

WHOSE COSMOS, WHICH COSMOPOLITICS?

Comments on the Peace Terms of Ulrich Beck

Bruno Latour

Blessed are the peacemakers. It is always nicer to read a peace proposal (like Ulrich Beck's) than a call for jihad (like Samuel Huntington's). Beck's robust and realist form of cosmopolitanism, expressed in the lead article of this symposium, is to be welcomed. On the other hand, peace proposals make sense only if the real extent of the conflicts they are supposed to settle is understood. A detached and, let us say, inexpensive way of understanding enmity, a Wilsonian indifference to its complexity, may further infuriate the parties to a violent dispute. The problem with Beck's solution is that, if world wars were about issues of universality and particularity, as he makes them out to be, then world peace would have ensued long ago. The limitation of Beck's approach is that his "cosmopolitics" entails no cosmos and hence no politics either. I am a great admirer of Beck's sociology—the only far-reaching one Europe has to offer—and have said so in print on several occasions. What we have here is an argument among friends working together on a puzzle that has defeated, so far, everyone everywhere.

Let me make clear from the beginning that I am not debating the usefulness of a cosmopolitan *social science* that, beyond the boundaries of nation-states, would try to look at global phenomena using new types of statistics and inquiries. I accept this point all the more readily since for me, *society* has never been the equivalent of *nation-state*. For two reasons: the first is that the scientific networks

that I have spent some time describing have never been limited to national boundaries anyway: *global* is largely, like the globe itself, an invention of science. The second reason is that, as disciples of Gabriel Tarde know very well, *society* has always meant *association* and has never been limited to humans. So I have always been perfectly happy to speak, like Alphonse de Candolle, of “plant sociology” or, like Alfred North Whitehead, of “stellar societies.”¹ It should also be clear that I don’t take the expression “peace proposal” ironically. On the contrary, it’s for me crucial to imagine another role for social science than that of a distant observer watching disinterestedly. Beck is struggling for a mixture of research and normative intervention, and this is exactly what I mean by the new *diplomatic* role of the social scientist. What is in question between us is the extent to which we are ready to absorb dissents not only about the identity of humans but also about the cosmos they live in.

A historical anecdote, retold in a major paper by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, may illustrate why Beck’s suggested approach to peacemaking is not completely up to the task.² The main example that Beck gives is the “Valladolid controversy,” the famous *disputatio* that Spaniards held to decide whether or not Indians had souls susceptible of being saved. But while that debate was under way, the Indians were engaged in a no less important one, though conducted with very different theories in mind and very different experimental tools.³ Their task, as Viveiros de Castro describes it, was not to decide if Spaniards had souls—that much seemed obvious—but rather if the conquistadors had *bodies*. The theory under which Amerindians were operating was that all entities share by default the same fundamental organization, which is basically that of humans. A licuri

1. The first book that tried to describe scientific networks quantitatively was written by a plant sociologist and took the point of view of cosmopolitan methodology. See Alphonse de Candolle, *Histoire des sciences et des savants depuis deux siècles d'après l'opinion des principales académies ou sociétés scientifiques* (1873; Paris: Fayard, 1987).

2. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, “Les pronoms cosmologiques et le perspectivisme amérindien,” in *Gille Deleuze: Une vie philosophique*, ed. Eric Alliez (Paris: Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 1998), 429–62 (see also his essay in this symposium).

3. It is not clear whether the two main characters of the controversy, as retold by Beck, ever met. See Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). There is a fairly bad book where the two protagonists meet (and the film is even worse): Jean-Claude Carrière, *La Controverse de Valladolid* (Paris: Le Pré aux clercs, 1992). The dispute over whether Spaniards have bodies is documented by Claude Lévi-

