But, as a concept, communal life provides a way of transcending ethnonational systems and the associated problems that come with the implementation of human rights. As our contemporary world becomes ever more intimate and interdependent

among nation-states, a renewed problem of world sovereignty emerges. Therefore, outside of national and international politics, it becomes obvious that we need a third kind of political concept. We can call this a “planetary politics” or a “world politics.” Such a new political concept takes the whole world, understood as the optimal measure for the conditions of shared, communal life, and attempts to understand and interpret the world as a political agency. This means that the central problem of contemporary planetary politics is the “internalization of the world”—or in other words, the changing of this world into a *tianxia*.

WORLD INTERNALIZATION AND WORLD SOVEREIGNTY

Although national politics seems to flow seamlessly into the development of international politics, it is impossible for current international politics to develop into a world politics. International politics and world politics have contradictory political logics. Because of this, international politics cannot serve as a basis or conceptual foundation for world politics. This means that political theory must seek out an alternative starting point. The language games of modern politics are primarily defined by the concept of the individual and the ethno-nation-state. Modern governmental institutions take the nation-state as the largest discursive boundary. In terms of going beyond the sovereign nation-state onto the world stage, there are only war tactics and an absence of any institutional order. Therefore sovereignty and the political are limited by national boundaries. Any attempt to extend the political into the external world changes its basic character so as to become a mode of resistance or war. It is better to say that war is a failure of the political than to say that war is politics continued by other means (the viewpoint of Carl von Clausewitz); war is a wager operating outside the calculations and deliberations of the political. Just because the world has been viewed as an externally existing object, the true meaning (if only implicit) of international politics is just war in pseudo-political packaging. Such “politics” are actually the antithesis of the political. The oppositional logic of modern politics ineluctably leads to a hopeless situation—a world of conflict and chaos. No matter how excellent a nation’s internal political order might be, such an order cannot avoid being threat-

ened from an unstable world situation. Such a nation-state might even be cast into total chaos where, as a single actor, it cannot extirpate itself. But when globalization develops a politics on a world scale, current international warring strategies will no longer have purchase.

Early on some modern philosophers recognized the looming danger of modern politics. Immanuel Kant thought that international law should develop a “cosmopolitan law” wherein everyone not only has their own set of rights associated with being a citizen of a nation-state but also should be conceived of as part of a “cosmopolitan commonwealth” with the rights belonging to a world citizen. However, to reiterate, before the world becomes a world of shared coexistence, there can be no world citizenship. So currently the expression “world citizen” is a specious identity, even though an imagined “world citizen” obviously influences possible futures. Kant himself discovered that an imagined world commonwealth was unreliable (and could even lead to authoritarian despotism). What ultimately can be trusted for Kant, though, is the ideal order of a “commonwealth of autonomous sovereign nation-states.” Jürgen Habermas in a similar way has recognized an imperative that the United Nations should transform international law into world law and that human rights could serve as a foundational principle for constituting world law. But such heroic efforts share a common fragility in not taking into consideration the “worst possibilities.” Such perspectives cannot deal with the challenges of the deep conflicts of self-interest and culture. Moreover, there is a basic contradiction implicit in these approaches to political theory. In attempting to transcend the limitations of modern politics, they preserve the political logics of modernity. Kant’s ideal could perhaps be put into practice under relatively favorable cultural conditions (like Europe) but is powerless to address adequately the political problems of the entire world—for example, civilizational clashes, global financial warfare, hegemony, and so on. Such an ideal is even powerless to secure long-term international agreements, with the current fragmenting of the European Union an illustrative example here. And the Habermasian hope for a principle of global human rights is a more contemporary and popular vision, but the concept of human rights implies all sorts of “ethical dilemmas.”²¹

Since every individual’s rights are absolute, then what to do about disputes between different individuals involving the violation of their rights?

And what if the human rights of one geographic region and another geographic region were to come into conflict? How do we deal with all of these sorts of intractable dilemmas? If these dilemmas can be adjudicated, it means that there is some other evaluative standard higher than human rights; and if they can't be adjudicated, it means that human rights discourse harbors an internal contradiction. Human rights is surely a great concept, but the problem lies in the fact that the theory of human rights, as it is presently conceived, harbors many internal contradictions. As such, appeal to human rights alone is not sufficient to resolve many conflicts. Modern politics still attempts to solve problems through discursive deliberations, bargaining, and the negotiation of contracts. However, not only is it the case that international contractual agreements can't be relied upon, but more important, what do we do about the conflicts of interests and rights arising from the inability to enter into shared deliberations, intolerance, and a failure to reach contractual agreements, in addition to profound cultural and religious differences? Although Samuel Huntington's analysis of geopolitical power formations includes many mistaken judgments, the basic problems he raises are compelling. The theoretical positions propounded from Kant to Rawls and Habermas cannot adequately address the problems of civilizational conflict as diagnosed by Huntington.

The basic spirit of modern politics is "division." Modern political discourse is obsessed with drawing all sorts of "borders." Individual rights are a boundary for individuals and sovereignty is a boundary for nation-states; taken together these are part of a basic logic that splits up the world. The internal contradictions of modern politics have always been hard to resolve. In order to protect all these boundary divisions, modern politics is focused on seeking out external enemies. And without the presence of a real enemy there is still a need to define an enemy. This sort of divisive politics can be seen in virtually every kind of context: from definitions of religious heterodoxy to racism; from hot to cold wars; from colonialism to human rights interventions; from economic and militarized hegemony to financial oligarchy; from technological domination to cultural imperialism—even to the point of *Star Wars* sci-fi scenarios in which we always witness the urge to seek out an enemy.

To clearly demarcate oneself from another, one need only to turn the