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"Globalization" as Collective Representation: The New Dream of a Cosmopolitan Civil Sphere

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By friends and foes alike, globalization is hailed as a revolutionary, path-breaking, *weltgeschichte* phenomenon. It solves the world's economic problems or condemns more of the world's people to poverty. It creates equality and cooperation or frightfully deepens inequality and hegemonic domination. It opens the way for world peace or it ushers in a new and nightmarish period of terrorism and war.

Is it possible to pry "globalization" out of the clutches of the rhetorical binaries that define the passionate simplifications of symbolic life?

Globalization is, indeed, one of the central facts of our time. It is a reference that must become central to the social sciences, but has not yet. In this respect, Beck's claim that modern social science is hobbled by methodological nationalism bears serious consideration (Beck, 2000).

But globalization is too important to be left to the "globalizers," to the entrepreneurs of globalization, whether economic, political, or intellectual, who have created what might be called "the discourse of globalization." The members of this carrier group make use of the facts of globality to suggest that the traditional rules of the game no longer hold, whether these are the traditional social "laws"

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that link capitalist markets with economic inequality and undemocratic political power with domination, or traditional ideas of the modern disciplines of social science.[1]

About such apocalyptic or utopian claims we must be very cautious. Globalization is not an alternative reality that makes previous knowledge and social reality irrelevant. It is a long emerging if only recently risible and represented reality, a social phenomenon that in itself is neither sacred nor profane. It must be put back inside history and social science.

To begin this process, we might start with a compelling phrase of Anthony Giddens, one of globalization's leading intellectual ideologists. Globalization marks, according to Giddens (1990), a compression of space and time. To this I would wish to add a relatively friendly amendment. Compression affects not only the pragmatics but the semantics of communication, the basic meaning units, the symbolic languages upon which interactions depend. There exist not only new technologies of movement and communication but more condensed and transcendent cultural logics, such as democracy and human rights, that spread common understandings and structures of feeling more widely than before. It is by the compression of space, time, and meaning that globalization creates a significantly more expansive field of action and organization.

The question, however, is whether such an expansion marks a new order of magnitude, as Giddens and the other entrepreneurs of globalization suggest, such that radically new knowledge is necessary? If the answer to this question is no, and I believe it is, then why has in incremental change in scale so frequently been represented as a change of exponential magnitude? Could it be that this shift in the representational order itself represents the fundamental and radical change? If so, it is an aspect of globalization to which globalizing intellectuals have not paid sufficient attention.

We return later to this shift in the field of representation. Let us speak first of the mundane process of globalization. My hypothesis is that globalization should not be understood as something radically new. It marks rather another step in the millennia-long compression of time/space/meaning, and the corresponding expansion in reach of the institutions that represent them, that is, the extension of political, economic, and cultural organization and power (Mann, 1986).

In fact, far from being radically new knowledge, this process of compression/expansion already formed the central subject of modernization theory in the middle of the last century. More than any other historical transformation, it was the movement from "particular" and "local" to the "universal" and "national" that fascinated modernization theorists, who framed it as the movement from traditional to modern society. In retrospect, from the perspective created by postmodern critique, we can see this binary as both tragic and absurd. The first side of the

binary represents a vast simplification, ignoring the extraordinary variation between different forms of earlier societies, for example, the giant power reach of early empires. The other side of the binary is also highly exaggerated. Nation and universal are as contradictory as synonymous. As for the much-heralded modernity of the 20th century, it turned out to be as barbaric as any recorded in the annals of traditional history. Nonetheless, the modernization theorists were right in thinking broadly about an historical enlargement of scope. Insofar as we are moving toward a more global playing field, we are in the midst of this familiar process. Social organizations and cultural structures alike are expanding their scope and reach.[2]

By emphasizing the familiarity of this process, and how it was a central topic for modernization theory, I want to suggest that, whether italicized, capitalized, or followed with an exclamation point, globalization does not represent an abrupt change. To understand it, we need not invent new or alternative knowledge. Rather, we must better apply the theoretical and empirical ideas already available, which means to orient them in a more global way.

