4 Agency, structures and time

From atemporal ontologies to explicit geo-historical hypotheses and anticipation of global democracy

Heikki Patomäki

Introduction

Following Richard Ashley's (1984) and Alexander Wendt's (1987) seminal contributions, Walter Carlsnaes helped to awaken IR theory from its dogmatic slumber and redirect scholars' attention to a critical issue in the philosophy of social sciences: what is the relationship between agency and structures? In a series of papers, Carlsnaes (1992, 1993, 1994) discusses the agency–structure problematic in the context of foreign policy analysis. Carlsnaes' intent to enrich foreign policy analysis through explicating a plausible social ontology (in line with Giddens 1979 and Archer 1985), he (Carlsnaes 1993: 13) talks about the 'interplay over time which exists between agency and structure'. He argues that decision-makers make choices and, through their actions, take part in the (re) production of structures the results of which, in turn, enable and constrain their subsequent actions. Furthermore, Carlsnaes stresses the importance of historical time for understanding foreign policy: 'since neither structures nor actors remain constant over time, a social theory worth its salt must be able to account not only for particular changes but also for social change itself as an inherently dynamic phenomenon' (1992: 246).

In this chapter, I explore further the temporality of agency and structures. Carlsnaes' Giddensian and Archerian social ontology presuppose that actors are self-consciously knowledgeable social beings producing and reproducing society on the basis of practical reason. I agree with this assumption. However, we should not take knowledgeable and capable actors as given but study the geo-historical conditions for their existence. It is possible to gain new insights into the nature and transformative possibilities of agency and structures by asking this deceptively simple question: when and how did the powers and liabilities now associated with agency emerge?

Evidence suggests that the capacity to reflect upon and choose self-consciously between alternative courses of action, by means of complex metaphors of time and self, developed alongside with complex society. This process can be best understood as collective learning. There is no reason to assume that human learning would have come to an end. Learning is an on-going process. By studying the logic of collective learning, it is possible to anticipate future

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forms of agency, power and authority in world politics. I conclude by outlining a few hypotheses about possible and likely planetary transformations of social beings and relations in the course of the twenty-first century, and beyond.

Historicising social ontology

Giddens (1979: 64) defines structures as 'structural properties [. . . which] can be understood as rules and resources'. He recognises the existence of: (i) knowledge – as memory traces – of 'how things are to be done' on the part of social actors (i.e. actors must be competent); (ii) social (and positioned) practices organised through the recursive mobilisation of that knowledge; and (iii) the transformative capabilities, i.e. power, that the production of those practices presupposes. Although Archer (1985; see also 1995) criticises Giddens for conflating agents and structures, her morphogenetic approach, too, presupposes knowledgeable and competent actors. Carlsnaes draws on these two approaches and applies them to foreign policy analysis. In a parallel manner, I have (Patomäki 1991, 1996, 2002) specified the essential components of social world by developing the notion of causal complex, involving

1 historically constructed and positioned corporeal actors (AR);
2 meaningful, historically structured, and reasoned *actions* (AN);
3 regulative and constitutive *rules* implicated in every action and constitution of actors (RU);
4 *resources* as competencies and facilities (RE); and
5 relational and positioned *practices* (PRA).

Causal complex K = {AR, RU, RE, PRA, AN} is an internally and externally related and open-systemic whole. However, a key problem with all these conceptualisations of agency structures is that while the substance of the elements is understood as historical, the historicity of the elements themselves is left at least partly implicit. This is true even when it is acknowledged that in order to grasp thoroughly the relationship between action and structures it is not possible to stay at a meta-level. 'No general, transhistorical or purely philosophical resolution of these problems is possible' (Bhaskar 1983: 87). Modes of social agency and types of action are historically generated. However, where do the competent, knowledgeable, rule-following but also improvising actors, who have the self-reflective capacity to do otherwise, come from? Are these capacities universal human powers, part of our species-being?

