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Musings on Global Citizenship

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> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world;
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.
> —William Butler Yeats, "The Second Coming"

A topic such as the one discussed in this inaugural volume is at once intimidating and unavoidable—terrifying because of its weight and complexity; inescapable due to its heightened timeliness. To make even a modest contribution, then, average minds such as mine must press into service, even more than the usual practice, greater thinkers. In this spirit, I will start with Clifford Geertz. Reflecting on intimate encounters in contexts of acute diversity, he instructs us about the imperatives of mutual coexistence. "The next necessary thing…," he declares in *The Anthropologist as Author*, "is to enlarge the possibility of intelligible discourses between people quite different from one another in interest, outlook, wealth and power, and yet contained in a world where, tumbled as they are into endless connection, it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other's way."[1]

I hold that Geertz is correct. Consequently, a preliminary definition of "Global Citizenship"—the emerging *logos* of our age—ought to start with a recognition of the dialectic of multiple differences that *cannot* be obliterated or wished out of existence, yet must co-evolve with each other. But perhaps one could dare to be a tad more adventuresome than Geertz. I suggest, therefore, that "Global Citizenship," to respond effectively to both the ideational and concrete local and planetary challenges that confront us, may include the following: an extension of selfhood to belong to the human race without foregoing more local or regional affinities. Cosmopolitanism, then, is a fusion of immediate and transnational conceptions of self—a gateway to a revival of inclu-

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sive empathy; an identification of the *problematique* at a given time; a discerning analysis; and a common *praxis* towards desirable and achievable utopia. More on this a bit later but, for now, let me propose that the context of global citizenship, contrary to popular conceptions that strictly associate it with the rise of contemporary globalization, is both *old* and *new*.[2]

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In its oldest guise, the world as *one* starts with physical geography. Nearly 200 million years ago, all the present continents were part of one huge landmass that geologists named Pangea.

> It stretched, writes the historian Alfred W. Crosby, over scores of degrees of latitude, and so we can assume that it had some variations in climate; but with only one landmass, there would not have been much variety among its life forms. One continent meant one arena for competition, and so only one set of winners in the Darwinian struggle for survival and reproduction. Reptiles, including all the dinosaurs, were the dominant kinds of land animals in Pangea—and, therefore, the world—for three times as long as mammals have held that position since, and yet reptiles diversified into only two-thirds as many orders.
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> About 180 million years ago, Pangea began to break up like some immense tubular iceberg rotting in the heat of the Gulf Stream. First it split into two supercontinents, and then into smaller units that became, in time, the continents we know.[3]

Notwithstanding the cost/benefit impact of competition for space and resources for the continuation of life, Crosby reminds us of the spatial, if not climatological, closeness of the material envelope of human existence. In other words, despite some local differences, the biosphere was one—a point that has taken us until the late 20th century to fully realize, and only after the rise of a set of serious global and regional environmental dangers.

In terms of human movement, archaeologists and anthropologists tell us that with the great break-up, Africa emerged as the oldest of the continents and the epicenter of the beginnings of human culture. Here, I proffer, lie both the origins of human life and constantly mutating adaptability. The import of this is twofold: (a) that at one time, though so long ago, we were one numerically tiny family in one place; and (b) that, if beginnings have durable significance, human beings became a

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"global" species with that, now realized, migration from Africa to all corners of the planet. No wonder, then, that all religions simultaneously underscore the eschatological unity of humankind as well as the rich variability in interpretations and personal practice of faith.

It is an increasingly acknowledged fact that none of the specific human civilizations begot itself.[4] Whether African, Indian, European, Chinese, Meso-American, or Middle Eastern, each fed on the energy of the others at one time or another. As Fernand Braudel asserted, on the contrary, each civilization is akin to "a railway goods yard"—one that thrives on exporting its own contributions and, at the same time, importing that of others. The balance of exportation and importation would, of course, vary with the specificity of the circumstances— though some might propose that satiated civilizations are less keen on honoring the mutuality of exchange, let alone admit the fact that their own account might heavily depend on borrowings from others.