Every process evoked in the globalization literature has already been conceptualized in studies of social and cultural transformations from local to national scale, which have traced sometimes incremental, sometimes abrupt enlargements in economic, political, military, religious, legal, penal, and cultural life. How these processes work has been conceptualized in a manner that has little to do with the scale of the nation as such.

Let us consider, for example, the classical theoretical writings of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, and their systemic understandings of such social phenomena as class formation, mode of production, division of labor, functional differentiation, bureaucracy, stratification, authority, and power. Were the concepts and propositions created by these writings, in contrast with their more restricted empirical referents, dependent on national scale? The empirical equation of their own societies—identified in terms of nation, civilization, or class—with progress, universalism, and rationality was often myopic. But the classical theorizing about the organizational and cultural processes involved in sustaining universalism and particularism can largely still stand. The same is true for much of the modern theorizing we have inherited from such sociological thinkers as Parsons, Elias, Goffman, and Geertz. They, too, dealt centrally with universalizing processes and compressions of temporal, spatial, and cultural scale, and their insights also provide foundations for thinking about the globalizing phase we are experiencing today.

But in the impassioned and simplified rhetorics of globalization more is involved than merely empirical claims. There are moral assertions about justice being possible for the first time or no longer being possible again. There is a sense of imminence, of an historical shifting that, for better or for worse, has

already transformed, or is about to, the basic meaning of social life. I wonder, however, whether globalization has, in fact, had any particular normative purchase? Does the compression of space, time, and meaning translate into justice and the good life?

Let's do a thought experiment. You are a citizen of Florence in the year 1500 and you are visited by the angel of history and vouchsafed a vision of the different, nationally organized world that is to come. Deeply inspired by this new vision of universalism, you turn to your companion in the palazzo and exclaim:

> Hey, you're not going to believe this, but there's going to be, starting in a hundred years or so, the birth of an amazing thing called the nation-state, and everything henceforth will be organized on a gigantically different scale. There will be an extraordinary compression of time and space, and everything, I mean everything, will be subject to the new law of nationalization. Someday, everything we take for granted—about economic life, war, science, customs, politics, religion, education—will be based, not on this little puny city or even this region, but on the great entity that will be called the nation.

Would you have been right, in that long ago Florentine time, to be so excited? Did nationalization turn out to be anything so great? It did represent a new compression of space, time, and meaning, and it had immense historical significance. But was it liberating in the normative sense? Did it have any particular moral purchase? Should we have heralded it in the kind of utopian manner that the economic, political, and intellectual entrepreneurs speak about globalization today?

The enthusiasm of our Florentine ancestor may be excused. The movement toward the city-state had once promised enlightenment, freedom, and justice, and he was already beginning to feel its restrictive corruptions full face. The promise of expanding to the national field seemed to provide a way out of that urban cul-de-sac. The promise of the nation made universalism still seem possible, just as the promise of the city had before. But this new promise to make the universal concrete turned out no differently. The social and moral possibilities of nationalization were rather more limited than its ideologists had thought.

Similar caution applies to the phase of time-space-meaning expansion in which we are participating today. Globalization is a mundane process that, in the course of the 20th century, has created at least as much trouble as possibility. The reach of markets has dramatically expanded, producing and distributing on a wider scale than ever before. These economic processes, however, have contributed as much to exploitation and poverty as to wealth creation and economic participation. Information from distant parts of the world has become increasingly available in real-time, but it has not become free floating and universal. Even the most rapidly circulated and easily available information remains attached to particular world-views, interests, and powers. Rather than having displaced enslaving religious dogmas for liberating reason, such globalizing ideologies as nationalism, communism, fascism, and economic liberalism have merely provided secular versions of equally heinous and dogmatic constraint. Like the earlier world-historical belief systems that emerged from the Axial age, these modern ideologies have created supplicants and priests. In the name of purification and world transformation, they have

justified massive violence and created havoc and mayhem on a global scale.[3] It is hardly surprising, in light of this modernist legacy, that so-called traditional religion has recently found on the global stage a new life.

