**Their framework skips the important parts of policymaking – internal link turns their offense**

**Carpentier 2011** (Nico, asst prof comm @  Vrije Universiteit Brussel “Policy’s Hubris: Power, Fantasy, and the Limits of (Global) Media Policy Interventions” The Handbook of Global Media and Communication Policy, First Edition.)

This discussion on the nature of policy brings us to an encounter with a set of key assumptions which will be theorized here as fantasies, using a Lacanian framework.4 The reason for using this framework is that there are implicit claims embedded within policy debates that are partially (discursive) power strategies but, partially also, fantasies about control and harmony. And within a Lacanian framework, fantasy beholds the promise of the unachievable wholeness and the harmonious resolution of social antagonism. Although this access to the Real is impossible, the fantasy, as such, and the desire for wholeness and harmony that lies behind it remain crucial driving forces and feed into the strategies that the diversity of (policy) actors develop. This also implies that these fantasies become part of our social realities in many different ways, for instance, as utopian driving forces for political activity and as discursive strategies for legitimating policies. A first fantasy has already been mentioned in the discussion about the classic perspective on policy. In the introductory part of his discussion of media policy, which carries the title “Is policy political?,” Freedman (2008: 2) refers to the mechanical perspective of policy-making, which marginalizes “political agency in favour of administrative technique and scientific principles” and becomes “the domain of small thoughts, bureaucratic tidiness and administrative effectiveness.” This fantasy of isolating policy from politics (and from the political) is a protective strategy to generate a harmonious and consensual zone within the social, out side political conflicts and antagonisms, which is believed to be governed by bureaucratic principles and/or legalistic mechanisms. This way of thinking is very much related to the ideology of “endism,” which proclaimed the end of ideology and claimed that this would lead to the replacement of politics by a managerial culture (see, for instance, Burnham (1941) and Bell (1960) ). More contemporary critical frameworks refer to (and critique) the post-political and the post-democratic, where the latter is defined by Rancière (2007: 88) as “the rule of the principle of unification of the multitude under the common law of the One.” Not only does this lead to the conflation of the “pays légal” and the “pays reél” (to use the two marvellous French concepts that allow us to distinguish between legislation and social practice), but it also becomes a form of strategic power that allows for the mobilization of actors (and their minds and bodies), discourses, and objects to legitimize the hegemonization of specific political projects by reverting to the claim that these projects are outside the political. However important this fantasy may be, it is structurally frustrated by the permanent reemergence of antagonisms and conflicts. This brings us to Mouffe’s (2005: 9) argument that the political is structurally defined by “power, conflict and antagonism.” Her work challenges the post-political status quo, which assumes that a societal consensus is reached or reachable. Not surprisingly, the last sentence of her 2005 book On the Political is a plea for “abandoning the dream of a reconciled world that would have overcome power, sovereignty and hegemony” (Mouffe 2005: 130; my emphasis). Through the contingency of the social, any hegemony and social imaginary, however phantasmagorically comforting it may be, remains vulnerable to contestation, and even the most sedimented and takenfor-granted certainties can become unfixed and fluid, as they are permanently vulnerable to rearticulation. In Mouffe’s (2005: 18) words: “What is at a given moment considered as the ‘natural’ order – jointly with the ‘common sense’ which accompanies it – is the result of sedimented practices; it is never the manifestation of a deeper objectivity exterior to the practices that bring it into being.”

**AHD 2k6.** American Heritage Dictionary

resolved v. To cause (a person) to reach a decision.

**We are not the state – roleplaying generates nationalistic ideologies which is at the root of war and removes meaning from life**