But, and to leapfrog, the project of modernity ushered in a massive and a new redrawing of many aspects of human life, including drastic displacements and replacements, and relations with nature. Some suggested benchmark dates are 1490, 1492, and the "Long 16th Century." For many, particularly in Europe, this was an opportunity to not only get away from dreaded situations but, more positively, to start all over again. Here, it is important to note that these adventures were supported by the combined naked force of the state and a raw appetite for private accumulation. The immediate consequences were dual clashes: (a) deadly competition among the contenders for material riches and power; and (b) on balance, utter devastation and conquest of native peoples.[5] The piercing expression of Karl Marx captures the multidimensional nature of the onslaught and the relentless forces at work:

> The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of conquest and looting of the East Indies…the hunting of black-skins, signalised the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation. On their heels treads the commercial war of the European nations, with the globe for a theatre.[6]

Increasingly, the shape of the world as one unit—one in which distant happenings had immediate local impact (and vice versa)—began to accelerate. Among the great issues was a rising concern over destruc-

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tive *othering* and exclusion. This worry led to renewed cosmopolitan yearnings such as those expressed in Immanuel Kant's landmark essay, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*. In these pages, Kant proposes that humankind can find lasting peace, "in a vast grave where all the horrors of violence and those responsible for them would be buried," or, alternatively, humanity could attend to the problem of violence by transcending feral nationalistic politics. The latter would demand putting into place "a cosmopolitan ideal that is not only necessary for survival but also a requirement of practical reason."[7] In other words, the only option against aggressive divisiveness is the creation of a universal community of all peoples founded on reverence for personhood and governed by the application of *just* laws.

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In our epoch, globalization is at once compounding and making distinctive the contradictions associated with modernity. These great tensions can be observed in some of the main spheres of human existence at the local, national, and transnational scales: relationship with nature; economic organization and livelihood; cultural encounters; and political order—all in a context of what has been identified as compressed time and a reconfigured space. For the purposes of these notes and the theme of the proceedings, I bring forth four of the many critical predicaments that seem to be central to our time:

- **War and peace**[8]

If it is now part of our common sense that the disappearance of the hostile and armed division of the world into a nuclear-armed West and East is no more, both the threat of these lethal weapons in the nuclear states and the ambition of others to acquire them has not diminished. Russia, the core of the now defunct Soviet Union, and the United States, the heart of NATO, are both in possession of potentially devastating warheads (25,000)—notwithstanding some initial quantitative reductions on both sides.[9] Moreover, both countries, particularly the U.S.A. (at nearly $500 billion), continue to pour large sums into efforts to sustain their military postures. On the other side of the world, the Peoples Republic of China, enabled by its galloping economic growth, is accelerating the modernization and thickening of its military capabilities. Hidden in this "quiet" arms race among these powers is an inten-

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sification of a search for advanced technological innovations, through more sophisticated robotization, that will minimize the deployment of human beings in the battlefields. Though a clash between major nuclear-armed countries is a quick way to Armageddon, it is the cost to human security of more conventional wars that continues to challenge us. In the last two decades in particular, bloody conflagrations or their impact *within* countries has claimed millions of lives. From the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Somalia, Algeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, to the Sudan, millions have been killed or died as a result of conditions induced by the wars. With easy acquisition of weapons in international markets and unconstrained by highly porous boundaries, internal strife fueled by a combination of material desperation in the midst of a visibly enticing but forbidden cornucopia, institutional decay, shrinking political arena, and contracting identities, presents a Hobbesian conjuncture.

The rise of these internal wars does not mean an end to the ambition of the powerful state to intimidate or even invade the lesser ones.[10] None captures this dimension more vividly than the continuing war by the United States on Iraq. What only a few decades ago was one of the more successful countries in the Arab world to create a significant middle class (though accompanied by utterly violent political leadership) is now reduced to sorrowful levels of generalized pauperism, intra-community blood-letting, and massive internal displacement, with many millions seeking refuge in neighboring countries and other parts of the world. The other war of this nature is the one raging in Afghanistan. First it was the then Soviet Union who sent its troops into the country to shore up a client regime; and now it is the United States, accompanied by NATO allies. It is important to note in the case of the latter, regarding the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the subsequent discovery that those who masterminded this horror as well as other ghoulish acts against the United States were ensconced in bases in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, the confluence of imperial arrogance and messianic hatred on the part of the disgruntled is an explosive cocktail. No matter its different guises, violence is antithetical to individual and "common" self. Here, then, we may remind ourselves of the sagacious voice of Erasmus of Rotterdam. In 1519, he wrote this: "Though other actions have their different disadvantages…war always brings about the wreck of everything that is good, and the tide of war overflows with everything that is worst; what is more, there is no evil that persists so stubbornly."[11]