As the world's territory has been scaled down from empires and up from cities, globalizing rhetorics charged nation-states with the mission of democracy and equality. It has been much more likely, however, for the new nations to become iron cages of suppression, with the universalism of the "people" becoming a camouflage for primordiality of some primitive kind. If nations represented a new phase of time/space/meaning compression, their expansionary powers have not necessarily been linked to individual freedom or civil rights. The origins of international law in the Treaty of Westphalia brought the destructive wars of religion to an end, but it did so by underscoring national sovereignty (Clark, 1999; Lipschutz, 1992). The treaty gave freedom and respect not to individuals but to states. We live still according to the tradition of international law that has nothing intrinsically to do with human rights (Cushman, 2005). With the significant exception of the European Union, which itself remains a regionally restricted power, no larger, more impartial, more universalistic, and more democratic entity has yet taken over from the nation-state.[4]

These sober reflections about 20th century globalization are underscored when we consider war, the national form of organized violence so conspicuously neglected by classical and modern social theory. Has it not been the very compression of time, space, and meaning that has allowed destructive violence and mass murder to become so worldwide? The utopian vision of a cosmopolitan and boundaryless civil society eloquently espoused by Kant (1970 [1784]) emerged just as the ideal of a democratic civil sphere was becoming firmly instantiated in the revolutionary nation state. Napoleon advanced even as Kant wrote. Since that time, the imperial idea of reshaping the world in the name of universal ideals has been related to war, whether waged for a French warrior's vision of Europe, a Russian revolutionary's ideal of communism, a German dictator's scheme for a *Volk Gemeinschaft*, or a new and democratic world order envisioned by the United States.

Yet, if we must resist the impulse to fold normative aspirations for a "global imaginary" into some immanent empirical laws about globalization, we must try all the harder, as David Held (2004) quite rightly insists, to steer time/space/meaning compression in normatively more compelling ways. The present phase of globalization does open up new democratic possibilities. If the social and cultural processes involved in contemporary time space meaning compression are not radically new but mundane, it may well be that the sense of newness is in the name, in the signifier, and not the signified. What I am suggesting is that we understand "globalization" as a process of social representation.

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[3] Eisenstadt's (1982) Weberian perspective on the manner in which free-floating intellectuals and transcendental, world-transforming ideologies emerged on a global level in the first millennium B.C. forms an important relativizing perspective for the current claims that are made for the newly emergent representation of globalization

[4] On how some of Europe's leading democratic intellectuals have recently employed the particularistic and simplistic tropes of "orientalism" to suggest European cultural and political superiority to America, see Heins (2005)

Why has "globalization" emerged as a dominant new imaginary? What discourse does it crystallize, what fears does it carry, and what hopes does it represent? "Globalization" appeared as a response to the trauma of the 20th century, in a moment of hope when it seemed, not for the first time, that the possibility for a worldwide civil society was finally at hand. Since before the Enlightenment, the idea of world peace has accompanied the expansion of organizational and cultural power. From the 17th century on, the political theory of high and organic intellectuals alike has articulated the idea of peaceful conflict resolution through the concept of civil power. The possibility for civil control, as opposed to military violence or political domination, can be traced back to the idea of the social contract, to the Lockean vision of consensual agreement and persuasion in contrast with the Hobbesian resort to force and fraud. Sociologically, the idea of civil society points to the idea of a liberal discourse that is at once critical and tolerant, and to institutions, from factual and fictional mass media to voting and law, that allow collectivities to be guided by symbolic communication among independent and rational citizens who feel bound by ties of solidarity and mutual obligation (Alexander, 2006).

In what has been called the long 19th century, during the "Age of Equipoise" that followed upon the end of the Napoleonic wars, there was the sense, not only among Euro-American elites, that such cosmopolitan peace was finally at hand.[5] It seemed possible to believe that, alongside the expansion of organizational and cultural power, "civilization" was becoming worldwide. That this civil utopian vision of a peaceful world was shadowed by the expansion of colonial conquest outside Europe is a fearful symmetry only visible from our own time.[6]

This dream of reason was shattered by the First World War. For intellectuals and artists, and thoughtful men and women on every side, the war exposed the barbarism that contradicted modernity's promise to create a more civil society.[7] If that first globalizing war exposed the ugly face of military nationalism that threatened cosmopolitan peace, so much more so did the totalitarianisms that emerged during its wake. The Second World War marked a globalizing battle over the very possibility for modern civil life.