Strauss, who retells an episode from Oviedo’s *Historia* (supposed to have taken place earlier in Puerto Rico). The famous passage from *Tristes tropiques* (Paris: Plon, 1955), 82–83, is as follows: “Au même moment d’ailleurs, et dans une île voisine (Porto Rico, selon le témoignage d’Oviedo) les Indiens s’employaient à capturer les blancs et à les faire périr par immersion, puis montaient pendant des semaines la garde autour des noyés afin de savoir s’ils étaient ou non soumis à la putréfaction. De cette comparaison entre les enquêtes se dégagent deux conclusions: les blancs invoquaient les sciences sociales alors que les Indiens avaient plutôt confiance dans les sciences naturelles; et, tandis que les blancs proclamaient que les Indiens étaient des bêtes, les seconds se contentaient de soupçonner les premiers d’être des dieux. A ignorance égale, le dernier procédé était certes plus digne d’hommes.” But, as Viveiros de Castro has shown, making a decisive improvement on Lévi-Strauss’s interpretation, the point was not to check whether the conquerors were gods but simply whether they had bodies.

palm, a peccary, a piranha, a macaw: each has a soul, a language, and a family life modeled on the pattern of a human (Amerindian) village. Entities all have souls and their souls are all the same. What makes them differ is that their bodies differ, and it is bodies that give souls their contradictory perspectives: the perspective of the licuri palm, the peccary, the piranha, the macaw. Entities all have the same *culture* but do not acknowledge, do not perceive, do not live in, the same *nature*. For the controversialists at Valladolid, the opposite was the case but they remained blissfully unaware that there *was* an opposite side. Indians obviously had bodies like those of Europeans, but did they have the same spirit? Each side conducted an experiment, based on its own premises and procedures: on the one side to determine whether Indians have souls, and on the other side to determine whether Europeans have bodies. The Amerindians' experiment was as scientific as the Europeans'. Conquistador prisoners were taken as guinea pigs and immersed in water to see, first, if they drowned and, second, if their flesh would eventually rot. This experiment was as crucial for the Amerindians as the Valladolid dispute was for the Iberians. If the conquerors drowned and rotted, then the question was settled; they had bodies. But if they did not drown and rot, then the conquerors had to be purely spiritual entities, perhaps similar to shamans. As Claude Lévi-Strauss summarized, somewhat ironically, the two experiments, the Spaniards' versus the Amerindians': "the whites were invoking the social sciences while the Indians had more confidence in the natural ones."

The relevance of this anecdote should be apparent: at no point in the Valladolid controversy did the protagonists consider, even in passing, that the confrontation of European Christians and Amerindian animists might be framed differently from the way in which Christian clerics understood it in the sixteenth century. At no point were the Amerindians asked what issue they took to be in dispute, nor is Beck asking now. But asking that question is only the first step en route to adequate complexity. Was every European in agreement with every other? Were there not two (at least) solutions to the problem raised at Valladolid? Indians had souls like Christians or else Indians did not—each position had its partisans. Beck supposes there were only two solutions to the problem posed at Valladolid about Indian souls (they have souls, they do not have souls) and he ignores the other problem raised in South America about conquistador bodies (they have bodies, they do not have bodies). A negotiation between Europeans and Amerindians would thus be, at a minimum, *four-sided*. Bartolomé de Las Casas, the Dominican priest, held that Europeans and Amerindians were basically the same, and he complained of the un-Christian cruelty of Christians against their "Indian brothers." But how would he have responded, how might his views have modified, had he witnessed the systematic drowning of his fellow Spaniards in a scientific experiment designed to assay their exact degree of bodily presence? Which "side" would Las Casas, after the experience, be on? As

Viveiros de Castro has persuasively shown, the question of “the other,” so central to recent theory and scholarship, has been framed with inadequate sophistication. There are more ways to be other, and vastly more others, than the most tolerant soul alive can conceive.