Precisely what kinds of powers do social agency and actions presuppose? First, actors must be capable of assuming causal, moral and legal responsibility for their actions. In order to take responsibility and to be knowingly able to act otherwise, there must be reflective consciousness capable of remembering and interpreting the past and anticipating the future. Second, the power to reflect upon non-actual action possibilities implies that actors are capable of thinking abstractly, i.e. that they can reason in terms of complex metaphors (cf. Lakoff

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and Johnson 1999). Third, with the help of metaphors, actors can imagine an 'I' and self that can move about within spatialised time; or they can fix their self and see time as something that flows. Spatialised time can be linear and abstract, rather than just cyclical and tied to repetitive natural rhythms, making future-oriented reflectivity possible.

When and how did these human powers (Harré and Secord 1972) emerge? In the light of available evidence, it is striking how slowly the human genetic potential resulted in new cultural achievements. Anatomically modern humans first appeared in Sub-Saharan Africa roughly 200,000 years ago. In the next 190,000 years, our African ancestors and their Eurasian, Australian and American offspring did not leave any traces of history, religion, arts, architecture, science or philosophy. For most of this time, the way of life of *homo* (*sapiens*) *sapiens* seems to have been similar to its human predecessors. It continued to use roughly made stone weapons and tools but otherwise to live in nature, following a biologically determined way of life, with hardly any signs of cultural or technical changes. How can we explain the gradual shift from biological to the much more rapid cultural pace of time?

Clearly, although the genetic constitution of *homo sapiens* was necessary for what was to come, it was insufficient for the rapid release of the potential for human creativity and all those things we associate with human culture. The process of development was slow and fragile and must have involved something other than genes. But what else could have played a role? Julian Jaynes' (2000; also Kuijsten 2006) theory of the development of human consciousness provides a plausible explanation of the gradual shift from biological to cultural time. Jaynes' theory is based on the systematic assessment of the available archaeological and written evidence.

Jaynes argues that the key to full human capabilities lies in the development of language. The first humans in Africa did not have complex verbal language, although – like other hominids before them – they could sustain various techniques and social expectations with a combination of imitation, visual images, body language, facial expressions and oral sounds and signals. The development of language was very slow (in terms of cultural-historical scales of time) but started, step by step, to accelerate.[1] Each new stage of linguistic learning created new perceptions and attentions, resulting in important cultural changes, which are reflected in the available archaeological record. Full sentences became possible probably sometime between 25,000 and 15,000 BCE. The first cave paintings of animals paralleled the appearance of nouns for animals; people can imagine and draw something for which they have a concept. The thing-nouns begot new things such as pottery, pendants, ornaments and barbed harpoons and spearheads.

The new functions of language and gradual acceleration of cultural learning also transformed the human brain – the brain is a highly connected and interconnected organ, in which connections and their activations are constantly shifting – and thus evolved the language hemispheres in human brain. Jaynes (2000: 134) maintains that language had important side effects. With complex oral language

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humans can continue activities over time and concentrate on working on something; clearly a benefit for survival and likely cause of population growth among those groups that adopted complex language. Moreover, once nouns were carried over to names of individuals who could be remembered and thus also missed also when they were absent and also after they had died. This cultural innovation led to the increasingly common practice of ceremonial graves from 10,000 BCE onwards.

On the other hand, there was yet no subject or self that could sustain enduring activities by conscious effort. Rather, commands and memories coming from within the individual resembled what we would today call verbal hallucinations. Because of the development of language, people started to hear 'external' voices telling them what to do. Jaynes claims that this phenomenon also had a physiological basis. The language involved only one side of the brain in order to leave the other side free for the language of these voices, or gods, as humans came to think of them. The bicameral mind enabled a form of social control that made it possible for humans to establish a complex society and move from small hunter-gatherer groups to large agricultural communities. Hence, with the development of bicameral mind, agricultural civilisations became possible, although the materialisation of this possibility was a slow and contingent process (see Jaynes 2000, Chs 4 and 5; and on the economics of early farming, Diamond 1999, 104–113).