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- **Social Justice and Freedom**

Among the crucial elements of social justice, none looms larger than the grip of poverty on hundreds of millions in many parts of the world. The rich societies of the North, including the United States, are not immune to this condition. As a matter of fact, in both rural areas and urban communities, deprivation, both relative and acute, is part of the human landscape. American inner cities and the suburbs of European metropolises such as Paris underscore this cruel reality.[12]

But it is in the societies beyond the core of the global system where social exclusion is most pronounced. Crystallizing in the growing "favela-zation" of urban living—one in which chronic hunger, disease, decrepit housing, violence, and toxic environment are the norm—social injustice is, for instance, a common feature in the Peoples Republic of China, India, Brazil, the Philippines, Peru, Haiti, Thailand, Mexico, Egypt, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe. Moreover, the demise of the Soviet Union seems to have triggered the appearance and spreading sites of misery.

> The fastest-growing slums are in the Russian Federation (especially ex-'Socialist company towns' dependent on a single, now-closed industry) and the former Soviet republics, where urban dereliction has been bred at the same stomach-churning velocity as economic inequality and civic disinvestment. In 1993 the UN Urban Indicators Programme reported poverty rates of 80 percent or higher in both Baku…and Yerevan. Likewise, the concrete-and-steel Soviet-era urban core of Ulaanbaatar is now surrounded by a sea of 500,000 or more impoverished former pastoralists living in tents…few of whom manage to eat more than once a day.[13]

Across geographies, the urgency for a fairer access to the necessary material and social means for a decent living is staring us in the face.[14]

To be sure, material sustenance is a precondition for human existence. Yet, as the familiar cliché has it, we don't live by bread alone. Equally crucial is individual liberty, buttressed by legitimate procedures. In this evolving global milieu, there are still huge numbers of people whose daily lives are punctuated by a mixture of repressive local structures and habits and distant, if not nefarious, international institutions. Again, there are few countries in the world where the opportunities to cultivate and then protect individual liberty are not an ongoing concern. The promotion of autonomy and self-restraint, in the context of constitutional governance, seems to be indispensable for

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empowered local and global citizens willing to acknowledge difference and still trust in one another. Warning about the explosive potential of deferred expectations and denial of dignity, J.G. Herder left this note, more than two centuries ago:

> To fail to make use of man's divine and noble gifts, to allow these to rust and annihilate themselves, is not only an act of high-treason against humanity, but also the greatest damage that a state can inflict upon itself: for what is lost with such 'dead' and 'buried' assets is not merely the capital with interest; rather, since living forces do not let themselves be buried like dead capital, they fight back and among each other, and create much confusion and disturbance for the commonwealth. A human being, whose capacities are suppressed and prevented from being used, cannot rest, simply because he is alive, and in his frustration he is likely to use his gifts for destructive ends in the most evil and hideous way.[15]

- **Environment**

Global warming is the latest and frightening evidence for the worsening state of the health of the biosphere.[16] Yet the deterioration of our ecological home, through our cultural and technological impact, has been in progress for a significant stretch of time. Perhaps the sharpest warning in the last fifty years came from Rachel Carson.[17] In that landmark volume, Carson sounded the alarm that, at least in the United States, air, water, and land had become subjected to reckless exploitation through the use of chemical pesticides. Even more presciently, she linked the poisoning of rivers and lakes to grave dangers to human health. The great equatorial forests of Brazil, Central Africa, and Southwest Asia are under enormous pressures from logging to ranching, in the process shrinking the space for wildlife as well as diminishing the amount of oxygen available and adding more heat to the atmosphere. Furthermore, desertification, or the receding of grasslands, is another item in the evolving environmental dangers, while coastal areas are being over-fished. Add to the above the mounting challenge of declining water tables, toxic waste, and air pollution, and it becomes plain that the degradation of the environment is one of the awesome dangers facing the human race. Few of the informed now doubt that a "death of nature" is tantamount to our own demise. In contrast, a new calibration, at the local and global levels, of environmental protection and human needs (and even some wants) seems the only way to

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reverse the current and pernicious trends and, therefore, serve both the sustainability of the ecosystems and community well being.[18]

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If this new century is to become different from where we have been, then, we must think hard about what is to be done, particularly with an eye on the items identified above. Rising to such an *obligation* is already underway in many households and communities around the world. To carry the impulse forward, and at a most fundamental level, the old consciousness of species-belonging ought to be rehabilitated. Linking this state of mind to ethically grounded endeavors will make possible the building of new supra-intersubjectivity and intercivilizational mutuality. In the pursuit of this large and difficult project, it is imperative to re-examine established perspectives—particularly that of the Left and the Right.

