Institut d'Etudes Européennes et Internationales du Luxembourg

Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summer Seminar

Searching for a decent international society

15-20 August 2011
Vama Veche, Romania

Introduction

The Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies (LIEIS), in association with the Black Sea University Foundation and the European Cultural Centre of Bucharest, organised a seminar on 'Searching for a decent international society' from 15 to 20 August 2011 in Vama Veche, Romania.

Since 1994, this seminar has been part of a long-term project of summer courses involving students from the wider Black Sea area and neighbouring countries. Past topics in this series have included the nature of conflicts in the international system, conceptual and practical issues in relation to European and world security problems as well as, more recently, the question of mentalities (2005), the quest for European values (2006), telos, ethos and demos in the European Union (2007), ideas for a viable society in the 21st century (2008), the evolution in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989 (2009), searching for a decent society (2010).

In line with this tradition, the goal of this seminar was to have an open and frank debate about the concept of decent international society and to explore the reasons for the lack of decency in various realms. The objective was to think about core topics and key issues in relation to this theme, without any *a priori* assumptions, prejudice or stereotypes. Rather than having long alternating presentations, there was a free-wheeling debate and a brain-storming with a clear focus on interdisciplinary concepts, with diverse and even clashing perspectives as well as attention to specific empirical facts. The ambition of the organisers was to raise awareness and sensitivity on fundamental and constitutive issues of contemporary societies.

As in previous years, the seminar brought together lecturers from various countries and about 25 students from Western and Eastern Europe, and the Black Sea area. The lecturers were Dr Armand Clesse, Director of the LIEIS, Professor Christopher Coker, Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and Professor Gerhard Michael Ambrosi, Jean Monnet Professor ad Personam at the University of Trier.

The group of students included a wide range of different levels and profiles: some undergraduates, others doing Master degrees, yet others were PhD candidates. Several have studied abroad and gained professional experience at international level. Most of them came from Romania, but there were also participants from Bulgaria, Moldova, Russia, Poland and The Netherlands, as well as seven observers from Greece, Malta, Romania, Bulgaria and France.

The seminar was divided into twelve sessions.[1] In addition to the plenary sessions, the students debated in separate working groups during five sessions. The results of these debates were summarised in three reports drawn up by the students themselves which can be found in the Appendix I, II and III.[2]

I. Part[3]

1. Introductory remarks

Following the presentation of the participants, A. Clesse opened the proceedings of the seminar by stressing how cautious the participants should be in treating the issues under discussion and their own presuppositions. He also formulated a series of questions that should and would be addressed in the following days.

A. Clesse expressed his uncertainty about our understanding of human nature and suggested that future researchers may prove us wrong. He wondered what the role of values is in the current international society and said that questions revolving around such concepts like values, norms, principles and virtues are often elusive. He continued by referring to other central topics such as socialism, capitalism and political and strategic aspects of the international society. Questions about whether institutions live up to their tasks and whether they can live up to the current economic challenges are crucial, too. More specifically, will they break down or will they adapt? A. Clesse also raised the question of the future of democracy given the recent surge of the extreme right, xenophobia and intolerance in the West. What might be the global repercussions of such a change? In addition, what will be the role and importance or necessity of war and nuclear weapons in a future decent international society? Could we imagine a world where war will be unthinkable or a world without nuclear weapons? Do nuclear weapons prevent conventional wars? Should we still think in terms of deterrence? In this context A. Clesse mentioned Wilhelm von Humboldt who contended that war is important for a society in order to avoid decay. More questions followed concerning the role of women, religion and humanitarian intervention in a decent international society, which all triggered a lively exchange of ideas in the subsequent discussions.

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[1] Agenda in Appendix VI. Appendix IV reports a survey on the virtues for an upcoming international society. Appendix V contains Professor Malitza's essay "Trying to find ways towards a decent humanity".

[2] This report does not outline in a chronological order the presentations given by the lecturers or the questions raised by the students. Rather, it seeks to provide an overview of the discussions and to highlight the main questions and conclusions that arose from the lively exchange of ideas. The topics of debate of the summer school can be divided into various categories: 1. The present international society: What is decent and what less so?, 2. Human nature and international society, 3. Virtue and international life, 4. Religion and decent society, 5. Values and models for an upcoming society, 6. On evil and war, 7. The role of the USA, 8. Relation between the sexes, 9. Consumerism in the current international society, 10. The role of new technologies in a future society, 11. Final remarks.

[3] By Alexandros Koutsoukis

The students mentioned a series of problems of the current international society, starting from abstract ones like western-centrism, ethno-centrism and lack of vision to more concrete ones such as climate change, protracted conflicts and the continuation of war. Other issues of concern were the substitution of economic language for political language, doubts about the utility of a scientific debate concerning values, the continued existence of a culture of war and the concept of international society as a western concept and not necessarily one to be undeniably accepted by non-western countries. Other concrete issues included sustainable development, financial institutions attacking democracy and in part usurping sovereignty, the hypocrisy of some liberals who in the wake of the economic crisis became increasingly xenophobic and supportive of the extreme right, the failure of international society to manage intercultural diversity, the lack of interest in the underdeveloped countries, the inequality of states and power politics, the international hegemonic order that leads the periphery into dependency, and the unsatisfactory US global leadership, which has created much resentment and disappointment because of its policy of regime change and interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan that have fallen short of their proclaimed goals, namely nation-building. Others pointed towards a moral and social constructivist approach towards globalization and expressed their concern about who is setting the norms and where such an authority would come from.