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One of the deadliest practices we engage in is that of identifying ourselves with a collective entity. Whether it be the state, a nationality, our race or gender, or any other abstraction, we introduce division – hence, conflict – into our lives as we separate ourselves from those who identify with other groupings. If one observes the state of our world today, this is the pattern that underlies our deadly and destructive social behavior. This mindset was no better articulated than when George W. Bush declared “you’re either with us, or against us.” Through years of careful conditioning, we learn to think of ourselves in terms of agencies and/or abstractions **external to our independent being**. Or, to express the point more clearly, we have learned to **internalize these external forces;** to **conform our thinking** and behavior to the purposes and interests of such entities. We adorn ourselves with flags, mouth shibboleths, and decorate our cars with bumper-stickers, in order to communicate to others our sense of “who we are.” In such ways does our being become indistinguishable from our chosen collective. In this way are institutions born. We discover a particular form of organization through which we are able to cooperate with others for our mutual benefit. Over time, the advantages derived from this system have a sufficient consistency to lead us to the conclusion that our well-being is dependent upon it. Those who manage the organization find it in their self-interests to propagate this belief so that we will become dependent upon its permanency. Like a sculptor working with clay, institutions take over the direction of our minds, twisting, squeezing, and pounding upon them until we have embraced a mindset conducive to their interests. Once this has been accomplished, we find it easy to subvert our will and sense of purpose to the collective. The organization ceases being a mere tool of mutual convenience, and becomes an end in itself. Our lives become “institutionalized,” and we regard it as fanciful to imagine ourselves living in any other way than as constituent parts of a machine that transcends our individual sense. **Once we identify ourselves with the state**, that collective entity does more than represent who we are; **it is who we are**. To the politicized mind, **the idea that “we are the government” has real meaning**, not in the sense of being able to control such an agency, but **in the psychological sense**. The successes and failures of the state become the subject’s successes and failures; insults or other attacks upon their abstract sense of being – such as the burning of “their” flag – become assaults upon their very personhood. Shortcomings on the part of the state become our failures of character. This is why so many Americans who have belatedly come to criticize the war against Iraq are inclined to treat it as only a “mistake” or the product of “mismanagement,” not as a moral wrong. Our egos can more easily admit to the making of a mistake than to moral transgressions. Such an attitude also helps to explain why, as Milton Mayer wrote in his revealing post-World War II book, They Thought They Were Free, most Germans were unable to admit that the Nazi regime had been tyrannical. It is this dynamic that makes it easy for political **officials to generate wars, a process that reinforces the sense of identity and attachment people have for “their” state**. It also helps to explain why most Americans – though tiring of the war against Iraq – refuse to condemn government leaders for the lies, forgeries, and deceit employed to get the war started: to acknowledge the dishonesty of the system through which they identify themselves is to admit to the dishonest base of their being. The truthfulness of the state’s rationale for war is irrelevant to most of its subjects. It is sufficient that they believe the abstraction with which their lives are intertwined will be benefited in some way by war. Against whom and upon what claim does not matter – except as a factor in assessing the likelihood of success. That most Americans have pipped nary a squeak of protest over Bush administration plans to attack Iran – with nuclear weapons if deemed useful to its ends – reflects the point I am making. Bush could undertake a full-fledged war against Lapland, and most Americans would trot out their flags and bumper-stickers of approval. The “rightness” or “wrongness” of any form of collective behavior becomes interpreted by the standard of whose actions are being considered. During World War II, for example, Japanese kamikaze pilots were regarded as crazed fanatics for crashing their planes into American battleships. At the same time, American war movies (see, e.g., Flying Tigers) extolled the heroism of American pilots who did the same thing. One sees this same double-standard in responding to “conspiracy theories.” “Do you think a conspiracy was behind the 9/11 attacks?” It certainly seems so to me, unless one is prepared to treat the disappearance of the World Trade Center buildings as the consequence of a couple pilots having bad navigational experiences! The question that should be asked is: whose conspiracy was it? To those whose identities coincide with the state, such a question is easily answered: others conspire, we do not. It is not the symbiotic relationship between war and the expansion of state power, nor the realization of corporate benefits that could not be obtained in a free market, that mobilize the machinery of war. Without most of us standing behind “our” system, and cheering on “our” troops, and defending “our” leaders, none of this would be possible. What would be your likely response if your neighbor prevailed upon you to join him in a violent attack upon a local convenience store, on the grounds that it hired “illegal aliens?” Your sense of identity would not be implicated in his efforts, and you would likely dismiss him as a lunatic. Only when our ego-identities become wrapped up with some institutional abstraction – such as the state – can we be persuaded to **invest** our **lives** and the lives of our children **in** the **collective** **madness** of state action. We do not have such attitudes toward organizations with which we have more transitory relationships. If we find an accounting error in our bank statement, we would not find satisfaction in the proposition “the First National Bank, right or wrong.” Neither would we be inclined to wear a T-shirt that read “Disneyland: love it or leave it.” One of the many adverse consequences of identifying with and attaching ourselves to collective abstractions is our loss of control over not only the **meaning** and direction **in our lives, but** of the manner in which we can be efficacious in **our efforts to pursue the purposes that have become central to us**.We become dependent upon the performance of “our” group; “our” reputation rises or falls on the basis of what institutional leaders do or fail to do. If “our” nation-state loses respect in the world – such as by the use of torture or killing innocent people - we consider ourselves no longer respectable, and scurry to find plausible excuses to redeem our egos. When these expectations are not met, we go in search of new leaders or organizational reforms we believe will restore our sense of purpose and pride that we have allowed abstract entities to personify for us. As the costs and failures of the state become increasingly evident, there is a growing tendency to blame this system. But to do so is to continue playing the same game into which we have allowed ourselves to become conditioned. One of the practices employed by the state to get us to mobilize our “dark side” energies in opposition to the endless recycling of enemies it has chosen for us, is that of psychological projection. Whether we care to acknowledge it or not – and most of us do not – each of us has an unconscious capacity for attitudes or conduct that our conscious minds reject. We fear that, sufficiently provoked, we might engage in violence – even deadly – against others; or that inducements might cause us to become dishonest. We might harbor racist or other bigoted sentiments, or consider ourselves lazy or irresponsible. Though we are unlikely to act upon such inner fears, their presence within us can generate discomforting self-directed feelings of guilt, anger, or unworthiness that we would like to eliminate. The most common way in which humanity has tried to bring about such an exorcism is by subconsciously projecting these traits onto others (i.e., “scapegoats”) and punishing them for what are really our own shortcomings. The **state** has **trained** **us** to behave this way, in order that we may be counted upon to invest our lives, resources, and other energies **in** **pursuit** **of** the **enemy** du jour. It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that most of us resort to the same practice in our criticism of political systems. After years of mouthing the high-school civics class mantra about the necessity for government – and the bigger the government the better – we begin to experience the unexpected consequences of politicization. Tax burdens continue to escalate; or the state takes our home to make way for a proposed shopping center; or ever-more details of our lives are micromanaged by ever-burgeoning state bureaucracies. Having grown weary of the costs – including the loss of control over our lives – we blame the state for what has befallen us. We condemn the Bush administration for the parade of lies that precipitated the war against Iraq, rather than indicting ourselves for ever believing anything the state tells us. We fault the politicians for the skyrocketing costs of governmental programs, conveniently ignoring our insistence upon this or that benefit whose costs we would prefer having others pay. The statists have helped us accept a world view that conflates our incompetence to manage our own lives with their omniscience to manage the lives of billions of people – along with the planet upon which we live! – and we are now experiencing the costs generated by our own gullibility. We have acted like country bumpkins at the state fair with the egg money who, having been fleeced by a bunch of carnival sharpies, look everywhere for someone to blame other than ourselves. We have been euchred out of our very lives because of our eagerness to believe that benefits can be enjoyed without incurring costs; that the freedom to control one’s life can be separated from the responsibilities for one’s actions; and that two plus two does not have to add up to four if a sizeable public opinion can be amassed against the proposition. By identifying ourselves with any abstraction (such as the state) we give up the integrated life, the sense of wholeness that can be found only within each of us. While the state has manipulated, cajoled, and threatened us to identify ourselves with it, the responsibility for our acceding to its pressures lies within each of us. The statists have – as was their vicious purpose – simply taken over the territory we have abandoned. **Our politico-centric pain and suffering has been brought about by our having allowed external forces to move in and occupy the vacuum we created at the center of our being**. The only way out of our dilemma involves a retracing of the route that brought us to where we are. **We require nothing so much right now as the development of a sense of “who we are” that transcends our institutionalized identities, and returns us** – without division and conflict – **to a centered, self-directed integrity in our lives.**