In the wake of these war traumas, the victors promised to renew the dream of cosmopolitan peace.[8] The utopia discourse of world civil society was even embedded in formally democratic institutional regimes, the quasi-world governments of first the League of Nations and then the United Nations. The ideas for these repair efforts were provided by such high intellectuals as Bertrand Russell

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[5] For the long 19th and short 20th centuries, see Eric Hobsbawm (1990, 1994); for the Age of Equipoise see Burn (1964). An earlier version of the second half of this chapter appeared in Alexander (2006b).
[6] For the self-deceptive conflation of the model of democratic citizen with patrimonial subject during the colonial era, see Mamdani (1996).
[7] For how 20th century social theory responded to the ennui and traumas of the century's first half, see Alexander (1990).
[8] In the following, I draw upon Alexander et al. (2004), which suggests that the construction of cultural trauma—defining the pain, the perpetrators, the victims, and the antidotle—is a central path by which collectivities sustain and develop collective identity.

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and implemented by such organic intellectuals as Ralph Bunche. Yet, the carrier groups for these efforts at renewing the cosmopolitan dream were the victorious national hegemons themselves. Such an infrastructure of national power belied the aspirations for a global civil order. When strains at the level of nation-states became too intense, the League of Nations was destroyed. It had been hobbled from its beginnings, of course, by America's refusal to join. The United Nations was undermined even more quickly by the division of the postwar universalizing spirit into the fighting camps of the Cold War. The rhetoric on both sides of this great divide rang the bells of international peace, but in the background one could always hear the sounds of war.

When the Third World War of the short 20th century was finished, there were once again utopian hopes for the repair of civil society and the creation of world peace. The utopian representation "globalization" first emerged in the late 1980s, as the Cold War wound down. As this new collective representation gained power, in the decade following, it looked as if a world civil society were finally at hand. This time around, the high and organic intellectuals were former activists and peaceniks, post-Marxist and liberal leftists who had campaigned for peace against the Vietnam war in the United States, for "Europe," and against national boundaries on the continent, and for nuclear disarmament on both sides. International law would be based, not on the rights of sovereign nations, but on individual and human rights. National force was pledged to multinational, not national interest, to a new world order in which peace and civil respect would reign. The Security Council of the United Nations was approached as if it were a global democratic forum in which rational discussion could affect the distribution of wealth and the application of power.[9]

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[9] It was Giddens' *Consequences of Modernity*, in 1990, that most forcefully introduced the idea that "globalization" characterized contemporary late modernity. Giddens brought Ulrich Beck, another intellectual central to this discourse, to LSE, and it has primarily been a group of post-Marxist British intellectuals, including, with Giddens and Beck, Mary Kaldor, John Keane, and David Held, who brought the idea of civil globality into centrality in the 15 years since. Mary Kaldor emphasizes the importance of the 1980s European disarmament and peace movements in "The Ideas of 1989: The Origins of the Concept of Global Civil Society" (Kaldor 2003a), and she points to such early collaborations as Kaldor, Holden, and Falk, *The New Détente* (1989). The work of hers that discusses globalization in a manner that can most clearly be seen as casting it as an idealistic "collective representation" is *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (2003b). The representation process emerging from the end of the Cold War can be seen in Keane's work (1988, 1991, 2003) Moving into this arena of representation slightly later, Held's influential writings have clarified and highlighted the democratic dimensions of Giddens' globalization concept, (e.g., 1995, 2004; and Held and McGrew 2002). All these writings mix normative elaborations about the scope and desirability of a global civil society with empirical data about its structural processes and analytic dimensions. Held's work is especially striking in this regard, for, although it makes broad incursions into the empirical domain, it is explicitly imbedded in normative political theory. At the other end of the empirical/normative continuum is the *Global Civil Society* project, the edited volumes that, since 2001, have been produced annually at the London School of Economics by Mary Kaldor, Helmut Anheier, and Marlies Glasius. This tightly organized and highly collaborative project, funded in large part by the Ford Foundation, has projected the "representation" of democratic globalization from London to activists, students, and intellectuals throughout the world.