How cosmopolitan is a negotiator who mediates on behalf of one or two of the four (or more) sides to a dispute? It is hazardous, and perhaps ethnocentric as well, to assume that enemies agree on baseline principles (the principle, for instance, that all humans have bodies).⁴ I say that Beck’s stance may be ethnocentric because his cosmopolitanism is a gentler case of European philosophical internationalism. Beck takes his key term and its definition, off the shelf, from the Stoics and Kant. Those definitions (Beck’s, Kant’s, the Stoics’) are problematic: none shows understanding that more than culture is put in jeopardy by conflicts. The cosmos too may be at stake. Like most sociologists, Beck suffers from anthropology blindness. For the sociologist, nature, the world, the cosmos, is simply there; and since humans share basic characteristics, our view of the world is, at baseline, the same everywhere. Perversity, acquisitiveness, undisciplined instincts account for the fact that we do not—we rarely have—peace. When Beck writes that Las Casas was in a state of denial over the extent of the struggle he wished devoutly to end, Beck without realizing it is speaking of himself as well. Beck and Las Casas are good guys, but good intentions do not resolve or prevent strife. I am not saying of course that Beck’s cosmopolitanism is simply a larger version of Jürgen Habermas’s humanism. The entrance to the debating room is not limited, for Beck, to rational agents able to pursue a reasonable conversation. Beck is ready to deal with much wider conflicts. What he does not realize, however, is that whenever cosmopolitanism has been tried out, from Alexandria to the United Nations, it has been during the great periods of complete confidence in the ability of reason and, later, science to know *the one cosmos* whose existence and solid certainty could then prop up all efforts to build the world metropolis of which we are all too happy to be citizens. The problem we face now is that it’s precisely this “one cosmos,” what I call *mononaturalism*, that has disappeared. It’s impossible for us now to inherit the beautiful idea of cosmopolitanism since what we lack is just what our prestigious ancestors possessed: a cosmos. Hence we have to choose, in my view, between cosmopolitanism and *cosmopolitics*.

4. There is of course a great difference between the “cosmopolitan” project of an international civil society and what I am discussing here. The difference, as was made clear in a meeting organized by Ulrich Beck at the London School of Economics in February 2004, is the weight given to the word *cosmos*. “Citizens of the world” are cosmopolitan, to be sure, but that does not mean that they have even begun to fathom the difficulties of a politics of

the cosmos. See, for instance, Étienne Tassin, *Un monde commun: Pour une cosmo-politique des conflits* (Paris: Seuil, 2003), and Daniele Archibugi, ed., *Debating Cosmopolitics*, New Left Review Debates (London: Verso, 2003). I thank the participants at the meeting for useful insights into these rather incommensurable political philosophies.

One way to present this argument is to contrast Beck's use of the term *cosmopolitan* with that of Isabelle Stengers in her multivolume masterpiece *Cosmopolitique*.⁵ A Stoic or a Kantian will call cosmopolitan anyone who is a "citizen of the cosmos" rather than (or before he or she is) a citizen of a particular state, an adherent of a particular religion, a member of a particular guild, profession, or family. Stengers intends her use of *cosmopolitics* to alter what it means "to belong" or "to pertain." She has reinvented the word by representing it as a composite of the strongest meaning of *cosmos* and the strongest meaning of *politics* precisely because the usual meaning of the word *cosmopolite* supposed a certain theory of science that is now disputed.⁶ For her, the strength of one element checks any dulling in the strength of the other. The presence of *cosmos* in *cosmopolitics* resists the tendency of *politics* to mean the give-and-take in an exclusive human club. The presence of *politics* in *cosmopolitics* resists the tendency of *cosmos* to mean a finite list of entities that must be taken into account. *Cosmos* protects against the premature closure of *politics*, and *politics* against the premature closure of *cosmos*. For the Stoics, cosmopolitanism was a proof of tolerance; cosmopolitics, in Stengers's definition, is a cure for what she calls "the malady of tolerance."⁷

