Totality and Ambivalence:

Postmodern Responses to Globalization and the American Empire

Eric Voegelin's resistance to Fascist and Communist totalitarianism stands as a model of ethical protest for us today. If so, then how should we respond to the totality we presently call "globalization" and to the powers that promote globalization � particularly the United States. Clearly, if we refer to globalization as a form of "totalitarianism" it must be qualified immediately. Globalization is not characterized by state surveillance and concentration camps. Still, globalization, like any totalitarian movement, aspires for completeness, and this is causing violence � both intentional and unintentional.

This paper will examine reactions to "globalization" in a post-September 11 context by thinkers who are frequently classified as "postmodern." I will concentrate on two prominent French theorists, Jean Baudrillard and Jacques Derrida, who share similar understandings of the general phenomenon of globalization, but who arrive at remarkably different conclusions. Baudrillard, in his response to globalization, wants to free himself from the heritage of the Enlightenment and modernity. Derrida, on the other hand, is not as "postmodern" as people often think, and this has become clearer over the past decade. Derrida wants to curb the excesses of globalization by reviving the spirit of the Enlightenment. He cherishes the heritage of the Enlightenment, but he wants to "intervene," to criticize certain features of it in order to improve

upon it and keep its promise alive. Derrida is, in fact, highly ambivalent about modernity, even about globalization, which he believes is "for better and for worse."

Postmodernity, Globalization and Universality

Let us begin by recalling Jean-Fran�ois Lyotard's famous definition of postmodernity as "incredulity toward metanarratives."1 [1]   The postmodern condition is characterized by skepticism or mistrust of any ontology, cosmology, ideology, sociology, psychology, theology, or historicism that claims to be absolute and total. Any form of thought or action that claims to have absolute knowledge of all phenomena, and that promises total control of the human and natural environments, is now immediately suspect. Zygmunt Bauman points out that modern institutions of all sorts, through bureaucracy, science and technology, have struggled to achieve "universality, homogeneity, monotony, and clarity." Progressive liberal societies have certainly aspired to actualize these ends. However, Fascism and Communism were the most radical expressions of this struggle in the twentieth century. The legacy of the totalitarian aspiration to created a unified system that is perfectly regulated, absolutely efficient, and cleansed of all human "contaminants" is one of oppression, war, concentration camps and genocide. As a result, modernity has produced unintended consequences. Bauman argues that the postmodern condition is characterized by "pluralism, variety, contingency and ambivalence" � that is, by the very things that modern society tried to overcome but which it ironically produced at ever increasing rates.2 [2]

In advanced Western societies, there is now widespread mistrust of any political or religious movement that claims to be complete. The modern desire to unify has been replaced, to some extent, by a postmodern recognition of, and respect for, plurality and difference. Deconstructionists point out that philosophical, religious and political metanarratives always exclude certain elements or "others" that undermine the internal consistency of a totality. Deconstruction aims to reintroduce these excluded elements, not so that the totality can be destroyed, but so that it can be criticized, destabilized, and modified � so that it can be shown its incompleteness. This emphasis on otherness, difference and destabilization can sometimes lead to nihilistic relativism � an accusation that is frequently leveled at postmodern thinkers. But it would be unfair to characterize all postmodern thought in this way. As Bauman has said, it is possible to identify oneself as a postmodern "without necessarily accepting every rubbish written in the name of postmodern theory."3 [3]

If it is true that the modern desire for universality and homogeneity is dead, then what are we to make of the current phenomenon we now call "globalization"? The word itself signifies a single movement that encompasses the world, and is thus ostensibly at odds with the postmodern sensibility. Derrida prefers to use the French word *mondialisation* rather than globalization so that he can refer to the "world" � or, in French, *monde* � rather than the territorial "globe."4 [4] *Mondialisation* is liberated from geography, thanks to the creation of teletechnologies and virtual reality. It presents itself as a movement that creates a unified "world," not by seizing territory

and colonizing, but through the expansion of Western markets, technology, values and popular culture.

Simply put, globalization is residual modernity. It is a movement that is essentially modern in its ambitions but which emerged just as it became clear that modern ambitions are essentially unrealizable. When speaking about globalization, it is important, as always, to distinguish appearance from reality. There is, first of all, the spectacle of globalization, or, to use Voegelinian terminology, globalization as "second reality." Globalization, as spectacle, is the apocalyptic victory of Western capitalist democracy over all other political forms. As such, it represents the penultimate, once-and-for-all, triumph of freedom and democracy over oppression and totalitarianism. Francis Fukuyama, that popular evangelist of globalization, proclaimed in 1989 that we had reached the "end of history." The Cold War divide between the superpowers was being replaced by a new unified world order. Fukuyama, using terminology borrowed from Alexandre Koj�ve, referred to this emerging totality as the "universal and homogenous state," a world order that, politically, is increasingly democratic, and, economically, increasingly capitalistic. Though there may be some setbacks along the way, the movement toward the universal and homogenous state is inevitable. All other political and economic forms � monarchy, aristocracy, theocracy, totalitarianism, slave economies, feudalism, socialism � have exhausted themselves. With globalization, we have reached the eschaton; the apocalyptic events are occurring as we speak, and the news is good, notwithstanding Fukuyama's own ambivalence about the shallow "last man" produced by such an apocalypse. Markets and borders will open up, the human race will become more interconnected, there will be universal access to technology and consumer goods, and there will be equality of opportunity. Authoritarian states around the world will collapse under the momentum of this movement. Indeed, there will be a

general diminution of state power around the world. The universal and homogenous "state" operates by an ethos of "deregulation," which is perhaps a postmodern acknowledgement of fragmentation.   However, the desire for a world with a single political and economic form is entirely modern. The guarantor of this final world order is the world's only remaining superpower, the United States, which, ostensibly, has the military and economic strength to protect Western democracies, markets, and values as they become global.