Auditory hallucinations involved the voice of the leader of the community – the chief or king – also in his absence, including after his death. This explains why people treated their dead kings as if they were still living for a long period after they died; later the decaying or mummified bodies were replaced with functionally similar posts and statues. The resulting hierarchical civilisations were literally built around god-houses visible to everyone in the village or town. This meant increased division of labour, efficiency and in effect also population growth that was rapid when compared to earlier eras. While from 70000–10000 BCE, human population had grown very slowly from perhaps mere 20,000 to something like one million, by the year 5000 BCE, the number of humans had suddenly grown to five million and there were a few towns numbering a few thousand inhabitants each. In 2000 BCE world population was already at 27 million and major cities had emerged; for example Lagash (80,000), Memphis (50,000), Uruk (50,000), Harappa (50,000) and Mohenjo-Daro (50,000).

A new level of complexity and social learning was reached. The emergent human civilisations invented or adopted writing, money and mathematics, and engaged in gift-exchange, trade and wars with other communities, thus gradually paving the way to the burst of reflective consciousness. It is around this time that the capacity to articulate one's own individual plans of action assumed such a level as to make rudimentary forms of individual moral/legal responsibility possible. With the Code of Hammurabi (*c.*1760 BCE) and similar codes of law in the Near East, the general principle of justice was born as a rudimentary moral accounting of equivalents (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth). The emergence of writing had far-reaching consequences:

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> The [role] of writing in the breakdown of the bicameral voices is tremendously important. What had to be spoken is now silent and carved upon a stone to be taken in visually.
>
> (Code of Hammurabi 1760: 302)[2]

Reflective consciousness and all its consequences occur through language, especially through written language and metaphors, which make abstract thinking, linear narratisation and self-reflection possible. At the dawn of the reflective consciousness, in the early first millennium BCE, bodily things such as breath, blood, lungs, heart and head were turned into metaphors and started to denote *psyche*, spirit, soul, life, emotions, intelligence and self. The repertoire of simple affects that we share with other mammals was transformed into complex human emotions: fear became anxiety, shame was translated into guilt and mating was turned into sex. These and many other conscious emotions were made possible by analogues and metaphors, which were subsequently used to debate and theorise justice, goodness, morality, emotions and the meaning of human existence.

According to Jaynes (2000: 65–66; cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 139–161, 235–289), metaphor generates consciousness by creating a space in which the 'I' can move and 'do' things that we are not actually doing, constructs the 'me' that we can imagine and see doing things that we may or may not be actually doing; and tell stories where the 'I' and 'me' moves in spatialised time. The spatialised time, in which events and experiences can now be located, remembered and anticipated, makes also social agency, morality, law and politics possibility. Actors know that they can act otherwise and thus become reflective (even reflexive) about some of their doings. They can also learn that others may be equally conscious beings. Once they have fully learnt this, however, it then becomes difficult to imagine a succession of thousands of generations of genetically indistinguishable human beings without consciousness in the reflective sense of the term.

Individual and collective learning

In order to become competent and knowledgeable actors, each biological individual has to learn, in a very short period of time, many of those things that it took such a long time for humanity as a whole to develop. In *The Language and Thought of the Child*, Piaget (2002) explores how children progressively enrich their understanding of things by acting on and reflecting on the effects of their own previous knowledge. On the basis of their practical actions and reflect-ive experiences, they are capable of organising their knowledge in increasingly complex and abstract structures. Piaget (2002: 240–241, 272–286) argues that the sequence of cognitive stages is conceptual-logical rather than just empirically correct, which also explains the spontaneity of reaching higher stages in sufficiently enabling context. The child learns by engaging in imitation and playing for their own sake, at first monologically and ego-centrically (for Piaget, the child's egocentrism is an illusion of perspective that stems from the incapacity to

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differentiate one's self, others and external world). Communication for instrumental reasons – for instance to get something the child wants – remains limited and is often subsumed under magical discourse and hallucinatory experiences in which words substitute for reality. In this sense, every child seems to go through a phase that is reminiscent of the bicameral-mind stage of the past civilizations.[3]

Gradually, with advancements towards more complex and abstract thinking, it becomes possible for a child to assume the perspective of others and have genuine dialogue with them. At the same time, his or her capacity to differentiate between things, categories and aspects of reality increases; and also causal why-questions become possible. As the child starts to communicate his or her thoughts to other people, and listen to others, an individual person emerges from the process of learning through actions and language (for Piaget, action usually comes before reflective thought[4]), following the order of logically sequential cognitive stages.