The contrast between Stengers's understanding of *cosmos* and Beck's could not be more stark. For Beck, the word means culture, worldview, any horizon wider than that of a nation-state. He assumes that issues of war and peace involve only humans, each endowed with the same psychology, each knowing a language translatable into every other language, and each possessed of only slightly contradictory representations of what-there-is. For Beck, as for most sociologists and all political scientists, wars rage because human cultures have (and defend) differing views of the same world. If those views could be reconciled or shown to differ only superficially, peace would follow automatically. This way of understanding *cosmos* and *cosmopolitics* is limited in that it puts a limit to the number of entities on the negotiating table. But if *cosmos* is to mean anything, it must embrace, literally, everything—including all the vast numbers of nonhuman entities making humans act. William James's synonym for *cosmos* was *pluriverse*, a coinage that makes its awesome multiplicity clear. In the face of which, Beck's calm, untaxed coherence would be unjustifiable except that he presumes that almost all the complexities of the pluriverse are out of bounds for politics, or, at any rate, that they make no difference in the way we agree or disagree with one another. Peace, for

5. Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitiques*, vol. 1, *La guerre des sciences* (Paris: La Découverte; Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 1996).

6. For Stengers as well as for me, the ability to imagine a political order is always directly predicated on a certain definition of science. The link was made forcefully by science studies. See the now classic work of Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

The main weakness of legal and humanitarian forms of cosmopolitanism is to forget entirely the theory of science that has been surreptitiously used to assemble the cosmos in a peaceful manner but without due process.

7. Stengers, *Cosmopolitiques*, vol. 7, *Pour en finir avec la tolérance* (Paris: La Découverte; Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 1997).

Beck's kind of mononaturalism, is possible because our disputes (to borrow the Scholastic terms) bear upon secondary, rather than primary, qualities.

If this be peace, I must say I prefer war. By war I mean a conflict for which there is no agreed-upon arbiter, a conflict in which what is at stake is precisely what is *common* in the common world to be built. As is well known from Carl Schmitt's definition, any conflict, no matter how bitter, that is waged under a common arbiter is not a war but what he calls a "police operation." If there exists one cosmos, already unified, one nature that is used as the arbiter for all our disputes, then there are, by definition, no wars but only police operations. To use Schmitt again: Westerners have not understood themselves as facing on the battlefield an enemy whose victory is possible, just irrational people who have to be corrected. As I have argued elsewhere, Westerners have until now been engaged in *pedagogical wars*.⁸ But things have changed of late and our wars are now wars of the worlds, because it's now the makeup of the cosmos that is at stake. Nothing is off limits, off the table, for dispute. The Amerindians, it is worth recalling, did not rejoice when their side—those Europeans who thought them fully human—triumphed at Valladolid. Yet those ungrateful Indians received the gift of a soul that permitted their baptism and thus salvation. Why did the European offer of both peace and eternal life not please them? The Europeans took European cosmopolitics for granted as *natural*, and nature is a means to shortcut politics before peace is authentically attainable.⁹ The settlements that nature offers are reached without due process—they put 99 percent of what is up for grabs off limits, and the result is always another round of conflict. Politics is moot if it is not about (what John Tresch calls) "cosmograms."¹⁰ We perhaps never differ about opinions, but rather always about things—about what world we inhabit. And very probably, it never happens that adversaries come to agree on opinions: they begin, rather, to inhabit a different world.

A common world is not something we come to recognize, as though it had always been here (and we had not until now noticed it). A common world, if there is going to be one, is something we will have to build, tooth and nail, together. The ethnocentrism of sociologists is never clearer than when they paper over the threat of multiple worlds with their weak notion of cosmopolitanism.¹¹ In Beck's

8. This point is developed at some length in Bruno Latour, *War of the Worlds: What about Peace?* trans. Charlotte Bigg (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2002). Beck's position in the paper I am discussing is all the more strange since he has never tired, in his other books, of showing why science and technology can no longer deliver the sort of mastery on which a quiet and sane political reason could then be propped up. For some strange reason, he seems to have forgotten his own lessons.

9. Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

10. John Tresch, "Mechanical Romanticism: Engineers of the Artificial Paradise" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 2001).