But so much for the dream. First of all, the spectacle of globalization suggests that Western political values spread naturally with Western free markets � as if the two are inseparable and necessarily linked. This is not, however, the case, as has been pointed out time and time again. One need only mention China to demonstrate how easy it is for a country to embrace free market capitalism and Western popular culture without accepting liberal democracy. Thus, while it might be correct to say that Western markets, consumer goods, technology, and popular culture are spreading, the same cannot be said of Western democratic values. To explain this reality, Baudrillard makes a distinction between "globalization" and "universality." He writes: "Between the terms �global' and �universal' there is a deceptive similarity. Universality is the universality of human rights, freedoms, culture, and democracy. Globalization is the globalization of technologies, the market, tourism, information."5 [5] Universalists desire to see the worldwide recognition of human rights, the application of international law, the rise of the global standard of living, the decrease of the disparity between rich and poor, and the spread of more representative forms of government. Globalization, on the other hand, facilitates the spread of free markets, consumer goods, technology, information, and

telecommunications. We see the conflict between universalizers and globalizers in the protests

that frequently accompany meetings of the IMF or the G8. However, the "antiglobalization"

movement protesting out in the streets is not, in fact, against world order *per se*. Though the

motives of the protesters are many and varied, and often at odds with each other, there is a

general sense that these protesters desire to curb economic deregulation. In their eyes, the

unregulated market is compromising human rights and aggravating economic disparity. Thus,

the tense standoffs in places such as Seattle and Genoa were between two different visions of

what constitutes the best form of universal world order. In other words, they are both modern.

No one of significance at these spectacles was calling for the complete dismantling of all global

institutions or ambitions.

There can be no doubt, however, as to which of these forms of world order commands the

greater power. Clearly, "globalization" dominates, whereas "universality," according to

Baudrillard, is "on the way out" (ST 88).6 [6]   More precisely, the universal has been absorbed

by the global. Universal values have become commodified and sold around the world as if they

were consumer goods. As Baudrillard puts it:

> What globalizes first is the market, the profusion of exchanges and of all
> products, the perpetual flow of money. Culturally, it is the promiscuity of all
> signs and all values�.At the end of this process, there is no longer any difference
> between the global and the universal. The universal itself is globalized;
> democracy and human rights circulate just like any other global product � like
> oil and capital. (ST 89-90)

When universal values become global, they no longer have any real value; "their expansion

corresponds to their weakest definition" (ST 89). What actually expands is the *spectacle* of

universal democracy, human rights, and freedom, but not the reality. Liberty is reduced to the free exchange wealth and information. In Baudrillard's words, "All [political] liberties fade before the mere liberation of exchange."7 [7]

So, the universal spread of democracy and human rights is not actually taking place through globalization. But, as Derrida argues, globalization itself "does not take place" either.8 [8]   Again, what is occurring is the spectacle of globalization through the media, technology, and advertising � a spectacle that, according to Derrida, is easier to globalize than globalization itself.   The discourse in favour of globalization speaks of global interconnectivity made possible through teletechnologies, the opening of borders and markets, the equality of opportunity for all people, the universal accumulation of wealth. But, as Derrida points out, there has "never been in the history of humanity, in absolute numbers, so many inequalities" (PT 121). Despite all the rhetoric of an interconnected world, Derrida points out that only 5% of humanity has access to the Internet, even though, by 1999, half of American households did.   Thus, Derrida concludes, "Only certain countries, and in these countries, only certain classes, benefit fully from globalization" (PT 122). Derrida admits that in some areas of the world where globalization in "believed," such as in North America, Europe, and Asia, it has had some beneficial effects, both economically and politically. However, the claim that globalization is creating a world in which everyone can share in the wealth accumulated through the liberation of exchanges is patently untrue.

However, there is another way in which globalization is not taking place. The spectacle of globalization is occurring as humanity is becoming increasingly fragmented. There was widespread expectation after the Cold War that the majority of the world would gravitate providentially towards a Western lifestyle. It is certainly true that there have been democratic and free market reforms in places such as Eastern Europe.   However, with the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, old ethnic and religious tensions have emerged from the deep freeze of totalitarianism. This fragmentation is, in fact, a universal phenomenon, happening even within the West itself. Baudrillard claims we are witnessing the proliferation of "singularities" � individuals, groups, cultures, ethnicities, nations, religions � that were thought to have been rendered politically obsolete by modern politics, but which are now emerging as forces to be reckoned with. Far from gravitating towards the West, many of these singularities are becoming increasingly resistant to Western forms of economy, politics and rationality. And as Western universal values lose their authority, the resistance is becoming more and more radical. Baudrillard points out that as long as universal values "could assert themselves as mediating values, they succeeded, more or less, in integrating singularities, as differences, into a universal culture of difference�. Once the universal has disappeared, all that remains is the all-powerful global technostructure, set over against singularities that are now returned to the wild and left to themselves" (ST 91).