**Causes extinction**

**Beres 94** (Louis Rene Beres, Professor @ Purdue University, SPRING, 1994, Arizona Journal of International and Comparative Law, *Self-Determination, International Law and Survival on Planet Earth*, LN)

Yet, this situation is enormously ironic. By its very nature, the self-determination of peoples and nations undermines the self-determination of *individuals*. [6](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n6) Encouraging the expanding fragmentation of the world into  [\*3]  competing sovereignties, this right under international law makes it nearly impossible for persons to see themselves as members of a single human family. As a result, the presumed differences between peoples are taken as critical and the essential similarities dismissed as unimportant. Not surprisingly, war [7](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n7) and genocide [8](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n8) are not only the legacy of the current century, but also the most probable planetary future. Self-determination, of course, has its place. Under the United Nations Charter, this principle is treated as an indispensable corrective to the crime of colonialism. Hence, colonial peoples are granted an "inherent" right to struggle  [\*4]  by all necessary means, [9](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n9) and United Nations member States are instructed to render all necessary moral and material assistance to the struggle for freedom and independence. [10](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n10) Yet, the cumulative effect of claims for self-determination is violence and death. Reaffirming individual commitments to life in the "herd," these claims contradict the idea of global oneness and cosmopolis. From identification as Moslem Azerbaijanis or Christian Armenians, as Croats or Serbs, individuals all over the world surrender themselves as persons, being told again and again that meaning derives from belonging. Not surprisingly, these individuals are too often willing to do anything that the group commands -- even the mass killing of other human beings, as long as the victims are "outsiders." [\*5]  What do we really seek in world affairs? If it is authentic peace and an end to war crimes [11](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n11) and crimes against humanity, [12](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n12) then the expectation of self-determination must be balanced against the needs of planetization, of a new world order [13](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n13) in which the commonality and community of the entire human species takes precedence over the lethal calls of separatism, ethnic rivalry, and militaristic nationalism. Poised to consider that national liberation can itself be the source of armed conflict and murder, individuals everywhere must learn to affirm their significance outside the herd, as persons rather than as members. The herd is always potentially dangerous, whether it be the herd of a criminal band, a discontented nationality, or a State. [14](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n14) Before the residents of this [\*6] endangered planet can discover safety in world politics, they will have to discover power and purpose within themselves. In the end, humankind will rise or fall on the strength of a new kind of loyalty, one that recognizes the contrived character of national, religious, and ethnic differences and the primacy of human solidarity. Although this kind of loyalty is certainly difficult to imagine, especially when one considers that organization into and belonging within competitive herds still offers most people a desperately needed sense of self-worth, there seems to be no alternative. Whether we seek an accommodation of Palestinians [15](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n15) and Israelis [16](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n16) in the Middle East, of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, or of different nationalities in Eastern Europe, in the former USSR, or in the former Yugoslavia, the only real hope lies in getting those involved to see themselves as *individuals*. II. AFFIRMING THE *INDIVIDUAL* SELF: A PLANETARY IMPERATIVE  [\*7]  To fulfill the expectations of a new global society, one that would erect effective barriers around humankind's most murderous forms of self-determination, [17](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n17) the essential initiatives must be undertaken *within* States. In this connection, national leaders can never be expected to initiate the essential changes on their own. Rather, the new evolutionary vanguard must -- in the fashion of the growing worldwide movement against nuclear weapons and nuclear war [18](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n18) -- grow out of informed publics throughout the world. Such a vanguard [\*8] must aim to end the separation of State interests from those of its citizens and from those of humanity as a whole. This vanguard must grow out of searches for *individual* self-determination. But the journey from the herd to selfhood begins in myth and ends in doubt. For this journey to succeed, the individual traveling along the route must learn to substitute a system of uncertainties for what [he or she] has always believed; learn to tolerate and encourage doubt as a replacement for the comforting "securities" of Statism. Induced to live against the grain of our civilization, [he or she] must become not only conscious of [his or her] singularity, but also satisfied with it. Organically separated from "civilization," [he or she] becomes aware of the forces that undermine it, forces that offer [him or her] a last remaining chance for both meaning and survival. [\*9]  We may turn to Kierkegaard for guidance. Recognizing the "crowd" as "untruth," the nineteenth-century Danish philosopher warns of the dangers that lurk in submission to multitudes: A crowd in its very concept is the untruth, by reason of the fact that it renders the individual completely impenitent and irresponsible, or at least weakens his sense of responsibility by reducing it to a fraction. . . . For "crowd" is an abstraction and has not hands: but each individual has ordinarily two hands. . . . [19](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n19) And what is the most degrading crowd of all? The answer is supplied not by Kierkegaard, but by Nietzsche: The State tells lies in all the tongues of good and evil; and whatever it says it lies -- and whatever it has it has stolen. Everything about it is false. . . . All-too-many are born: for the superfluous the State was invented. [20](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n20) In giving ourselves over completely to national self-determination, we commit a grievous form of idolatry. Allegedly offering ourselves to a "higher cause," we actually turn national frontiers into prison walls that lock up capacity for thought and authentic feeling. We nurture incessant preparations for killing by embracing the cold, metallic surfaces of the State. Without such preparations national leaders would jeopardize their positions, and the State itself would be in "danger" of relinquishing its hold on citizens as an object of libation. As Simone Weil has observed: "The State is a cold concern, which cannot inspire love, but itself kills, suppresses everything that might be loved; so one is forced to love it, because there is nothing else. That is the moral torment to which all of us today are exposed." [21](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n21) The task, then, is for each person to *become* an individual. In order to reject the idolatry of militaristic nationalism and national self-determination, each man and woman must understand the lethal encroachments of the State. Recognizing in their current leadership an incapacity to surmount collective misfortune, [22](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n22) citizens must strive to produce their own private expressions of progress. "From  [\*10]  becoming an individual no one," says Kierkegaard, "is excluded, except he who excludes himself by becoming a crowd." We live in a twilight era. Faced with endless infamy of the modern State, we must understand the responsibility to be *in* the world, to act *in* history. If we are unwilling to accept abolition of the future, then we must rescue life from the threat of war and genocide. [24](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n24) But something must precede this turn of events. We must move toward meaningful definitions of selfhood by acknowledging the vulgarity of captivity involving endless cycles of useless production and consumption. Rejecting the relentless docility of the crowd, we must discard artificial definitions of wealth in favor of true private and national growth. Inventiveness must take new forms. Revolted by the mob and its mouthpieces, we begin to understand our disorder. A collapsing civilization compromises with its disease, cherishes the infectious pathogen. "The wrinkles of a nation," writes E. M. Cioran, "are as visible as those of an individual." [25](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n25) Witnessing the dying reflexes of an entire planet, we must learn to tremble at the visible manifestations of humankind's aggressions against itself. [26](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n26) After so much imposture, so much fraud, we must feel that we have had  [\*11]  enough. Instead of being engulfed by the refined gibberish of State and society, we need to choose transformation and rebirth. The herd takes pleasure in turning the "other" into a corpse. 27 The remedy for this tragedy can never be found entirely within the realms of inter-State relations or jurisprudence. 28 It can be found only in diminishing the claims of the State herd. [\*12]  The problem of the omnivorous State, which subordinates all individual sensibilities to the idea of unlimited internal and external jurisdiction, was foreseen brilliantly in the 1930s by Jose Ortega y Gasset. In *The Revolt of the Masses*, Ortega correctly identifies the State as "the greatest danger," mustering its immense and unassailable resources "to crush beneath it any creative minority which disturbs it -- disturbs it in any order of things: in politics, in ideas, in industry." [29](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n29) Set in motion by individuals whom it has already rendered anonymous, the State positions its machinery above society so that humankind comes to live *for* the State, *for* the governmental apparatus: And as, after all, it is only a machine whose existence and maintenance depend on vital supports around it, the State, after sucking out the very marrow of society, will be left bloodless, a skeleton, dead with that rusty death of machinery, more gruesome than the death of a living organism. [30](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n30)   A similar image is offered by Simone Weil: "The development of the State exhausts a country. The State eats away its moral substance, lives on it, fattens on it, until the day comes when no more nourishment can be drawn from it, and famine reduces it to a condition of lethargy." [31](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n31) Ortega's and Weil's characterizations of the State were prefigured by Nietzsche. "State," he exclaims in the First Part of *Zarathustra*, "is the name of the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly, it tells lies too and this lie crawls out of its mouth! 'I, the State, am the people.’ That is a lie! It was creators who created peoples and hung a faith and a love over them: thus they served life." [32](http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu:2047/universe/document?_m=dbe5f83c3c45c74963b88d3d906a0d5d&_docnum=8&wchp=dGLbVlz-zSkVA&_md5=e91981aa6e1fb388288aa3777f7e8cc3#n32)