Once again, however, this moment of equipoise was underpinned by a national infrastructure. It was the victors in the Cold War who were most excited about globalization; the losers were more interested in national reconstruction and restoring regional strength. It was the President of the United States, Bill Clinton, who gave commencement addresses on civil society as the key to world peace. It was NATO that intervened in Kosovo. It should not be surprising that this most recent dream for cosmopolitan peace reigned for scarcely more than a decade. The postwar collective effervescence in which globalization became such a powerful new representation came to an end with the election in America of George W. Bush, which was soon accompanied by a neoconservative discourse of empire. National interest was unabashedly reasserted, global agreements cancelled, and global conferences and institutions boycotted. As the President and neoconservative politicians and intellectuals handled and channeled the national trauma of September 11, 2001, it highlighted anticivil violence and global fragmentation and pointed to a Hobbesian struggle between civilizations. Collective violence once again came to be waged by nations and blocs, with divisive rather than unifying effects for the world scene.[10]

These events were experienced by the intellectuals promoting globality, and by its organized carrier groups, not merely as disappointment but betrayal. For explanation, many turned to anti-Americanism, the long-standing culture structure that divides good and evil by polluting the United States and purifying any collectivity, ideology, or region that comes to represent the other side.[11] No matter how culturally satisfying, however, this interpretation elides the systemic processes at play. The structures and the ideologies of the world are still primarily organized nationally, and hardly at all in a globally civil way. As long as this organizational structure is maintained, if and when other states amass extraordinarily asymmetrical power, they will undoubtedly act in a similar way.

To accept anti-Americanism as explanation rather than as interpretation, moreover, misses the ambiguous and often productive role that this cultural trop often has played. To pollute America as a hegemon is to make deviant anticivil actions as such, not merely the United States. By creating a stark if simplifying contrast between "American" action, on the one side, and a more civil sort of

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[10] For the neoconservative discourse of empire, see, e.g., Boot (2001), D'Souza (2002), and Kagan (2003). For an overview of this revival and an ironic yet forceful liberal-realist case for American imperial power as, in principle, the only viable force for progressive transformation in a Hobbesian world, see Ferguson (2004). The most sophisticated and influential conservative argument against the very possibility for a global civil society is undoubtedly Huntington's (1996). which made its first appearance as a widely influential article in *Foreign Affairs* (1993). Huntington employs a primordial understanding of culture to develop a seemingly scientific case that the world's distinctive civilizations are based on religions that can never be reconciled, which means that, rather than moving toward global civil order, the future of international politics will revolve around prolonged conflict for hegemony.

[11] For a systematic empirical interpretation of French anti-Americanism during the postwar period, see Kuisel (1993) and, more generally, Buruma and Margalit (2004).

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global power, this binary has the effect of allowing the purifying power of the globalization representation to be sustained. In February, 2003, in the days just before the American invasion of Iraq, the meaning of this cultural confrontation, and the stakes involved, were clearly displayed on the front page of the *New York Times*. Reporting the massive demonstrations that had unfolded throughout the world on the previous day, a *Times* correspondent wrote: "The fracturing of the Western alliance over Iraq and the huge antiwar demonstrations around the world this weekend are reminders that there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion." Apparently factual, this statement must be seen rather as interpretive reconstruction. It framed these empirical events in a globally civil way. They are presented as transpiring on the public stage of the world, and America is portrayed, not as an elect but as a particularistic nation, confronting not the evil of an Iraqi dictator but the world as a civil, rationally organized society: "President Bush appears to be eyeball to eyeball with a tenacious new adversary: millions of people who flooded the streets of New York and dozens of world cities to say they are against war based on the evidence at hand."