11. To counter that ethnocentrism is why Viveiros de Castro (see n. 2 herein) launched his monster term *multinaturalism*. The difference between multinaturalism and multiculturalism is that truth and reality are engaged in the former and never in the latter.

article here, the telltale symptom is his offhand footnote about religion. There have been good historical reasons—as Olivier Christin has shown, with respect to sixteenth-century warfare in Europe—to sequester religion when peace proposals are advanced.¹² But it is not clear that what was right four and a half centuries ago is a diplomatic and respectful way to handle our newly generated wars of religion. When men of good will assemble with their cigars in the Habermas Club to discuss an armistice for this or that conflict and they leave their gods on hooks in the cloakroom, I suspect that what is under way is not a peace conference at all. There are Versailles that beget Munichs that beget Apocalypse. How is it that Beck believes religion is ignorable? Again, there is no cosmos in his cosmopolitanism: he seems to have no inkling that humans have always counted less than the vast population of divinities and lesser transcendental entities that give us life. For most people, in most places, during most eons, humans have “owners,” to use Tobie Nathan’s term; and those proprietors take precedence over humans at whatever cost. Beck appears to believe in a UNESCO koine, a sociological Esperanto, that lies hidden behind stubborn defects, whether social or psychological, in our representations. Men of good will, he would say, must agree that gods are no more than representations. It would be pretty to think so; but, as Nathan makes vivid in his contribution to this symposium, it is not humans who are at war but gods. Or, at least, we should entertain the possibility that enemies can be separated by disagreements *that wide*. Peace settlements are not, as Stengers emphasizes, between men of good will who have left their gods (their narrow attachments) behind but between men of ill will possessed by super- and subhumans of ill will. A settlement reached too soon is, realistically, a grave danger. Stengers might even add that the longer it takes to reach agreement, the better (hence her daring to utter the phrase “malady of tolerance”). Even Cromwell, after all, while promoting the most horrendous acts of iconoclasm, had the scruple to exclaim (in a sentence Stengers never tires of quoting): “I beseech ye, my brethren, in the bowels of Christ, think that ye may be mistaken!” Where, in Beck’s view, is the place for such a tragic warning? His cosmopolitics is much too *cosmopolite* to handle the horrors of our time.

But perhaps the problem is simply that Beck explores only one dimension of peacemaking—the traditional gradient that leads from particular to universal and back again. Approaching peace in this way is a venerable Stoic tradition; and, as its latest expositor, Beck develops a nice compromise between the cheap universalisms available now and some even cheaper varieties of relativism and multiculturalism. Still, the traditional gradient and the Stoic view of it are not all there is to achieving peace: attachments are not defined solely by their expansion

12. Olivier Christin, *La Paix de religion: L'autonomisation de la raison politique au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1997).

and shrinkage along a line between universalism and particularism. We should perhaps explore another dimension, perpendicular to the first—a gradient running from “naturalism” to “constructivism.” If it’s true that the traditional meaning of cosmopolitanism was based on a certain definition of science, it makes sense to see how it has been modified when another definition of science is called for. Cosmopolitans may dream of the time when citizens of the world come to recognize that they all inhabit the same world, but cosmopolitics are up against a somewhat more daunting task: to see how this “same world” can be slowly *composed*.

Confronted by a given cosmogram, the Stoic wants to know whether it is expressive more of attachment or of detachment (whether it is local or universal in character). But a more urgent and polemical question to ask enemies might be: “How do you differentiate between good and bad attachments?” For the Stoic, detachment is emancipation (and attachment is slavery). By definition a citizen of the cosmos is free; an Egyptian, Greek, or Jew is attached (enslaved) to his or her locale and local knowledge. To be Egyptian, Greek, or Jewish is—in the Stoic tradition—a stigma. “Humanity” was a great and welcome discovery and has been a great and welcome rediscovery each time that (after World War II, notably) it has come to prominence. And yet, if all the United Nations members were satisfied to be “just humans,” if the UNESCO lingua franca was enough to define all inhabitants of the planet, peace would already reign. Since there is no peace, there must be something wrong with this humanistic definition of an emancipated human as the only acceptable member of the Club.