**And, they can’t get offense because nothing happens when you vote aff**

**Schlag**, Professor of Law@ Univ. Colorado, 19**90** (Pierre, Stanford Law Review, November, Page Lexis)

In fact, normative legal thought is so much in a hurry that it will tell you what to do even though there is not the slightest chance that you might actually be in a position to do it. For instance, when was the last time you were in a position to put the difference principle n31 into effect, or to restructure [\*179] the doctrinal corpus of the first amendment? "In the future, we should. . . ." When was the last time you were in a position to rule whether judges should become pragmatists, efficiency purveyors, civic republicans, or Hercules surrogates? Normative legal thought doesn't seem overly concerned with such worldly questions about the character and the effectiveness of its own discourse. It just goes along and proposes, recommends, prescribes, solves, and resolves. Yet despite its obvious desire to have worldly effects, worldly consequences, normative legal thought remains seemingly unconcerned that for all practical purposes, its only consumers are legal academics and perhaps a few law students -- persons who are virtually never in a position to put any of its wonderful normative advice into effect.

#### Falsification is a bad standard for policy

**Pollins 7** – Associate Professor of Political Science at the Ohio State University and a Research Fellow at the Mershon Center

(Brian M., “Theory and Evidence in Comparative Politics and International Relations”, ch. 4, p. 89-91, dml)