In his 1932 book, *The Moral Judgment of the Child* (1977), Piaget applies similar ideas to moral learning. How do children form ideas about right and wrong, and fair and unfair? According to Piaget, the essential aspect of morality is the tendency to accept and follow a system of rules which regulate interpersonal behaviour. Piaget (ibid.: 23) studied these questions empirically and concluded that there are three major stages of the practice of rules in children's games such as marbles. In the *egocentric* stage children do not grasp or follow the rules, but insist that they do (each plays his own parallel game even when they play 'together'). In the stage of *incipient cooperation*, mastery of the rules has improved and rule-following has become a practice, but as the rules are grasped incompletely, there are often difficulties and conflicts. Finally, in the stage of *genuine cooperation* and *codification of rules*, children not only know the rules well but also enjoy reflecting and elaborating upon them.

> The collective rule is at first something external to the individual and consequently sacred to him; then, as he gradually makes it his own, it comes to that extent be felt as the free product of mutual agreement and an autonomous conscience. And with regard to the practical use, it is only natural that a mystical respect for laws should be accompanied by a rudimentary knowledge and application of their contents, while a rational and well-founded respect is accompanied by an effective application of each rule in detail.
>
> (ibid.: 24–25)

In the earlier stages children's moral judgements are based on the objective external consequences of actions, independently of intentions and circumstances. At the same time, rules are taken literally and authoritatively. With advancements towards more differentiated and cooperative thinking, children start to understand others' intentions and their relevance, and be capable of distinguishing the spirit or purpose of a rule from its literal meaning (ibid.: 68–69).

In the democratic Switzerland of the 1920s and 1930s, children learnt, by the age of 12–13, that law emanates 'from the sovereign people and no longer

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[mystically from the God or] from the tradition by the Elders' (ibid.: 67). These children had realised that people are autonomous and can revise their own rules and laws; and that the purpose of rules and laws is to enable mutually enjoyable and beneficial co-operation and to avoid and resolve social conflicts. Piaget (ibid.: 71, 194, 219, 257) stressed, however, that various stages of reasoning always overlap both in individuals and society. Like older children, adults, too, often practice lower stages moral reasoning and make underdeveloped moral judgements, often to conform to authority and institutional expectations.

Stages of advancement?

The agency–structure problematic seems to open up the Pandora's box of thinking about human history in terms of stages of advancement. Most social scientists and philosophers avoid explicit theorisation of collective advancement, except in relativistic terms, or in local scales of time. Notions such as universal moral learning, cultural evolution, and ethico-political progress have been widely seen as dubious at best – and potentially dangerous. Already the founders of sociology such as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Edward Westermarck tended to reduce values to culturally conditioned instinctive emotions, historical traditions, or particular social formations. Although in practice remaining ambivalent and even positive about the moral worth of modernisation, they verged on denying the possibility of collective ethico-political learning.[5]

Anthropologists have been especially vocal in their opposition to the idea of universal stages of moral learning, an idea they have associated with the 'white man's burden', 'civilizing mission' and other nineteenth-century ideologies of imperialism. The self-inflicted horrors of the First World War degraded the moral status of the West and made cultural and moral relativism popular among intellectuals and, in particular, anthropologists (who were also responding to the particular problems of the US society).[6] Moreover, the ensuing catastrophes of the twentieth century, including Stalin's purges, deepened the sense of nihilism among leftist social theorists especially in Europe. Theodor Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's (1979) pessimistic criticism of the Enlightenment legacy; Karl Popper's (1960) widely read liberal attack on historicism and Marxism; and Michel Foucault's (1984, 2001) sceptical studies on truth, normality and power strengthened the conviction that – as Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984: 37) put it – the grand emancipatory narrative has lost its credibility.