We face a situation in which, on the one hand, real peace is unattainable if negotiators leave their gods, attachments, and incompatible cosmos outside the conference room. On the other hand, a freight of gods, attachments, and unruly cosmos make it hard to get through the door into any common space. Moreover, humans with owners, attachments, and a cosmos (crammed with entities ignored or ridiculed by other humans) tend not to seek new memberships in clubs. They have reason to believe that they themselves belong to the best clubs already and cannot fathom why others—when invited—have refused to join.¹³ Hence the need for a second dimension to peacemaking, one that does not require detachment from the beings (for instance, divinities) that make us exist. This second dimension requires another protocol, another investigation, to answer another question: *Through what sort of test do you render possible the distinction between good*

13. This attitude pertains, according to Philippe Descola and Viveiros de Castro, to all animists—as opposed to totemists, naturalists, and analogists. (I am using here the vocabulary developed by Descola in his essay “Constructing Natures: Symbolic Ecology and Social Practice,” in *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Descola and Gíslí Pálsson [London: Routledge, 1996], 82–102.)

According to Viveiros de Castro (in comments on my paper), Amazonian Indians are already globalized in the sense that they have no difficulty in integrating “us” into “their” cosmologies. It is simply that in their cosmic politics we do not have the place that “we” think we deserve; it is not the case that “we” are global and “they” are local.

and bad attachments? Making those distinctions necessitates, first, the abandonment of naturalism, which is the faith in a single natural world, comprehensible through Science—or rather, through a mistaken definition of (Western) natural science whose purpose has been to eliminate entities from the pluriverse. The universal embrace of naturalism has been, for moderns, the royal road to peace. And yet naturalism has also been the grounds on which the West has waged its pedagogical wars. The modern West scolds the remainder of mankind: *we all live under the same biological and physical laws and have the same fundamental biological, social, and psychological makeup. This, you have not understood because you are prisoners of your superficial worldviews, which are but representations of the reality to which we, through science, have privileged access. But science is not our property; it belongs to mankind universally! Here, partake—and with us you will be one.* The problem with this opening gambit into diplomacy is not, I rush to add, that the argument is wrong.¹⁴ The argument is right, but it puts the cart before the horse; it begins where it should, eventually (very eventually), end. It is possible—and from a Western (from my Burgundian) point of view, desirable—that, in the distant future, we come to live within a common world defined as naturalism defines it. But to behave as if the settlement were already in place and as though it requires no negotiation to achieve it is a sure trigger to further warfare.

The assumptions of naturalism have been shown—most recently and thoroughly by Philippe Descola—to be unshared by vast numbers of humans.¹⁵ But constructivism, despite its reputation as a radical postmodern ideology, might be more universalizable since the distinction between what is well and badly made is more than widespread. *Constructivism* is a tricky word, no doubt.¹⁶ But we can likely agree that constructivists tend to share these principles:

- the realities to which humans are attached are dependent on series of mediations;
- those realities and their mediations are composed of heterogeneous ingredients and have histories;

14. There is a large difference between “the sciences” understood as the proliferation of entities with which to build the collective and “Science” as a way to eliminate secondary qualities because of the postulation of primary ones. Each requires a different politics. On this distinction, see my *Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). Contrary to what naturalists believe, there is little in the sciences that authorizes scientists to be eliminativists. This point is made especially well by Stengers in the brilliant book *Penser avec Whitehead: Une libre et sauvage création de concepts* (Paris: Seuil, 2002).

15. See, e.g., Descola, *La Nature domestique: Symbolisme et praxis dans l’écologie des Achuar* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 1986), translated into English by Nora Scott as *In the Society of Nature: A Native Ecology in Amazonia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

16. See more on this subject in Latour, “The Promises of Constructivism,” in *Chasing Technoscience: Matrix for Materiality*, ed. Don Ihde and Evan Selinger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 27–46.