We are thus faced with the irony of globalization, which is the irony of modernity in general. Instead of a universal and homogeneous state, see the proliferation of singularities that are becoming increasingly radicalized and resistant. In a world of deregulation and privatization, unregulated and private groups have emerged that operate beyond the control traditional

sovereign states and world markets. And this brings us to Al Qaeda, a private enterprise that emerged as a bi-product of deregulation in the 1990s.

Globalization and September 11

Radical Islam � or Islamism � was perhaps the most prominent "singularity" to emerge in the later part of the twentieth century. The House of Islam is not a homogeneous entity; it is filled with divisions and violent antagonisms � a multitude of singularities. Yet, it was within the Muslim world � in the "Islamist" or "fundamentalist" strains of Sunni and Shia Islam � that the most organized forms of resistance to Western domination emerged as the Cold War came to an end. This new reality was observed by Michel Foucault in 1978, and was articulated in a series of articles on the Iranian revolution. Foucault's enthusiasm for the revolution was, to say the least, ill-advised, but he was perceptive enough to understand the true import of the Shi'ite revolt. According to Foucault, the Iranians were not simply protesting their political grievances against the Shah and his American supporters; rather, their revolt was a spiritual revolution directed against Western "global hegemony." As such, the Ayatollah Khomeini's brand of revolutionary Shi'ism initiated a new form of "political spirituality" that was foreign to Western modernity. Foucault mused that Iran might be "the first great insurrection against the planetary system, the most mad and most modern form of revolt."9 [9]

The true defining moment of Islamist resistance to the Western "planetary system" occurred twenty-two years later, on September 11, 2001. This time, the resistance was carried out by Sunni radicals from Al Qaeda, and occurred not in the Middle East but in United States

itself. But the shock of 9/11 is more than just our reaction to the attack � of suicide hijackers striking the American mainland, destroying the World Trade Center and killing 3000 people. 9/11 was essentially a shock because it was an assault on the prevailing myth of modernity and globalization: the idea that we are all becoming more alike through a generalized system of exchange. And the Twin Towers, in their very twin-ness, in their identicality, were the perfect symbol of this totality � an awe-inspiring, functional, global system of exchange, replicating itself and overshadowing everything else to produce a homogeneous, identical order. For Baudrillard, it is the symbolic nature of this even that is most significant. The World Trade Center was targeted � twice � for its symbolic value, and the second attack on 9/11 was successful. The 9/11 hijackers probably did not anticipate the actual collapse of the towers, but the fact that both towers fell only added to the symbolism of the event; it was as if globalization itself was committing suicide, under the threat of a new type of suicidal terror.10 [10]

Baudrillard emphasizes that the current "war on terror" is not a clash of civilizations. There is indeed, says Baudrillard, a "fundamental antagonism" but it extends well beyond America and Islam. America is the "epicentre" of globalization but not its sole embodiment; Islam is the most significant incarnation of terror, but not the only manifestation. What is actually occurring, says Baudrillard, is "triumphant globalization battling against itself" (ST 11). Globalization has produced all kinds of singular bi-products that are using the methods of globalization against globalization. Furthermore, even those who have benefited from globalization feel an inherent terrorist impulse to destroy the global order. Baudrillard speaks of a new world war in which globalization itself is threatened but which is producing these threats

by itself. Long before former CIA Director James Woolsey referred to the war on terror as

"World War Four," Baudrillard used the phrase in his controversial essay *The Spirit of*

Terrorism:

> [W]e can indeed speak of a world war � not the Third World War, but the Fourth
> and the only really global one, since what is at stake is globalization itself. The
> first two world wars corresponded to the classical image of war. The first ended
> the supremacy of Europe and the colonial era. The second put an end to Nazism.
> The third, which has indeed taken place, in the form of cold war and deterrence,
> put an end to Communism. With each succeeding war, we have moved further
> towards a single world order. Today, that order, which has virtually reached its
> culmination, finds itself grappling with the antagonistic forces scattered
> throughout the very heartlands of the global, in all the current convulsions. A
> fractal war of all cells, all singularities, revolting in the form of antibodies. A
> confrontation so impossible to pin down that the idea of war has to be rescued
> from time to time by spectacular set-pieces, such as the Gulf War or the war in
> Afghanistan. But the Fourth World War is elsewhere. It is what haunts every
> world order, all hegemonic domination � if Islam dominated the world, terrorism
> would rise against Islam, *for it is the world, the globe itself, which resists*
> *globalization*. (ST 11-12)

According to Baudrillard, there is an automatic reaction in the world to any form of global

domination. Amidst the spectacle of globalization, singularity is expressing itself most

significantly through spectacular violence. As Baudrillard puts it, "Terrorism is the act that

restores an irreducible singularity to the heart of a system of generalized exchange" (ST 9). Thus,

terrorism is emerging everywhere, in individuals and groups. But, according to Baudrillard,

there is an "unwitting terroristic imagination which dwells in all of us," and he makes the

controversial claim that all of us are complicit in the September 11 attacks. Baudrillard claims

that even those of us who benefit from the spectacle of globalization harbour a desire to see that

global order destroyed. Most of us will not act on this desire. However, the attack on the World

Trade Center was not "unimaginable." Such an attack had been imagined countless times in

Hollywood disaster movies. The fact that people flocked to such movies in the years preceding

the attacks, to see this pornography for our terrorist imaginations, reveals that even the Western soul cannot avoid dreaming � and unwittingly desiring � the destruction of such an unprecedented global totality. Baudrillard writes: "they *did* it, but we *wished for* it" (ST 5).