There is not a world government to curb a hegemonic state bent on defending its interests as nationally conceived. The nascent global civil sphere has none of the institutions that, in a fully functioning democracy, allow public opinion to produce civil power and thus regulate the state, such as independent courts, party competition, and elections. Yet this nascent global civil sphere does have access to institutions of a more communicative kind. Despite different languages and separated ownership and organization, national news stories construct extranational events in a manner that often reveals a high level of intertextuality, creating the common understandings and interpretations that allow there to be putatively global events. These "factual" understandings are sustained by the intense circulation around the globe of "fictional" mass media, which are far from being merely entertaining in their cultural effects. These fictional media are movies, television dramas, novels, music, and the international brands whose consumption is creating a more common material culture worldwide.

It is within this symbolic and institutionally constructed sea of global public opinion that there emerges the world stage, on which transpire polls, demonstrations, social movements, scandals, corruptions, terrorism, electoral triumphs, and tragedies, performances which palpably create the very sense that there is a supranational life. It is within this febrile and often highly unstable membrane of global consciousness that international institutions and nongovernmental organizations create forms, not of governance in the state-political sense, but of governmentality, from agreements over labor conditions and world health to regulations about the environment and land mines. The rules and resources that sustain governmentality, as opposed to government, rest on consensus and agreement rather than on the violence-backed power of a state.[12]

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[12] For this distinction, see, particularly, Held and McGrew (2002).

The dream of cosmopolitan peace has not died. The forceful hope for creating a global civil sphere remains. It is embodied in the collective representation of globalization, which has organizational integuments and political and economic effects. There is a global stage in which local events are evaluated, not only nationally or ethnically, but according to the standards of the civil sphere. Before this stage sits an idealized audience of world citizens. Sometimes the performances projected to this audience are initiated by avowedly global actors. More often, they reflect local scripts of national actors, which are projected on the world stage and evaluated according to the principles of cosmopolitan peace and by the discourse and interactions of civil life.

Since the first national institutionalizations of civil societies, there has been imagined the possibility for a civil sphere on a supranational scale. In the 17th century, the trope of "oriental despotism" emerged, reconfiguring colonialism into a fight for civil power on a global scale. In the middle of the 18th century, the Lisbon earthquake became a trauma for Europe and offered a sentimental education for "all mankind." In the early 19th century, the moral movement against slavery achieved political success by generating moral empathy, extending solidarity and psychological identification to nonwhite others for the first time. In the mid-20th century, the narration and memorialization of the Holocaust formed a powerful basis for expanding moral universalism, establishing genocide as a principle for evaluating national, ethnic, and religious power. At the end of the 20th century, globalization emerged as a new representation on the fragile public stage of world life.

Globalization refers to a process of space/time/meaning compression that is ongoing. These expansions have not yet, by any means, created the basis for globality in the sense of a supranational civil society, as the recent revival of nation-centered rhetorics and practices of national hegemony have demonstrated. Nonetheless, globalization is a new and powerful social representation. It has performative force, and it has emerged for good sociological reasons. Even if it is sharply contested, the dream of cosmopolitan peace can never be entirely suppressed.

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20
Rationalization and Globalization in Neo-Weberian Perspective

RANDALL COLLINS

There is no deep structural difference between modernity and so-called postmodernity. The latter is an extension of the same trends. That means it is an extension of the same long-term processes, the same causal dynamics, although carried further and producing new concrete manifestations.

This will become clear as we look at the most important structural transformations of societies since about 1600 in European societies. In many ways these structural transformations also developed about the same time in Japan, which casts another light on the ways in which these processes have been global.

I list four features briefly, then consider their underlying causal dynamics:

1. State penetration and bureaucratization of society
2. Mass mobilization of the people by new networks, and social and political movements
3. Self-transforming capitalist growth
4. Religious secularization: or more generally, proliferation and de-monopolization of the means of cultural production

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Editor's Note: Randall Collins has written a chapter that, among other important points, challenges the notion that globalization has introduced a discontinuity in social processes and, therefore, demands a new sociological paradigm (Beck's thesis and Ritzer's "wonder").

I received Collins' paper when my conclusive argument was already formulated. However, I refer in my conclusion to crucial passages that suggest new or parallel critiques of Beck and Ritzer's positions.