- the amount of heterogeneous ingredients and the number of mediations necessary to sustain realities are a credit to their reality (the more mediated, the more real);
- our realities are open to differing interpretations that must be considered with caution;
- if a reality has extension (in space and time), its complex life-support systems must have been extended also;
- realities can fail and thus require careful maintenance and constant repair.

The paramount example of constructivism, on this definition, is the work of the sciences, as I have shown numerous times.¹⁷ In the sciences, the degree of objectivity and certainty is directly proportional to the extent of artificiality, layering, heterogeneity, multiplicity, and complexity of mediations. The assertion sounds radical but is merely obvious: in a laboratory, no naked access to truth is thinkable. Is a microbe visible without the mediation of a microscope? Are microscopes found in nature or are they human fabrications? When one scientist questions another, it is not to ask whether new data (new facts) have been fabricated or not. The question is, “How have you proven that *x* is so?”—and the emphasis is on *how*, by what *means* or mediation. The difference that counts, when scientists meet in confidence, is not the one between fact and construction but the one between good and bad facts. Things are different when scientists meet the *vulgum pecus*: then (and only then) do they borrow arguments from the epistemologists and join with philosophers in playing pedagogical war games, where the Red relativists have to fight the White Knights of realism.

The example of the sciences should make clear that *constructed* and *real* are not opposed terms and that the operative question is how to distinguish between good constructions and bad. If these two generalizations apply to the sciences, to which epistemologists have assigned so unique and transcendent a role, then surely my generalizations apply to the harsh realities of cosmopolitics. And it appears, indeed, that there is no extant or extinct way of life that has not been passionately involved in making distinctions between good and bad fabrications. This observation has its uses in pursuit of peace. A constructivist landing at the mouth of the Amazon (where Amerindians, recall, were drowning Spaniards to test if they had bodies) could have entered into conversations unimaginable to

¹⁷. In *Common Knowledge* alone, I have defended variations on this argument in four articles and two dialogues: “On Technical Mediation—Philosophy, Sociology, Genealogy,” *Common Knowledge* 3.2 (fall 1994): 29–64; “The ‘Pédofil’ of Boa Vista: A Photo-Philosophical Montage,” *Common Knowledge* 4.1 (spring 1995): 144–87; “Do Scientific Objects Have a History? Pasteur and Whitehead in a Bath of Lactic Acid,” *Common Knowledge* 5.1 (spring

1996): 76–91; “Trains of Thought: Piaget, Formalism, and the Fifth Dimension,” *Common Knowledge* 6.3 (winter 1997): 170–91; “Two Writers Face One Turing Test: A Dialogue in Honor of HAL” (with Richard Powers), *Common Knowledge* 7.1 (spring 1998): 177–91; and “The Science Wars—A Dialogue,” *Common Knowledge* 8.1 (winter 2002): 71–79.

the clerics at Valladolid. “Ah,” a Spanish constructivist could have said to an Amazonian researcher, “this is how you decide matters? How horrifying. Let me suggest another way to formulate and test the question at issue.” Of course, this peaceful encounter is fantastic but not for the reason that a naturalist would presume. The encounter would not happen as I have described it only because of the fundamentalism of the parties involved.

Fundamentalism is at the far end of our options from constructivism. A fundamentalist—in science, politics, or religion—would review the list I gave above and indignantly invert every assertion on it:

- the realities to which humans are attached are, quite simply, unmediated;
- those realities are unitary (not composed of heterogeneous ingredients) and have no history per se;
- the amount of heterogeneous ingredients and the number of mediations necessary to sustain a state of affairs must be debited from its degree of reality (the less mediation, the more real);
- realities are not open to interpretation;
- realities of course have extension (in space and time)—they are by nature universal and it is absurd to say that they require “life support”;
- realities are not susceptible to failure and thus do not require maintenance or repair of any kind.