When pressed, few sceptics of cultural evolution or progress would deny that the Rawlsian notion of justice (or any relevant twentieth-century conception) is not only more sophisticated and complex but also better than the one codified in the Code of Hammurabi. Yet most critical social scientists and philosophers seem reluctant to theorise collective human learning, cultural evolution and moral progress. But there have been exceptions.

Building on Piaget's work, as well as on Socrates, Kant and Dewey, Kohlberg's 3×2 stages were first outlined in his 1958 doctoral dissertation.[7] They were further refined over a twenty-year period of empirical research and

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verification, including a large amount of cross-cultural research that went beyond Piaget's rather limited setting of empirical observations. Kohlberg died in 1987, but subsequent research has confirmed, method-independently, the existence of common scheme of development of cognitive and moral reasoning and judgement, and related social perspective-taking, across a variety of cultural and politico-economic contexts (Boom *et al*. 2007; Dawson 2002; Gibbs *et al*. 2007; see also Robinson 2007). The contents of moral reasoning are culturally specific and contextual, but the stages of cognitive-conceptual schemes are universal. These studies show the existing potential for human reasoning and judgements, not their role in actual practices.[8]

For a political scientist, ethico-political judgements and principles are especially interesting. According to Kohlberg (1971, 1973), they are human constructions, but are in no way arbitrary. Rather they make increasingly more generalisable, differentiated and 'equilibriated' solutions possible. At stage (1) humans can only obey the powerful and claim simple rewards and retributive justice. At stage (2) reasoning is hedonistic and takes into account, in addition to authoritarian stage one considerations, only limited forms of reciprocity. Stage (3) actors are explicitly moral, but mostly only in a sense of recognising morality as conformity to the prevailing expectations. Stage (3) actors are, however, capable of differentiating between intentions and results of actions and, for instance, do not anymore demand punishments for non-intentional actions or outcomes.

Stage (4) is a step more abstract and general, based on the explicit recognition of the value of the community, its relations of authority, and one's duty to it. However, pure stage (4) does not enable law-making in any rational sense as there are no extra-conventional reasons to draw on. At stage (5), utilitarian and contractual considerations become possible, and finally at stage (6), right is defined by the decision of conscience in accord with the self-chosen ethical principles. Stage (6) corresponds to the Rawlsian principles of democratic justice.

Jürgen Habermas (1979) has built on Kohlberg and added a seventh level. When Habermas first proposed a new stage (7) to complement Kohlberg's account of moral learning, he was responding to a major problem of Kantian ethics. Kant's categorical imperative denies the relevance of ego and its needs, emotions, interests and happiness to morality. It demands the submission of ego to whatever commands cognitive reason may generate. It also sees the categorical imperative in monological terms, thus denying any need for an intersubjective dialogue about moral rules and principles. On the basis of his criticism of monological reasoning, Habermas formulates the basic principles of discourse ethics, including 'only those norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all affected in their capacity as participants in a practical discourse' (Habermas 1990a: 197). Further, Habermas argues that what is also required for a successful normative discourse is openness to learning. 'Even those interpretations in which the individual identifies needs that are most peculiarly her own are open to a revision process' (Habermas 1990b: 49). This openness notwithstanding, no-one can replace individual's own assessment of normative validity. Habermas also maintains that successful normative discourse

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requires some minimal solidarity, i.e. concern for others' welfare and empathy for their situation. Universal discourse ethics is thus entwined with the basics of ethics of care; and, by implication, it must also presuppose something akin to Rawls' difference principle in order to sustain the socio-economic and educational preconditions for free discourse.

Habermas (1979: 89) argues that while stage (5) still somehow manages to limit applicability to legal associates (citizens of a state), at stage (6) the domain of validity of ethico-political principles must include all humans at least as private persons. At the discourse-ethical stage (7) all human beings are seen as members of an imagined world society, as world citizens. Thus cognitive stages (6) and (7) and stages beyond[9] imply cosmopolitan principles of inclusion. While Kant still wanted to limit the public rights of world citizens to hospitality, his categorical imperative did not stop at state-borders; for Kant, moral reasoning concerns all human beings. In discourse ethics, the *all* in 'only those norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of *all affected* in their capacity as participants in a practical discourse' refers potentially to every human being, depending of course also on who in fact affected. Similarly, Bhaskar's (1994) principle 'free flourishing of each is the condition of free flourishing of *all*' is universalist and cosmopolitan.