It is now over eighty years since the formation of the Vienna Circle by Moritz Schlick, Otto Neurath,Hans Hahn, and others. Luminaries such as Rudolph Carnap, Herbert Feigl, and Kurt Godel joined not long after the Circle’s founding. As all members were trained extensively in mathematics and the physical sciences, these disciplines received most attention in their early discussions. But the tenets that the Circle would come to advocate were considered by many members to be equally applicable to the social sciences—Neurath himself was a sociologist. Thus the notion of a “unity of sciences”(physical and social) was born. The keystone in the edifice of logical positivism was the “verification principle” that held that claims of fact must be either purely analytic (i.e., formally true or false in a mathematical sense) or empirically testable to have any meaning. The influence of the Vienna Circle expanded greatly beginning in the 1930s, just as the original Circle was itself breaking up. Hitler’s rise caused several members to flee Vienna for safer havens, and this spread the group’s influence more widely. Feigl, for one, established a leading department in the philosophy of science at the University of Minnesota. Carnap moved to the University of Chicago. Godel joined the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. And in addition to Karl Popper (who moved from Vienna to London during this same exodus), others such as A. J.Ayer and Ernst Nagel were attracted to the banner.2 Under their collective influence, science became a search for immutable laws—positive claims about the workings of the world that were analytically sound and tested empirically. The Circle had a profound effect on the social sciences, culminating with the 1960s “behavioral revolution” that reshaped the fields of psychology, sociology, and political science—especially in the United States. Ironically, just as the influence of logical positivism on the physical as well as the social sciences was reaching its zenith, its very foundations were being called into question by philosophers of science. Karl Popper showed that the verification principle suffered fatally from Humes Problem of Induction and therefore could never serve as the arbiter of a theorys truth or falsity. He substituted his own principle of falsification in its stead, and most members of the Circle accepted this without difficulty (Edmonds and Eidinow 2001: p. 171). Further challenges to logical positivism gained significant ground. The attack came on multiple fronts. For one, the “falsificationism” that now substituted for the verification principle in the minds of many followers of the Vienna Circle presumes a logical distinction between theory (the knowledge claim) and observation (the act of testing the theory). Carl Hempel, to name one, famously argued that **no such distinction exists**—observation presumes theoretically derived frameworks and categories, hence our tests cannot be independent from our theories.3 Similarly, logical problems with “critical experiments” were found.4 There are very good reasons why we do not allow one contradictory observation to destroy a theory. But if we tolerate such anomalies (and *all* sciences do), what can “verification” and “falsification” mean? The “unity of science” was also being rightly questioned. Allow me to illustrate: In a number of fields from evolutionary biology to human history the role of *contingency* is central, while in others such as physics it is largely irrelevant.5 And where contingency matters, universal or “covering” laws are obviated. Where contingency matters, our explanations for particular events—such as the appearance of homo sapiens on the evolutionary time line, or the ascent of Caesar Augustus to the imperial throne—will emphasize path dependence and invite the exploration of counterfactual conditions. Indeed, the exploration of counterfactuals, whether by thought exercise or more formally via gaming and simulation, is itself a type of evidence important to sciences that explore contingent events (Lebow and Tetlock 2001). In addition to its often contingent nature, human behavior, unlike that of physical objects, is often purposive and self-conscious. This goal orientation in humans, *inter alia*, means that regularities in behavior—stable patterns that may appear to some to be “laws”—may change as human goals and strategies evolve, perhaps even as a result of rising consciousness of the existing pattern itself. The key point is that our capacity to adapt our behavior to new circumstances ensures that we are not subject to “laws” in the way that physical objects are. Any regularities we find will be *bounded* in space and time—utterly the opposite condition from that studied by our colleagues in physics departments. Thus, due to the contingent and bounded nature of any patterns we find in social phenomena and human tendencies, the methods of social scientists must be more flexible and our ways of understanding our world more pluralistic than the physical sciences. In sum, efforts in philosophy of science over the latter half of the twentieth century established the existence of fatal flaws in logical positivism. The doctrine of falsificationism that developed from the verification principle was shown to have **severe shortcomings**—Popper himself made a point of distinguishing his position from the “naive falsificationism” of the logical positivists in his later work. The search for immutable laws of nature, whether in Carnap’s purely deductive-nomological form or Hempel’s inductive-probabilistic statements, was found to suffer from the same **difficulties in proving causation** that have been shown to be just as reliant on the psychologic of Kant’s constant conjunction.6 Thus, the notion of science as a quest for universal laws, independently tested by observation, was shown to be deeply problematic **even for the physical sciences**.7 Finally, the mutability, historicity, and boundedness of human behavior, the contingencies that can deflect the human story down countless different paths at any given moment, all create qualitative differences between our subject matter and many of the physical sciences in ways that make **the search for a “unity of science” completely futile**. It would be salutary if social scientists would admit that we are all postpositivists now. Logical positivism has come and gone, and it is time for us to move on. But let us not begin this journey with a misstep. The passing of logical positivism does not logically imply the ascendance of relativism (Laudan 1990). Relativism has its own set of deep limitations and logical conundrums.

historical analysis is outmoded

**Hardt and Negri 04** (\*Michael, Professor of Literature and Italian, Duke University, Ph.D in Comparative Literature, University of Washington, and \*Antonio, Former professor in State Theory, Padua University, *Multitude*, 38-9)

It is common to date the shift in international relations to 1989 and the final collapse of the cold war, but perhaps a more suggestive date to mark the inauguration of our present state of war is May 26, 1972, the day when the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which regulated the nuclear weapons production of the two superpowers. The specular contest of nuclear threat had reached its apotheosis. This may be the moment when war began to vacillate as a fundamental index of the power of the nation-state. The nuclear keystone of military strategy still stood for a long time resting on the heads of missiles, but in reality from that moment on the nuclear missiles began to sink in their muddy warehouses. **War,** at least **as modernity knew it,** which is to say generalized war **involving unrestrained, high-intensity conflict and destruction, began to fade away**. A massacre like the German bombing of London in September 1940 or the Allied bombing of Dresden in February 1945, a sustained, **all-out effort aimed at killing** and terrorizing **an entire population,** **could no longer** rationally **be part of** the art of **war**- which does not mean, unfortunately, that such acts cannot be repeated. The mutual deterrence strategy of the United States and the Soviet Union may still have been perpetuated for a time, but **war itself had begun to be transformed—**less oriented toward defending against a coherent megathreat and **more focused on proliferating mini-threats; less intent on the general destruction of the enemy and more inclined toward the transformation or even production of the enemy. War became constrained.** Rather than all-out, large-scale combat, the great superpowers began to engage in high-intensity police actions, such as the United States's involvement in Vietnam and Latin America and the Soviet engagement in Afghanistan. High-intensity police action, of course, is often indistinguishable from low-intensity warfare. Even when these conflicts were at times transformed into wars, they were never as extensive as the total mobilizations of the twentieth century's "great wars." On May 26, 1972, in short, war began to become an integral element of biopower, aimed at the construction and reproduction of the global social order.