Thus, the terrorist impulse is not restricted to those who ended up on the losing end of globalization; it is in all of us, at least at the level of desire. In fact, the hijackers who carried out the 9/11 attacks were not on the losing end of globalization either. This fact is perhaps most frightening of all. 9/11 was, in Baudrillard's words, a "terrorism of the rich" (ST 23). Though the hijackers believed they were attacking on behalf of the Islamic world against Western evil, they were actually beneficiaries of Western affluence. They participated in the Western way of life, they had access to technology, they were media savvy, and they attended flight school. Derrida points out that the 9/11 attacks occurred "*from the inside*," by individuals who were ostensibly weak in comparison to the global power structure, but who, "though ruse and the implementation of *high-tech* knowledge" managed to "get hold of an American weapon in an American city on the ground of an American airport" (PT 95). The attackers went to Al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan, but they integrated themselves into a Western way of life, familiarizing themselves with the methods of globalization, only to then use those very methods against it. Despite experiencing the benefits globalization, they still wanted to demolish it. Baudrillard writes: "Money and stock-market speculation, computer technology and aeronautics, spectacle and the media networks � [the 9/11 terrorists] assimilated everything of modernity and globalism, without changing their goal, which is to destroy that power" (ST 19).

The Immune Disorders of Globalization

Both Baudrillard and Derrida use the language of immunology to describe our current ailments. They both argue that the West is suffering from a disorder in its immune system. Baudrillard likens terrorism to viral infections, such as AIDS. HIV enters certain white blood cells in the immune system, incorporates itself into the DNA of the cells, gathers information from the DNA, and then destroys the cells while releasing new virus particles that further compromise the immune system. Similarly, terrorists incorporate themselves into the social DNA of Western societies, gather information from the inside, and then use that information against the host to destroy its defenses and inspire new terrorists. In this sense, terrorism is "viral," and for Baudrillard it is not coincidental that AIDS and global terrorism emerged as radical forces at around the same time. Just as AIDS, at the biological level, undermines the absolute liberation of sexual exchanges, so global terrorism, at the social level, undermines the liberation of economic and information exchanges. Indeed, they use our aspirations for liberation and interconnectivity against us.

The more interconnected the world becomes, the less immunity we have against attacks. Just as an infectious disease that emerges in one area of the world can spread globally via the interconnectivity of air travel (think of the recent SARS outbreak), so a terrorist attack at one point on the global grid can no longer be contained locally; it reverberates globally, sending markets and societies into convulsions. 9/11 is the most striking example of this, but we are seeing lesser examples in the daily reality of computer viruses. The full potential of cyberterrorism � infecting fragile computer networks and creating maximum havoc around the world � has yet to be realized, but it is undoubtedly a possibility that should concern us. Again, our interconnectivity makes us vulnerable. Those with a high degree of technical knowledge can use it against us. In this regard, one does not need to be an Islamist enthusiast. The future of

terror may come from loner terrorists with technical expertise, who are not driven by any definable fundamentalism or ideology like Al Qaeda, but who are nevertheless drawn to the idea of attacking the world � perhaps from a computer screen. "Terrorism, like viruses, is everywhere," says Baudrillard, and the West does not have an immune system that can destroy these bugs definitely (ST 10). They are circulating throughout the system, *within* the system, impossible to pin down or isolate entirely.

Derrida does not speak of viruses or *acquired* immune deficiency. Rather, he diagnoses the West's illness as an "autoimmunitary process," whereby "a living being, in quasi-*suicidal* fashion, �itself' works to destroy its own protection, to immunize itself *against* its �own' immunity" (PT 94). Derrida identifies three "moments" of this autoimmunitary process, which occurred as the West was emerging from the Cold War (see PT 94-100). The first moment of suicidal autoimmunity occurred during the Cold War, when the United States formed alliances with Arab countries and Islamist factions in its struggle with the Soviet Union. The U.S. allied itself with Saudi Arabia, a radical Islamist regime, and became increasingly dependent on Saudi oil. The flow of money into Saudi Arabia was used by the Saudis to reinforce and disseminate its radical interpretation of Islam, both at home and throughout the Islamic world. The U.S. also supported the mujahideen forces in Afghanistan in their struggle against the Soviets during the 1980s. The consequence of this flood of wealth, arms, and support to radical Islamists resulted in what is popularly called "blowback," but what Derrida calls "the Cold War in the head." The mujahideen forces that the U.S. once backed have now struck the U.S. in its military and economic head. The support of radical Islam during the Cold War was a suicidal autoimmune moment.

The second autoimmune moment occurred at the end of the Cold War, or what Derrida calls "Worse than the Cold War." During the Cold War there was a "balance of terror"; the Americans and the Soviets were involved in a standoff in which both states were "capable of neutralizing the other's nuclear power through a reciprocal and organized evaluation of the respective risks" (PT 98). In other words, the threat of an actual nuclear war was diminished by the prospect of mutually assured destruction. However, with the victory of the U.S., this standoff came to end, and it set in motion a suicidal autoimmunitary process. As the Soviet Union was dismantled, it lost control of its nuclear arsenal, technology, and scientists. Consequently, the nuclear threat today has changed from the days of the Cold War. Derrida points out that the nuclear threat "no longer comes from a state but from anonymous forces that are absolutely unforeseeable and incalculable" (PT 98). This is, again, a symptom of our increasing autoimmunity, and it is part of what makes the current situation "worse" than the Cold War. The very destructive technologies developed by the superpowers during the Cold War have proliferated into private hands. There is also the threat of chemical or bacteriological attacks, as more information and technology spreads throughout the black market.