Realities of this description are invoked in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* as much as in the dark caves of Pakistan, and they can even come from human-rights activists: anyone who holds that *fabricated* means *untrue*, and *made* means *fake*, tends toward fundamentalism. Common experience in science, art, love, and religion should prompt us to say, “the more carefully fabricated, the more real and long-lasting.” Why we do not tend to reach that more sensible conclusion is perhaps our old and continuing fear of idolatry, of worshiping what human hands have made; a genuine acceptance of constructivism requires a reassessment of the whole history of iconoclasm and critique.¹⁸

The delightful irony of the matter is that, while fundamentalism was home-made, made in the West—the former West—it has by now become *la chose du monde la mieux distribuée*. As Peter Sloterdijk has remarked, Westerners loved globalization until *les autres* could reach us as easily as we could reach them. Naturalizers, those in the West who appeal to a Nature Out There, unconstructed and nonnegotiable, are now confronted by people saying the same of the Koran

18. For a systematic exposition, see Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Iconoclash: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion, and Art* (Karlsruhe, Germany: ZKM; Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002).

and *Shari'a*. And when one fundamentalism butts heads with another, no peace talks are possible because there is nothing to discuss: pedagogical wars are waged to the bitter end. However, it is not the case (pace President Bush) that the present world war is between a modern culture and an archaic one. The supposed enemies of modernization are themselves modernizers in the extreme, using conceptual tools provided them by Western fundamentalism.¹⁹ My main objection, then, to the peace terms of Ulrich Beck is that he has not put the West's own native fundamentalism up for discussion. Our naturalism has failed: it was a war plan disguised as a peace plan, and those against whom we directed it are no longer fooled. Naturalism, like any fundamentalist ideology, amounts to a prejudice against fabrication. Constructivism is not, cannot possibly be, deconstructive—quite the contrary—though the former has been regularly said to be a subset of the latter. Constructivism is the attitude of those who make things and are capable of telling good from bad fabrications, who want to compare their goods with those of others so that the standards of their own products improve. But for this diplomatic task to begin, a state of war has first to be declared. And once war is declared, we can seek peace on firmer grounds: where naturalism has failed, why not try constructivism?

The misunderstanding between Beck and myself may stem, in the end, from differing interpretations of the present historical situation. The “first modernization,” to use his favorite expression, came with a certain definition of cosmopolitanism, which corresponded to the great idea that the whole earth could actually fit snugly inside what Sloterdijk has called the “metaphysical Globe” (as imagined by Mercator, Galileo, Descartes, Leibniz, and of course Hegel).²⁰ The problem is that when this version of the global was invented the world was just beginning to be “globalized.” The Globe on which Hegel could rely to house every event “in it” was a purely conceptual one; it was for this reason perfect, with neither shadow nor gap. Now the planet is indeed being slowly and mercilessly globalized, but there is no “global” anymore, no metaphysical Globe to offer advance welcome to inhabitants and give them their rightful and predetermined places. So the two meanings of *cosmopolitanism* are, so to speak, out of sync: just when we need the Global, it has sunk deep down in the Atlantic, beyond repair. Therefore, in my view, another definition of *cosmopolitics* is called for, one that

¹⁹. Compare my assumption here that Islamic fundamentalism is a form of modernization with, e.g., Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women* (Oxford: OneWorld Publications, 2001), and Emmanuel Todd, *Après l'Empire: Essai sur la décomposition du système américain* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002).

²⁰. There is a direct connection between Beck's cosmopolitan interest and those of the great German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk. The difference is that, in the latter's

“spherology,” the questions are raised in terms of “air conditioning” and “life support.” In his three-volume inquiry into the shape of spheres, he shows how and why the Global *has existed* in the past but is no longer a structure in which we can freely breathe. For an excellent overview of his philosophy, see Peter Sloterdijk, *Ni le soleil ni la mort: Jeu de piste sous forme de dialogues avec Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs* (Paris: Pauvert, 2003).

does not rely on the “first modernity” dream of an already existing common Sphere. It would be a tragic mistake to pursue peace by dragging in the defunct Globe as a locus for the common world of cosmopolitanism. Since Ulrich Beck does not wish to be Munich’s Hegel, he knows fairly well that the parliament in which a common world could be assembled has got to be constructed from scratch.