Method is a prior question

**Bartlett 1990** – professor of law at Duke University (Katherine, Harvard Law Review, “Feminist legal methods”, 103 Harv. L. Rev. 829, Lexis, WEA)

Feminists have developed extensive critiques of law n2 and proposals for legal reform. n3 Feminists have had much less to say, however, about what the "doing" of law should entail and what truth status to give to the legal claims that follow. These methodological issues matter because methods shape one's view of the possibilities for legal practice and reform. Method "organizes the apprehension of truth; it determines what counts as evidence and defines what is taken as verification." n4 Feminists cannot ignore method, because if they seek to challenge existing structures of power with the same methods that [\*831] have defined what counts within those structures, they may instead "recreate the illegitimate power structures [that they are] trying to identify and undermine."n5

**The plan’s acceleration of warfare guarantees accidents that trigger their impacts**

Kellner, 08 Douglas Kellner, professor of philosophy at UCLA, "Preface The Ideology of HIgh-Tech/Postmodern War vs. the Reality of Messy Wars." <http://gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/2008_Kellner_MessyWarPreface_ver29052008FINAL.pdf>

Hence, phenomenal new military technologies are being produced in the Third Millennium, described as the instruments of an emergent postmodern warfare, and envisaged earlier by Philip K. Dick and other SF writers. These military technologies, described in Messy Wars, are changing the nature of warfare and are part of a turbulent technological revolution with wide-ranging effects. They are helping to engender a novel type of highly intense "hyperwar," cyberwar, or technowar, where technical systems make military decisions and humans are put out of the loop, or are forced to make instant judgments based on technical data. As computer programs displace military planners and computer simulations supplant charts and maps of the territory, technology supersedes humans in terms of planning, decision making and execution. On the level of the battlefield itself, human power is replaced by machines, reducing the soldier to a cog in a servomechanism. These developments are alarming and led French theorist Paul Virilio (1989, 84) to comment in War and Cinema: The disintegration of the warrior's personality is at a very advanced stage. Looking up, he sees the digital display (optoelectronic or holographic) of the windscreen collimator; looking down, the radar screen, the onboard computer, the radio and the video screen, which enables him to follow the terrain with its four or five simultaneous targets; and to monitor his selfnavigating Sidewinder missiles fitted with a camera of infra-red guidance system. The autonomization of warfare and ongoing displacement of humans by technology creates the specter of technology taking over and the possibility of military accidents, leading to, Virilio warns us, the specter of global catastrophe. There is a fierce argument raging in military circles between those who want to delegate more power and fighting to the new "brilliant" weapons opposed to those who want to keep human operators in charge of technical systems. Critics of cyberwar worry that as technology supplants human beings, taking humans out of decision-making loops, the possibility of accidental firing of arms at inappropriate targets and even nuclear war increases. Since the 1980s, Virilio criticized the accelerating speed of modern technology and indicated how it was producing developments that were spinning out of control, and that, in the case of military technology, could lead to the end of the human race (see Virilio and Lotringer’s Pure War 1983). For Virilio, the acceleration of events, technological development, and speed in the current era unfolds such that "the new war machine combines a double disappearance: the disappearance of matter in nuclear disintegration and the disappearance of places in vehicular extermination" (Virilio 1986: 134). The increased pace of destruction in military technology is moving toward the speed of light with laser weapons and computer-governed networks constituting a novelty in warfare in which there are no longer geostrategic strongpoints since from any given spot we can now reach any other, creating "a strategy of Brownian movement through geostrategic homogenization of the globe" (Virilio 1986: 135). Thus, "strategic spatial miniaturization is now the order of the day," with microtechnologies transforming production and communication, shrinking the planet, and preparing the way for what Virilio calls "pure war," a situation where military technologies and an accompanying technocratic system come to dominate every aspect of life. In Virilio's view, the war machine is the demiurge of technological growth and an ultimate threat to humanity, producing "a state of emergency" where nuclear holocaust threatens the very survival of the human species. This consists of a shift from a "geo-politics" to a "chrono-politics," from a politics of space to a politics of time, in which whoever commands the means of instant information, communication, and destruction is a dominant sociopolitical force. For Virilio, every technological system contains its specific form of accident and a nuclear accident would be catastrophic. Hence, in the contemporary era, in which weapons of mass destruction could create an instant world holocaust, we are thrust into a permanent state of emergency with hightech networks that enables military state to impose its imperatives on ever more domains of political and social life, as shown in Messy Wars’ chapter 3 about war environment.

#### The alternative is to critique the aff’s discourse. Rejecting their demand for immediate yes/no policy response is the only way to raise critical ethical questions about the racialized discourse and practice of IR.

Biswas 7—Shampa Biswas, Politics at Whitman [“Empire and Global Public Intellectuals: Reading Edward Said as an International Relations Theorist” *Millennium* 36 (1) p. 117-125]

The recent resuscitation of the project of Empire should give International Relations scholars particular pause.1 For a discipline long premised on a triumphant Westphalian sovereignty, there should be something remarkable about the ease with which the case for brute force, regime change and empire-building is being formulated in widespread commentary spanning the political spectrum. Writing after the 1991 Gulf War, Edward Said notes the US hesitance to use the word ‘empire’ despite its long imperial history.2 This hesitance too is increasingly under attack as even self-designated liberal commentators such as Michael Ignatieff urge the US to overcome its unease with the ‘e-word’ and selfconsciously don the mantle of imperial power, contravening the limits of sovereign authority and remaking the world in its universalist image of ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’.3 Rashid Khalidi has argued that the US invasion and occupation of Iraq does indeed mark a new stage in American world hegemony, replacing the indirect and proxy forms of Cold War domination with a regime much more reminiscent of European colonial empires in the Middle East.4 The ease with which a defence of empire has been mounted and a colonial project so unabashedly resurrected makes this a particularly opportune, if not necessary, moment, as scholars of ‘the global’, to take stock of our disciplinary complicities with power, to account for colonialist imaginaries that are lodged at the heart of a discipline ostensibly interested in power but perhaps far too deluded by the formal equality of state sovereignty and overly concerned with security and order.