These new threats, says Derrida, put at risk the very possibility of any "world-wide effort [*mondialisation*] (international law, a world market, a universal language)." Derrida refers this threat as an "absolute evil," because it threatens something absolute: "what is at stake is nothing less than the *mondialisation* or the worldwide movement of the world." 9/11 was the "first (conscious-unconscious) sign of this absolute terror" (PT 98-9).   But this sign also points us towards a terrifying future. What made 9/11 so terrifying was not just our horror of what happened on that day, but our fear that something even worse may happen in the future. As Derrida point out, if we had been told on 9/11 that nothing like this would ever happen again,

then America and the West would have proceeded with the "task of mourning" and life would have soon returned to "normal" (see PT 97). But this is not what occurred; instead, we discovered ourselves in the "new normal," in which the threat of a worse attack "to come" hangs over the West every day. In the future, the attack may not be as tangible as 9/11; a cybernetic, biological, or nanotechnological attack, would make the terror microscopic, invisible, and potentially more deadly while being less obviously violent. Derrida writes: "One day it might be said: �September 11' � those were the (�good') old days of the last war. Things were still of the order of the gigantic: visible and enormous! What size, what height! There has been worse since. Nanotechnologies of all sorts are so much more powerful and invisible, uncontrollable, capable of creeping in everywhere" (PT 102). This is another feature of what makes our current situation "worse" than the Cold War.

The third, and final, autoimmune moment is what Derrida calls "The vicious cycle of repression." Derrida claims that humanity is not defenseless against the threat of this new evil, but he claims that "all forms" of the current "war on terror" will only work to "regenerate, in the short and long term, the causes of the evil they seek to eradicate" (PT 100). In other words, the victims of Western military action in places such as Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere, will respond, either personally or by proxy, with more terrorism. This in turn will inspire more violence from America and its allies, and so on ad infinitum.

Derrida's brief account of this autoimmune moment was formulated a month after 9/11 and long before the Iraq war. From a Derridian perspective, the Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq was a suicidal autoimmune response to terror, not just because it was fought under false pretenses (no WMD's, no working relation between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda), but

also because it ironically facilitated and inspired the spread of terror (in Iraq itself and Spain). The chaos of post-war Iraq created an environment in which Islamic extremism could thrive. Islamist movements that were oppressed by Saddam's tyranny were revitalized. The U.S. invasion also divided the West. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the Western world was united, and there was little opposition to the war in Afghanistan. Within a year and a half, that unity had disintegrated. The schisms created by the war in Iraq are now everywhere. Consequently, the international response required to contain terrorism has been compromised. Our immune systems are threatened.

Baudrillard and the Traditional Moral Order

Baudrillard's and Derrida's analyses of globalization and its discontents are similar. But their accounts of how we should respond to this malaise, and what the future may hold, differ radically.

Baudrillard writes that "Terrorism is immoral," but that terror "is a response to a globalization which is itself immoral." Then, in a manner that recalls Nietzsche, he writes: "let us be immoral: and if we want to have some understanding of all this, let us go and take a little look beyond Good and Evil" (ST 12-13).   Baudrillard attacks the predominant Western understanding of Good and Evil. He defines the Western conception of "Good" as "the unification of things in a totalized world," whereas Evil is whatever antagonizes or disrupts this unification.11 [11]   It must be said that all of Baudrillard's philosophical efforts are directed against such a unification; thus, in this sense, he is firmly on the side of "Evil." However, we

must not think that this leads to a philosophy where "everything is permitted." Baudrillard is

"immoral" from the standpoint of a Western philosophy, which can only conceive of goodness as

total unification; however, Baudrillard wants to get beyond this understanding, and he directs us

to, what he calls, the traditional "moral universe" that existed in premodern societies. Once

again, Baudrillard works in the spirit of Nietzsche, who wanted to move beyond Christian and

modern conceptions of "good and evil," but not beyond older conceptions of "good and bad."12

[12]

The expectation, central to both Judeo-Christian and modern understandings, that Good

can be separated from Evil, or that it can eradicate Evil, is a disorienting illusion � an illusion

that Baudrillard calls a "terroristic dream." He writes: "We ought not to entertain the illusion

that we might separate the two, that we might cultivate good and happiness in a pure state and

expel evil and sorrow as wastes." 13 [13]   But this eschatological illusion, according to

Baudrillard, has been propagated in Western thought, first in "theology," and then in the "whole

of modern philosophy."14 [14]   Baudrillard writes:

> This is precisely where the crucial point lies � in the total misunderstanding on
> the part of Western philosophy, on the part of the Enlightenment, of the relation
> between Good and Evil. We believe naively that the progress of Good, its
> advance in all fields (the sciences, technology, democracy, human rights),
> corresponds to a defeat of Evil. No one seems to have understood that Good and
> Evil advance together, as part of the same movement. (ST 13)

Thus, "it is not by expurgating evil that we liberate good. Worse, by liberating good, we also liberate evil."15 [15] Globalization unleashed a "total extrapolation of Good" (ST 14), but evil was not diminished; on the contrary, it has increased exponentially, "transpiring though" the hegemony of Globalization (the Good) and manifesting itself in system breakdowns, accidents, catastrophes, new diseases, violence, and terrorism. Evil, writes Baudrillard, is "everywhere," despite our enlightened efforts to conquer it; it has "metamorphosed into all the viral and terroristic forms that obsess us."16 [16]