Consistent stages (6) and (7) reasoning thus question the moral relevance of state-borders and other partitions, and anticipate a future planetary society. This is a conceptual-logical consequence of moving to higher stages. Higher stage reasoning is both more differentiated (implying a nuanced understanding of social and cultural realities) and more integrated (implying symmetry and consistence) than prior stages. Therefore, further learning at the critical-reflective stage implies cosmopolitanism. From stage (6) onwards, moral principles must concern universally all of humanity, for otherwise the symmetry and consistence of those principles would be undermined, or directly violated.

Conclusion: in anticipation of a planetary ethico-political community

Social structures are concept- and action-dependent. Society is both the ever-present condition and the continually reproduced outcome of human agency (see Bhaskar 1979: 43). The mechanism generating the outcome that internal relations, social practices and systems transcend time, place and, also, the biological existence of human beings, is language, communication and learning. The actions of several actors are linked to one another by means of the enabling and regulative mechanism of reaching understanding. (cf. Habermas 1984: 274–275). This indicates that the structures of individual and collective learning are homologous and intertwined; yet they are not the same. The mechanisms and processes of collective learning through institutional transformations are dissimilar from those of the growth of an individual (cf. Habermas 1979: 102–103).

The complications of institutional changes notwithstanding, involving relations of direct and structural power and many other conditions, actors' further

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advances in learning tend to change the social context. Knowledgeable and competent actors are not genetically determined beings, but results of a slow shift from predominantly biological to increasingly cultural time. Actors' construction follows the conceptual and practical logic inherent in human culture. Complex language has not only made agency possible but also facilitated further stages of learning, gradually changing the prevailing types of action and modes of agency. This process is of course contingent upon many particular geo-historical conditions and, therefore, temporary and contextual reversals are clearly possible, but as a real tendency, collective learning is moving us towards a cosmopolitan direction. From a future-oriented perspective in world politics, foreign policy-making is thus unlikely to remain the central focus of agency–structure dialectics. Rather, my analysis suggests that the shape of things to come will be determined in struggles over establishing global-democratic public spheres and institutions.

Notes

1 Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2002: 171–177) claim that there is no evidence of a gradual evolutionary development of language: '…we can point to no simple languages, or even ones that are simpler than ours…; we have no evidence of intermediate, simpler forms of language'. First, there is now evidence for such a language; see Everett (2008). Second, developments in language are highly contagious through learning. Over a few thousands of years, linguistic and grammatical innovations can easily move across Eurasia and Africa. In fact, the gradual development of complex verbal language seems to have taken tens of thousands of years. Third, because linguistic complexity enabled new techniques and forms of cooperation, human population growth has concentrated almost exclusively in those groups that have successfully adopted complex verbal language (while many other groups may have faced physical extinction or cultural conversion or adoption). Fourth, because the stages of learning are logically and conceptually connected, there is no reason why a group of humans isolated from the rest since, say, 40,000 BCE would not have made some progress on its own (e.g. aboriginals of Australia). No part of humanity has been isolated for more than 40,000 years; and we should only expect the isolated groups to have developed more slowly, not to lack all progress.
2 This is not only compatible with Jacques Derrida's (1997) 'science of grammatology' but also gives it historical substance. Derrida maintains that our self-conscious existence is possible only because of language and, more precisely (arch-) writing. Writing comes before subjectivity. What many political theories such as liberalism take for granted – self-conscious individual actors – is an effect of language/writing. The formative context for consciousness and subjectivity evolved from the time-consuming process of gradual cognitive and related technical (and later also artistic) developments in the long pre-history of *homo sapiens*.
3 To what extent would it be possible to explain some of the phenomena Jaynes links with the special effects of the 'bicameral mind' in ordinary cognitive terms? Piaget (1977: 104–189) maintains that egocentrism, as a cognitive illusion of perspective and related incapacity to distinguish properly between self, community/society and nature, is essentially connected with heteronomy, which involves a literal/'realist' respect for the authority of the rules and their reified origin. It is true that – just like children hallucinate in contemporary societies – many ancient people did, and some contemporary people do, hallucinate ancestors and gods. Nonetheless, perhaps the hierarchical structures of these societies can be explained, to a degree, in terms of egocentric stage of