Perhaps more than any other scholar, Edward Said’s groundbreaking work in *Orientalism* has argued and demonstrated the long and deep complicity of academic scholarship with colonial domination.5 In addition to spawning whole new areas of scholarship such as postcolonial studies, Said’s writings have had considerable influence in his own discipline of comparative literature but also in such varied disciplines as anthropology, geography and history, all of which have taken serious and sustained stock of their own participation in imperial projects and in fact regrouped around that consciousness in a way that has simply not happened with International Relations.6 It has been 30 years since Stanley Hoffman accused IR of being an ‘American social science’ and noted its too close connections to US foreign policy elites and US preoccupations of the Cold War to be able to make any universal claims,7 yet there seems to be a curious amnesia and lack of curiosity about the political history of the discipline, and in particular its own complicities in the production of empire.8 Through what discourses the imperial gets reproduced, resurrected and re-energised is a question that should be very much at the heart of a discipline whose task it is to examine the contours of global power.

Thinking this failure of IR through some of Edward Said’s critical scholarly work from his long distinguished career as an intellectual and activist, this article is an attempt to politicise and hence render questionable the disciplinary traps that have, ironically, circumscribed the ability of scholars whose very business it is to think about global politics to actually think globally and politically. What Edward Said has to offer IR scholars, I believe, is a certain kind of global sensibility, a critical but sympathetic and felt awareness of an inhabited and cohabited world. Furthermore, it is a profoundly political sensibility whose globalism is predicated on a cognisance of the imperial and a firm non-imperial ethic in its formulation. I make this argument by travelling through a couple of Said’s thematic foci in his enormous corpus of writing. Using a lot of Said’s reflections on the role of public intellectuals, I argue in this article that IR scholars need to develop what I call a ‘global intellectual posture’. In the 1993 Reith Lectures delivered on BBC channels, Said outlines three positions for public intellectuals to assume – as an outsider/exile/marginal, as an ‘amateur’, and as a disturber of the status quo speaking ‘truth to power’ and self-consciously siding with those who are underrepresented and disadvantaged.9 Beginning with a discussion of Said’s critique of ‘professionalism’ and the ‘cult of expertise’ as it applies to International Relations, I first argue the importance, for scholars of global politics, of taking *politics* seriously. Second, I turn to Said’s comments on the posture of exile and his critique of identity politics, particularly in its nationalist formulations, to ask what it means for students of global politics to take the *global* seriously. Finally, I attend to some of Said’s comments on humanism and contrapuntality to examine what IR scholars can learn from Said about *feeling and thinking globally* concretely, thoroughly and carefully.

IR Professionals in an Age of Empire: From ‘International Experts’ to ‘Global Public Intellectuals’

One of the profound effects of the war on terror initiated by the Bush administration has been a significant constriction of a democratic public sphere, which has included the active and aggressive curtailment of intellectual and political dissent and a sharp delineation of national boundaries along with concentration of state power. The academy in this context has become a particularly embattled site with some highly disturbing onslaughts on academic freedom. At the most obvious level, this has involved fairly well-calibrated neoconservative attacks on US higher education that have invoked the mantra of ‘liberal bias’ and demanded legislative regulation and reform10, an onslaught supported by a well-funded network of conservative think tanks, centres, institutes and ‘concerned citizen groups’ within and outside the higher education establishment11 and with considerable reach among sitting legislators, jurists and policy-makers as well as the media. But what has in part made possible the encroachment of such nationalist and statist agendas has been a larger history of the corporatisation of the university and the accompanying ‘professionalisation’ that goes with it. Expressing concern with ‘academic acquiescence in the decline of public discourse in the United States’, Herbert Reid has examined the ways in which the university is beginning to operate as another transnational corporation12, and critiqued the consolidation of a ‘culture of professionalism’ where academic bureaucrats engage in bureaucratic role-playing, minor academic turf battles mask the larger managerial power play on campuses and the increasing influence of a relatively autonomous administrative elite and the rise of insular ‘expert cultures’ have led to academics relinquishing their claims to public space and authority.13

While it is no surprise that the US academy should find itself too at that uneasy confluence of neoliberal globalising dynamics and exclusivist nationalist agendas that is the predicament of many contemporary institutions around the world, there is much reason for concern and an urgent need to rethink the role and place of intellectual labour in the democratic process. This is especially true for scholars of the global writing in this age of globalisation and empire. Edward Said has written extensively on the place of the academy as one of the few and increasingly precarious spaces for democratic deliberation and argued the necessity for public intellectuals immured from the seductions of power.14 Defending the US academy as one of the last remaining utopian spaces, ‘the one public space available to real alternative intellectual practices: no other institution like it on such a scale exists anywhere else in the world today’15, and lauding the remarkable critical theoretical and historical work of many academic intellectuals in a lot of his work, Said also complains that ‘the American University, with its munificence, utopian sanctuary, and remarkable diversity, has defanged (intellectuals)’16. The most serious threat to the ‘intellectual vocation’, he argues, is ‘professionalism’ and mounts a pointed attack on the proliferation of ‘specializations’ and the ‘cult of expertise’ with their focus on ‘relatively narrow areas of knowledge’, ‘technical formalism’, ‘impersonal theories and methodologies’, and most worrisome of all, their ability and willingness to be seduced by power.17 Said mentions in this context the funding of academic programmes and research which came out of the exigencies of the Cold War18, an area in which there was considerable traffic of political scientists (largely trained as IR and comparative politics scholars) with institutions of policy-making. Looking at various influential US academics as ‘organic intellectuals’ involved in a dialectical relationship with foreign policy-makers and examining the institutional relationships at and among numerous think tanks and universities that create convergent perspectives and interests, Christopher Clement has studied US intervention in the Third World both during and after the Cold War made possible and justified through various forms of ‘intellectual articulation’.19 This is not simply a matter of scholars working for the state, but indeed a larger question of intellectual orientation. It is not uncommon for IR scholars to feel the need to formulate their scholarly conclusions in terms of its relevance for global politics, where ‘relevance’ is measured entirely in terms of policy wisdom. Edward Said’s searing indictment of US intellectuals – policy-experts and Middle East experts - in the context of the first Gulf War20 is certainly even more resonant in the contemporary context preceding and following the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The space for a critical appraisal of the motivations and conduct of this war has been considerably diminished by the expertise-framed national debate wherein certain kinds **of** ethical questions irreducible to formulaic ‘for or against’ and ‘costs and benefits’ analysis can simply not be raised. In effect, what Said argues for, and IR scholars need to pay particular heed to, is an understanding of ‘intellectual relevance’ that is larger and more worthwhile, that is about the posing of critical, historical, ethical and perhaps unanswerable questions rather than the offering of recipes and solutions, that is about politics (rather than techno-expertise) in the most fundamental and important senses of the vocation.21