Baudrillard directs us away from the dream that evil can be conquered. He claims we will not achieve "equilibrium" until we accept what he variously calls the "moral universe" or "traditional universe" (ST 14). It is a universe that accepts the world as it is without any appeal to an actual or hypothetical triumph of the Good. This world, according to Baudrillard, is constituted by an inescapable duality. "Everything," says Baudrillard, "is in the play of duality."17 [17] And perhaps the most fundamental duality is that of Good and Evil. The world as constituted by Good and Evil cannot be exchanged for a world constituted by Good alone. Thus, the traditional moral universe was an "antagonistic coexistence of two equal and eternal principles, Good and Evil, at once inseparable and irreconcilable."18 [18] There was "a balance between Good and Evil, in accordance with a dialectical relation which maintained the tension and equilibrium of the moral universe, come what may" (ST 14). This delicate balance was maintained because there was no supremacy of one over the other. However, this balance was

upset with the Western hegemony of the Good � the effort to destroy any negative or adverse force, and subsume all "otherness" within a universal order. The irony, of course, is that Evil developed exponentially; the positive accomplishments of Western economic expansion and technological advancement have been met by equally negative reactions.

Thus, Baudrillard argues against any type of Western based "internationalism," whether this be the internationalism of economic globalization or universal human rights. The idea that Western values or markets can unify the world, or mediate the world's differences, must be abandoned, for the intent is naively utopian and the results have been destructive. Through these efforts, the West has attempted to exterminate all "otherness." It will accept "difference," says Baudrillard, but only if the various differences accept the overriding Western value system. We must, according to Baudrillard, adopt a different strategy. We must surrender to the fragmentation that is occurring, and embrace the idea of a radically plural world that cannot be mediated or unified by a transcendent system of law, politics, economics or values. Baudrillard calls for nothing short of abandoning the Western dream of unification and universality in all its guises.

Derrida and the New International

Derrida is more ambivalent about the West. Like Baudrillard, he has a thorough critique of Western philosophy, politics and economics, but this does not lead to a full-scale rejection. Whereas Baudrillard states that both terrorism and globalization are "immoral," Derrida understands the matter somewhat differently. He speaks of two metonymies, "bin Laden" and "Bush," who represent, respectively, the forces of Islamist terror and Western power. And Derrida says, quite revealingly:

> [I]f I had to take one of the two sides and choose in a binary situation, well, I would. Despite my very strong reservations about the American, indeed European, political posture, about the "international antiterrorist" coalition, despite al the de facto betrayals, all the failures to live up to democracy, international law, and the very international institutions that the states of this "coalition" themselves founded and supported up to a certain point, I would take the side of the camp that, in principle, by right of law, leaves a perspective open to perfectibility in the name of the "political," democracy, international law, international institutions, and so on�.I don't hear any such promise coming from "bin Laden," at least not one for *this world*. (PT 114)

Derrida, with a large degree of reservation, chooses the West, not for what it is, but because of a "promise" that is contained within it � a promise that cannot be found in the forces of Islamist terror or other violent dogmatisms, both religious and secular. Despite his criticisms of the West, it is clear that Derrida wants to retain "the promise" contained within those societies shaped by the Enlightenment.

Derrida is even ambivalent about globalization itself. As we have seen, he does not believe globalization is actually taking place. However, Derrida writes, "wherever it is believed *globalization is taking place, it is for better and for worse*" (PT 123). It is for worse because it subjects the believers of globalization to all of the autoimmune symptoms we discussed earlier. It is for better, according to Derrida, because democracy and human rights stand a better chance of realizing themselves where globalization is believed. He claims that the movement towards democratization in Eastern Europe owes almost everything "to television, to the communication of models, norms, images, informational products, and so on" (PT 123).   Derrida uses an old favorite term, *pharmakon*, to describe globalization: a *pharmakon* is both medicine and poison, and that is precisely what globalization, indeed modernity, is � an apparent remedy that has brought both the best and the worst (see PT 124). Baudrillard would agree with this assessment. But whereas Baudrillard rejects the *pharmakon* entirely, Derrida looks for the medicinal qualities

in the West. Derrida is aware that the medicine can never be extracted completely, and that there

will always be contamination; but he thinks that it is imperative for us to retain the medicine, the

ethical promise of the Enlightenment � a promise that extends back even further in our history,

to the messianic hope of the Abrahamic religious traditions.

Derrida's understanding of ethics has been deeply influenced by the work of Emmanuel

Levinas, and it is helpful to consider Levinasian ethics in outline.19 [19]   For Levinas, the

primary purpose of philosophy is ethical. After Auschwitz, after the Gulag, after the Killing

Fields, "first philosophy" is no longer metaphysics, ontology, or theology; rather, as Levinas

repeatedly said, "*ethics* is first philosophy." And for philosophers such as Levinas and Derrida,

ethics does not originate in legalistic or theological codes of correct behaviour; rather, ethics

emerges out of the encounter with the "other." The "other" is the individual or culture whose

singularity and uniqueness is revealed to me, and which implicitly issues a command that I can

choose to obey or disobey. As Levinas puts it, the "face" of every individual issues the

command "Thou shalt not kill." This is not just a negative command to "not kill." It is also a

positive command to care for the other, to be hospitable to the other without conditions, and to

preserve the other to the point where I am willing to die for the other.