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reasoning, rather than in terms of particular stuctur-ation of the brain? As Piaget (129) writes, at the egocentric stage '[…rules] acquire the value of ritual necessities, and the forbidden things take on the significance of taboos. Moral realism would thus seem to be the fruit of constraint and of the primitive forms of unilateral respect.' Similarly, 'dreams, for example, even when the child already knows that they are deceptive, are, till about 7–8, systematically considered as an objective reality' (180).

4 'We have often noted that in the intellectual field the child's verbal thinking consists of a progressive coming into consciousness, or conscious realization, of schemas that have been built up by action. In such cases verbal thought simply lags behind concrete thought, since the former has to reconstruct symbolically, and on a new plane operations that have already taken place on the preceding level' (Piaget 1977: 112).

5 Despite his social relativism about values, Durkheim argued that moral and legal individualism is uniquely suitable to modern conditions of social solidarity, thus presuming both linear history and historical inevitability in a sense that comes close to the standard modernisation thesis (Cotterrell 1999: Chs 7–9). Weber maintained that ultimate values are arbitrary and modern individuals can see the tragedy of this irreversible condition of humanity living in a godless and disenchanted world (Lassman 2004: 256–261); yet Weber also theorised world-historical rationalisation, especially on its technical, institutional and voluntaristic dimensions, implying western superiority (Blaut 2000: 19–30). In a like manner, Westermarck believed simultaneously in (1) relativist emotivism and (2) progress understood as an increasingly logical-reflective attitude towards moral rules and principles (Swabey 1942).

6 This used to be the constitutive idea of anthropology since the founding works of Franz Boas and others until the late twentieth century. It was articulated knowingly against the imperialist policies of European and North American states and against the attitudes prevailing in those state/societies. Michael E. Brown (2008) argues, however, that since the late 1980s most anthropologists have been trying to reconcile cultural relativism with universal human rights and other normative notions, rather than adhering to relativism.

7 Kohlberg's stages should be understood as revisable models about the conceptual-logical sequence of learning normative rules and principles, subsequently more adequate for enabling co-operation and resolving conflicts. Models of stages of learning are double-hermeneutical in two ways. At the first level, these models concern a pre-interpreted world of lay meanings and can be, in part, checked against them; and second, they are necessarily moving between abstract normative theories of morality, justice and democracy, each of which enables one to perceive somewhat different things.

8 This is the criticism of Dennis L. Krebs and Kathy Denton (2006) of some of the recent studies confirming Kohlberg's theory of moral stages. This criticism is pertinent only to the extent that Kohlberg's stages are taken to determine actual conduct in social practices and institutions rather than indicate learning and cognitive capacity for moral reasoning and judgement.

9 In contrast to Habermas, Karl-Otto Apel (1978: 82–84) starts his normative theorising from the late twentieth-century global conditions of overpopulation, shortage of energy resources, ecological crisis, including global warming and 'the enormous enlargement of the risks involved in human activities and conflicts'. On that basis Apel (1991, 1992, 2001) articulates a new philosophically grounded political ethics, what he calls 'planetary macroethics'. Arguably, it is a new, higher stage in the cultural evolution of humankind, corresponding to requirements of a common and joint responsibility for the global consequences of human activities (Apel 1991: 261). Apel's planetary macroethics is built on stage-7 discourse ethics but goes beyond in its eco-planetary future-orientation. In addition, further levels are also possible, as indicated by Kohlberg's (1981: 311–372) reflections on a cosmic perspective and how it can ultimately ground ethics and give life a meaning.

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