**Liberalism’s structure is incapable of checking the worst of its excesses**

Mitchell **Dean**, Professor of Sociology at Macquarie University, 20**01**, “Demonic Societies: Liberalism, biopolitics, and sovereignty.” Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State, ed. Hanson and Stepputat, p. 50-1

Finally, although liberalism may try to make safe the biopolitical imperative of the optimization of life, it has shown itself permanently incapable of arresting—from eugenics to contemporary genetics---the emergence of rationalities that make the optimization of the life of some dependent on the disallowing of the life of others. I can only suggest some general reasons for this. Liberalism is fundamentally concerned to govern through what it conceives as processes that are external to the sphere of government limited by the respect for rights and liberties of individual subjects. Liberal rule thus fosters forms of knowledge of vital processes and seeks to govern through their application. Moreover, to the extent that liberalism depends on the formation of responsible and autonomous subjects through biopolitics and discipline, it fosters the type of governmental practices that are the ground of such rationalities. Further, and perhaps more simply, we might consider the possibility that sovereignty and biopolitics are so heterogeneous to one another that the derivation of political norms from the democratization of the former cannot act as a prophylactic for the possible outcomes of the latter. We might also consider the alternative to this thesis, that biopolitics captures and expands the division between political life and mere existence, already found within sovereignty. In either case, the framework of right and law can act as a resource for forces engaged in contestation of the effects of biopower; it cannot provide a guarantee as the efficacy of such struggle and may even be the means of the consolidation of those effects.

**No uniqueness – left has already ceded the political**

**Castenada 9** [Concha, “Letter to Joe Bagent about Smokers and Fat People”, Concha’s Cauldron Political Analysis website, http://conchacastaneda.blogspot.com/2009/11/letter-to-joe-bagent-about-smokers-and.html, November 17, 2009] //khirn

There are a million ways to be smug and the American left holds the copyright on three quarters of them. Down inside most lefties feel superior to the majority of Americans for the simple reason that they are indeed superior. Morally superior (at least in the justice sense), intellectually and politically superior too, if you exclude every member of the Democratic Party. However, the American left is void of compassion, the thing that is at the very heart of the true left the world round. And by true left I mean the people dying for the cause in places we never heard of and never will. Given the afore named virtues and qualities possessed by most lefties, they are convinced they know everything about the people around them and what is best for everyone else. People should not own guns, or eat meat, wear fur or shop at WalMart. They should be able to obtain abortion on demand and pot should be legal. Maybe so, but those who do not agree will never be convinced of that by people they will never meet, but who insist upon calling them "sheeple" and "'Merkins" on the Internet and in other public venues. All of which is not the worst thing in the world. In a nation that proclaims every citizen to be an individual, precious and special in his or her own right, merely for being born, well, a lot of folks are bound to take such bullshit a mite too seriously. As in, "I'm special, and you might be too, but the rest of them are just sheeple." I've done that myself, so I'm throwing stones from a glass house. It took a lifetime to recognize the lack of compassion in American society. Hell, I was raised there too. And it took the raw obscenity of George Bush for me to realize that ideology had taken over the political and civic arenas, the only venues where a society can exercise compassion collectively and by force of legislation and law demonstrate its humanity and evolution. It was the snuffing out of what compassion remained in the Democratic Party that ceded the political stage to hard rightist forces. The Democratic leadership, fickle spineless cunts that they are, let the rightists reduce everything to ideological warfare, handing the rightists the field of play. It no longer matters if Democrats are the majority. We don't see our warfare abroad decreasing. It's expanding. And following an ideological war over healthcare reform, we "won." We got reform. Reform which forces 40 million of America's poorest and hardest working folks into bed with insurance corporations, sucking an additional 70 billion dollars a year in public funds from the citizens' pockets into insurance industry coffers. We don't need the insurance companies at all. Never did. Never will. But they are still leeching us because "we won." We the supposed proponents of universal healthcare, we who believe in the right of all children and old folks, the right of all people to freedom from pain and misery, we won. After the ceding of issues and principles to ideology, the only exposure to politics the people got was to ideological warfare. And the only way they got to vote was based on ideology. The left was entirely sucked into this game. Now it's the only game in town and will remain so. You cannot backtrack on pure meanness once it is unleashed, because if you quit playing the game, soften up and exhibit compassion, the opposition eats you alive next election. Calls you the kumbaya crowd and mocks you mercilessly through its extensive network of media puppets, a la Beck, Limbaugh. The crowd loves mockery. Meanwhile the nation continues to rot under a soulless ideological sun. Perishing for want of a drink from compassion's cup. I think many Americans voted for Obama because in their minds he represented the promise of a more compassionate America. They forgot, or chose to forget, that the promise was a political promise. Which is to say it was all either just smoke, or unfulfillable by even the best intended mortal in such a heavily armed high stakes whorehouse. Some of the best among us have thrown in the towel, lost all faith in the political process. Frankly, in my 63 years as an American I've never seen more hearts broken nor more bitter people created by a single event. And that includes the Vietnam War. Those who remain politically involved have internalized politics as ideological warfare. Which means no thing nor person is now safe from the toothy maw of ideology. As the Red Brigades in China showed us, ideology is the big grinder, baby.