The problem, however, is that there is a multitude of others in the world, and it is

impossible for me to care for all others unconditionally. Between the dual relationship of me and

the other, there is what Levinas calls a "third"; that is, there is another "other," who also demands

that I care for her unconditionally and interrupts my ability to care for the first other

unconditionally. This is also the problem with all political, social and legal systems; they must

deal with the competing demands of individuals and groups, and cannot express unconditional

care for any particular individual. These systems must prioritize, and inevitably they will show

more concern for some individuals and groups than for others. No political or legal totality can

be absolutely hospitable to all individuals, and all totalities, even the most benevolent, must be

inhospitable to some, such as those deemed criminals or enemies. The primary purpose of

postmodern ethics, as formulated by Levinas, and later developed by Derrida, is not to

undermine all politics and law. It is, rather, to remind any political totality of its incompleteness,

of its neglect for certain others, and of the ways in which it is inhospitable. The postmodern

ethicist stands as an advocate for those individuals, groups or cultures that are forgotten,

threatened or mistreated by a totality. The purpose of this postmodern, or deconstructive,

approach is to make sure that a totality does not rest easy, or become too assured of its "justice"

� an assurance that, in the worst-case scenarios, descends into totalitarianism or

fundamentalism.

According to Derrida, the true promise of the Enlightenment, and the true promise of

Abrahamic messianic hope, is what he calls "unconditional hospitality." It is absolute ethical

care for "the other," for every "other," without conditions, without limitations, without demands,

and without any expectation of reciprocity. We accept the other *as* other, without requiring that

she conform to our rules or pay for our hospitality. Pure hospitality is not a condition in which

the other is invited to live with us; rather, the other arrives unannounced, and yet is given

absolute care. Unconditional hospitality is dangerous because, as Derrida points out, the "visit

might actually be very dangerous" (PT 129). Nevertheless, hospitality is the condition of ethics;

responsibility for the *other*, not *auto*nomy or *self*-rule, is the ground of morality.

To clarify what he means by absolute hospitality, Derrida distinguishes it from "tolerance." For many in the West, "tolerance" is the ultimate ground of ethics, or the basis of human rights, but Derrida argues that this is not the case. Tolerance is the limited form of hospitality. If we are tolerant, we "accept the foreigner, the other, the foreign body *up to a certain point*, and so not without restrictions. Tolerance is a conditional, circumspect, careful hospitality" (PT 128). Derrida points out that tolerance is always on the side of the strongest. It is the stronger power that agrees to "tolerate," "put up with," or "suffer" a weaker power that it thinks is inferior or wrong, and which it could oppress, exclude or destroy. Instead, the stronger power decides to let a weaker powers live, and perhaps even thrive, but only under certain conditions (see PT 127). As such, tolerance is accompanied by a certain degree of arrogance, which implicitly says: "We are right, you are wrong, we are superior, you are inferior, but you are not insufferable." There are various connotations to tolerance � religious, ethnic, nationalistic, ideological, racial, and biological. But in every case, the acceptance of the other is limited, regardless of whether we are "suffering" the presence of a different race or a different religion. Tolerance easily becomes intolerance once the tolerated group is believed to have broken the conditions it was supposed to live under.

For this reason, "tolerance" cannot be the measure of ethics or human rights. "Unconditional hospitality" is the standard, so to speak, by which we measure our actions. However, as Derrida recognizes, "unconditional hospitality is � practically impossible to live; one cannot in any case, and by definition, organize it" (PT 129). All political, legal, and religious forms of organization must, by necessity, be inhospitable to some. But, insofar as we are conscious of unconditional hospitality, we are acutely aware of the extent to which these forms are limited and exclusive. They are, to greater and lesser extents, unjust. Thus, Derrida

says we must live in constant tension � between the conditional forms of tolerance and practice found in politics, law and religion, and the unconditional imperative of absolute hospitality. This is Derrida's way of speaking about the *metaxy*: he encourages us to live in a perpetual state of critical reflection, of continual unease with our worldly systems of politics and law. The moment that we forget about the transcendent pole in this tension, the moment we try to relieve the tension and abolish the notion of unconditional hospitality, that is the moment when we will become enmeshed in what Derrida calls "theologico-political" forms � that is, in thoroughly immanent metanarratives that claim to be absolute but are, in fact, partial, exclusionary, and imperfectly hospitable. All thought, all law, and all politics are, for the deconstructionist, never complete; they are always provisional, and always in need of revision.

Derrida speaks of unconditional hospitality as a "messianic promise" � a promise of, what he calls, a "democracy to come" in which absolute hospitality is granted to every "other." However, the "democracy to come" is not an actual event in the future, or, as Derrida puts it, it is not a "future present."20 [20]   Derrida's "messianic" is structured by the general expectation of a "democracy to come" that is always expected but never arrives. No messiah, human or divine, will ever bring us "absolute hospitality." Nevertheless, Derrida advises us to adopt a paradoxical faith � a "quasi-messianism"21 [21] � that retains the messianic orientation while remaining acutely aware that the "democracy to come" will never actually come. This faith encourages "new effective forms of action, practice, organization, and so forth," because it reveals how far

the present falls short promised messianic age. However, it prohibits us from accepting a vehement fundamentalism or a genocidal solution.22 [22]