Among the provisions we need for this new journey, the Left's stress on communitarian solidarity and social intimacy are precious. Democratic citizenship is unthinkable without such a credo and the institutions that give concreteness to it. But, we now know, after bitter experiences, that forced "community" and perverse conceptions of equality end up becoming an essentializing folly and a license for indulgences masquerading as "progressive" action. The ultimate cost is the erosion of *thymos*.

On the other hand, the Right's emphasis on the preservation and enlargement of individual liberty, risk-taking, and the restraining of collective power is wise to appropriate. By the same token, the liabilities of the Right to be avoided include self-seeking atomization. Put another way, in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Jean-Paul Sartre correctly brings to our attention the syndrome of "inert gathering with its structure of seriality." Sartre's famous example is that of the bus queue. Notwithstanding the appearance of a social group, each is isolated from the rest and, consequently, connected only by way of their alienation—the basis for what condemns them to their mutual aloneness. The upshot is that the merging of a self-possessed individual and hyper-consumerist culture is antithetical to the conduct of a common life—one in which the "self" and "other" commune.

A key mechanism to attend to the project of "global citizenship" is politics or the ordering of human associational life. Politics is to be understood as at once good and an unavoidable evil. The first points to

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a moral exercise necessary for the creation and maintenance of a civilized community; the latter reminds us of the presence of such vices as avarice, mendacity, and megalomania. Both Aristotle, in the first instance, and St. Augustine, in the second view, are instructive. Living in the midst of this contradiction, then, is a perpetual assignment, with stress on ethical thinking and living as a way to strengthen the spirit of personal and public goodness and diminish the seduction and destructiveness of self-serving or sectarian glory.[19] A contemporary meditation on global citizenship, without completely overlooking the historical peculiarities of individuals, communities, cultures, and civilizations, cannot afford to underplay commonalities that defy differences. Two relevant insights from two remarkable world citizens, separated by millennia, still affirm our affinities: Diogenes the Cynic and Edward W. Said. In his prescient thinking, Diogenes construed "global citizenship" as an eternal form of exile from the easy slippage into the orbit of local axioms, the reinforcing assurance of myopic attachments, and the intoxicating feeling that often accompanies self-importance and conceit in one's own group. For Said, "Universality means taking a risk in order to go beyond the easy certainties provided us by our background, language, nationality, which so often shield us from the reality of others."[20]

Given the preceding, cultivating the identity of "global citizen" or "universal human," in Martha Nussbaum's conception, is a demanding and endless task but one whose time has come. It is a remaking of both the self and the *other* in a multi-dialogical fashion. This requires attachment and detachment, individual responsibility and collective action—an exercise whose ultimate purpose is to create a global civic culture competent to treat the major issues of our age. Macalester College's awareness of this imperative is on record. In December 1943, the *Macalester Weekly*, our student body paper, printed this remarkable declaration:

> The *Mac Weekly* editorial policy has been to strive toward better world citizenship among Macalester students, agreeing that the ultimate goal of education should be the establishing of a sound and just peace for all peoples.

These sentiments are notable because they fly in the face of a time in the United States when an aggressive nationalist fever was ascendant. Such farsightedness and courage are even more needed at this precarious juncture in American and world history.[21] ◉

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Notes

1. Clifford Geertz, *The Anthropologist as Author* (Palo Alto, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 147.

2. William H. McNeill, "Globalization: Long Term Process or New Era in Human Affairs?," *New Global Studies* 2, no. 1 (2008).

3. Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 9.

4. Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations* (New York: Penguin, 1995); and Peter N. Stearns, Michael Adas, Stuart B. Schwartz, and Marc Jason Gilbert, *World Civilizations: The Global Experience*, 3rd ed. (London: Longman, 2001).

5. Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1982); L.S. Stavrianos, *Global Rift: The Third World Comes of Age* (New York: William Morrow, 1981); Samir Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale* (New York: Harvester Press, 1974) and *Unequal Development* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976); Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (London: Verso, 1998); Eduardo Galeano, *The Open Veins of Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997); Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1981, revised edition); and Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade 1730–1830* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).

6. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1 (New York: Modern Library, 1906), p. 823.

The similarity of the angles of observation of Marx and Adam Smith on this particular, often unacknowledged, point is remarkable.

> The discovery of America, and that of a passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope, are the two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind. Their consequences have already been very great; but in the short period of between two and three centuries which has elapsed since these discoveries were made, it is impossible that the whole extent of their consequences can have been seen. What benefits or what misfortunes to mankind may hereafter result from those great events, no human wisdom can foresee. By uniting, in some measure, the most distant parts of the world, by enabling them to relieve one another's wants, to increase one another's enjoyments, and to encourage one another's industry, their general tendency would seem to be beneficial. To the natives, however, both of the East and West Indies, all the commercial benefits which can have resulted from those events have been sunk and lost in the dreadful misfortunes which they have occasioned. These misfortunes, however, seem to have arisen rather from accident than from anything in the nature of those events themselves. At the particular time when those discoveries were made, the superiority of force happened to be so great on the side of the Europeans that they were enabled to commit with impunity every sort of injustice in those remote countries.
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> Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations: Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of Wealth of Nations* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), p. 561.

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7. Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 105.

8. Richard A. Falk, *The Costs of War: The UN and World Order after Iraq* (New York: Routledge, 20008); and Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).

9. Jonathan Schell, *The Seventh Decade: The New Shape of Nuclear Danger* (New York: Metropolitan, 2007).

10. The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C., September 2002) and *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C., 2006).

11. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, edited and translated by Lisa Jardine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. xiii.

12. Even among the majority that is better off, there is a growing concern over what some see as the corrosion of civic culture by a relentless manufacturing of consumption. On this issue in the context of the American society, see Benjamin R. Barber, *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007). Also, John E. Schwarz, *Freedom Reclaimed: Rediscovering the American Vision* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

13. Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2006), pp. 24–25.

14. Pranab Bardhan, Samuel Bowles, and Michael Wallerstein, eds., *Globalization and Egalitarian Redistribution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: The Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

15. Quoted in F.M. Barnard, *Self-Direction and Political Legitimacy: Rousseau and Herder* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 254.

16. James Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia: Earth's Climate Crisis and the Fate of Humanity* (New York: Basic Books, 2006); Ross Gelbspan, *The Heat is On: The High Stakes Battle over Earth's Threatened Climate* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1997); and Rodney R. White, *North, South, and the Environmental Crisis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

17. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962).

18. Hildegard Hannum, ed., *People, Land, and Community* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). For a dissenting voice that proposes that environmental health need not clash with economic growth and prosperity, see Wilfred Beckerman, *Through Green-Colored Glasses: Environmentalism Reconsidered* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 1996).

19. For a valuable contribution through the wisdom of "Non-Western" civilization, particularly with regard to ethical leadership, see William Theodore de Bary, *Nobility and Civility: Asian Ideals of Leadership and the Common Good* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); and Joseph A. Kechichian and R. Hrair Dekmejian, *The Just Prince: A Manual of Leadership* (London: Saqi, 2003).

20. Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York: Pantheon, 1994), p. xiv.

21. After a distinguished scholarly career in educating us to understand the making of our "Modern World-System," Immanuel Wallerstein urges us to act, within the possibilities of our circumstances, in a spirit of a new pan-humanism:

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We are at the end of a long era, which can go by many names. One appropriate name could be the era of European universalism. We are moving into the era after that. One possible alternative is a multiplicity of universalisms that would resemble a network of universal universalisms. It would be the world of Senghor's *rendez-vous du donner et du recevoir*. There is no guarantee that we shall arrive there. This is the struggle of the coming twenty to fifty years. The only serious alternative is a new hierarchical, inegalitarian world that will claim to be based on universal values, but in which racism and sexism will continue to dominate our practices, quite possibly more viciously than in our existing world-system. So we must all simply persist in trying to analyze a world-system in its age of transition, in clarifying the alternatives available and thereby the moral choices we have to make, and finally, in illuminating the possible political paths we wish to choose.

Immanuel Wallerstein, *European Universalism: The Rhetoric of Power* (New York: The New Press, 2006), p. 84.

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