Derrida speaks of a "New International" that is guided by these conceptions of "hospitality" and "democracy to come." This New International is not a "World State," nor is it "cosmopolitan" in the classic sense of a confederation of sovereign states that attempt to uphold international law. Derrida thinks that international law, though a good thing, is still rooted in limited conceptions of state and sovereignty; the "universality of international law is in the hands of a number of powerful, rich states."23 [23]   In contrast to this, Derrida speaks of individuals who are "secretly aligned in their suffering against the hegemonic powers which protect what is called the �new order.'"24 [24]   By secret alliances, he does not mean Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations, but rather a "spirit" that he calls the New International, which preserves the promise of absolute hospitality. Derrida is necessarily vague about what the New International would look like; perhaps by definition such as "organization" cannot be organized in traditional ways. But Derrida is pointing to a space that is separate from sovereign states, from secular and religious fundamentalisms, and from all theologico-political expressions of power. It is not anti-state, or anti-law, but it is acutely aware of the limits of the state and law. In an interesting way, Derrida is recasting Augustine's distinction between the City of Man and the City of God. Derrida's New International represents the unconditional, like Augustine's City of God, amongst all of the conditional limits of worldly politics. But Derrida deconstructs

Augustine: the New International is animated by a vague, "messianic" spirit, not a specific, literal "messianism" like Augustine's Christianity. The New International lives in expectation of an absolute hospitality that it knows will never arrive, but which nevertheless reveals the limits of all worldly forms and potentially curbs their most inhospitable possibilities.

Derrida, far from rejecting the West, is drawn to what he calls a "new figure of Europe" where he thinks his conception of the New International can emerge (PT116). Derrida is aware of all of Europe's shortcomings and hypocrisies, but it is also the historic site of, what he calls, the "more or less incomplete Enlightenment" (PT 117). After a century of upheaval, Derrida sees within Europe a critical complexity and a promise that, he claims, is less evident in America. The United States is also a product of the Enlightenment, and it is also full of complexity, but Derrida argues that the predominant reality of American culture is theologico-political, even in the liberal wing of U.S. politics. There is a missionary zeal in the United States. Similar aspirations in Europe have been mitigated after centuries of imperialism. Thus, Derrida puts his hope in Europe, notwithstanding his critique of Europe as it is.

The Main Ruptures in "Postmodern" Thought on Globalization

Comparing Baudrillard and Derrida on the topic of globalization is illuminating because it reveals the central fault line in what is generally called "postmodernism." Baudrillard dismisses the Enlightenment; Derrida, on the other hand, acts "in the name of new Enlightenment for the century to come."25 [25]   Baudrillard predicts a world of increasing fragmentation where the West is no longer dominant. Derrida attempts to retain certain features of the Enlightenment to

arrive at a new foundation for ethics. Baudrillard speaks of the "other" as a source of

confrontation and non-assimilation. Derrida speaks similarly of the other, but he emphasizes

how ethics is based on our hospitality towards the other. Baudrillard has given up on all forms

of universalization. Derrida, on the other hand, speaks of a New International. For Baudrillard,

our sense of radical "otherness" is destroyed insofar as we speak of a universal value that

transcends all differences. For Derrida, it is essential for us to retain a notion of universal

hospitality that accommodates all differences, for otherwise we undermine the source of ethics

and responsibility. Baudrillard asks us to accept a world without any appeal to an actual or

hypothetical messianic age. Derrida encourages us to live in hope of such an age, while

remaining acutely aware that such an age can never actually occur.

     These are the tensions. My critical assessment of Baudrillard and Derrida will be the

subject of another paper.

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26 [1] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984(, 1.

27 [2] Bauman, "A Sociological Theory of Postmodernity," in *The Bauman Reader*, ed. Peter Beilharz (Malden: Blackwell Publishers,
2001),173-74.

28 [3] Bauman, "The *Telos* Interview," in ibid., 20.

29 [4] See Derrida, "The University Without Conditions," in *Without Alibi*, ed. and trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford University Press, 2002), 23.

30 [5] Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, New Edition, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2003), 87-8. For the

remainder of my paper, I will refer to this volume in brackets with the abbreviation ST, followed by page numbers.

31 [6] Also see Zygmunt Bauman, "On Glocalization: Or Globalization for Some, Localization for Some Others," in *The Bauman Reader*, 299.

32 [7] Baudrillard, *Paroxysm*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1998), 11.

33 [8] See Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with J�rgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 121-23. For the remainder of my paper, I will refer to this text in brackets with the abbreviation PT, followed by page numbers.

34 [9] See James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 309.

35 [10] See Baudrillard's essay "Requiem for the Twin Towers" in ST, 35-48.

36 [11] Baudrillard, *Passwords*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2003), 33.

37 [12] See Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New

York: The Modern Library, 1992), 491.

38 [13] Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End*, trans. Chris Turner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 82.

39 [14] Baudrillard, *Impossible Exchange*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2001), 91.

40 [15] Baudrillard, *Illusion of the End*, 82.

41 [16] Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil*, trans. James Benedict (London: Verso, 1993), 81.

42 [17] Baudrillard, *Impossible Exchange*, 90.

43 [18] Ibid.

44 [19] For an excellent overview of Levinas's thought, see Oona Ajzenstat, *Driven Back to the Text: The Premodern Sources of Levina's Postmodernism* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001), 19-83.

45 [20] John D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 24.

46 [21] Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 168.

47 [22] Ibid., 89.

48 [23] Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 12.

49 [24] Ibid.

50 [25] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 90.