2. The present international society: What is decent and what less so?

Following this roundtable, A. Clesse wondered if there is reason to look for social justice at the international level and then commented on the recent demonstrations in the Arab world and in parts of Europe. He pointed out that the United Nations Millennium goals have not been achieved and that there is a widening wealth gap not only among but also within countries such as the USA. Therefore, he asked if we should choose between implementing maximum or minimum goals, diminishing the wealth gap or at least stopping the divergence from growing. He also mentioned economic justice and if it can exist without minimum global social standards such as a minimum income. Wouldn't that imply huge financial transfers? Is a minimum income feasible even if it cannot be implemented within the EU? Could there be at least equal access to certain goods, i.e. education, water, justice, medical care? Would that be the equivalent of a minimum standard of dignity?

A. Clesse then turned to the role of the nation state in current global affairs. Can international society last just as long as nation-states exist? Can there be an alternative organizing principle or authority such as a world government? Is humanitarian justice meaningful? Is international justice impartial or hypocritical because it brings to court only cases from defeated nations like Serbia and never from the victors? How hypocritical is this historical era? Doesn't justice lose credibility if it only handles the easy cases?

A. Clesse referred to the French May '68, to the alter-globalisation movement and to the current popular revolts and demonstrations in the Arab world and Europe. He deemed that the first two have not reached their goals and have been inefficient and inadequate, whereas the third one looks more promising. Stéphane Hessel's essay *Time for Outrage!* (original French title: *Indignez-vous!*) helps to understand the '*indignados*' and their demonstrations which are fuelled by frustration and disillusionment about the course of our world.

A. Clesse suggested a world based on a radically different ethos. The way towards a better world passes through the acceptance of the absolute sanctity of life, both human and animal life. People have to live in harmony with other creatures. Eliminating killing and suffering should become

the ethical foundation of a robust and resilient international society. For example, isn't it atrocious to abort and kill an unborn who cannot defend himself? If we are allowed to do that, what prevents us from killing six-month babies? Even at the psychological level, the absolute sanctity of life makes people understand that there are limits to their behaviour and that not everything is permitted.

A. Clesse developed his point by referring to the controversial utilitarian ethics that do not support such a proposal. Utilitarianism is an ethical theory holding that the proper course of action maximizes the overall "good" of the society. The most influential contributors to this theory are considered to be Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill as well as more recently the Australian philosopher Peter Singer. However, utilitarian thinking could lead to support for euthanasia and generate dilemmas about choosing and judging the utility of a life. How can one decide that? Is it correct or appropriate to choose by comparing the cost of preserving a life with the cost of not preserving it? Not surprisingly, when Peter Singer's book *Practical Ethics* was published in German it produced a big public outcry because in his book he argues that infanticide is allowed. This is, A. Clesse cautioned, where utilitarian ethics can lead us and that is why it is so divisive.

C. Coker referred to Dominique Moïsi's book *The Geopolitics of Emotion: How Cultures of Fear, Humiliation, and Hope are Reshaping the World*. There are three categories of countries. The first is characterised by appetite and wants to increase its standard of living. The second comprises the countries of the West that are afraid of losing their status, and the third category contains those states that are resentful of the position of the western countries. C. Coker concluded his intervention by saying that the lesson to be drawn from this book is that the feelings of fear, humiliation and hope are reshaping world politics. These sentiments are just as influential as the cultural, social, and economic factors that breed political conflict. They condition the future of international society and whether people see themselves to be part of it or not.

For the participants a common issue of concern was the American hegemony, its quality and if or how it can be achieved consensually. C. Coker expressed a benign view of the USA and argued that the USA is an empire by invitation. He divided hegemonic powers between those ones that provide services that other countries accept and those that provide services that other countries do not accept. The USA is of the first type because there is demand for the services that it provides; services that work for the benefit of the world. Nonetheless, the American hegemony is in decline because its vision for the world is gone. The USA has, for C. Coker, degenerated into a conservative status quo power. For example, in 2001 President Bush said he would manage global disorder instead of intending to achieve an era of global order. In the beginning of its hegemony, after WWII, the USA was targeting something different. Its aim was to form a permanent peaceful system. They achieved this by creating the liberal international institutions that underwrote the US power without war. This was the basis for a vision that is now long gone.

2. Human nature and international society

2.1 Values and the concept of "humanity"

C. Coker opened the discussion on values and the concept of 'humanity'. He first clarified the differences between values and norms which are often confused by many. Values, he stated, are universal whereas norms are cultural institutionalisations that operationalise values. Values stem

from the axial age in human history (the period from 800 to 200 BC during which, according to the German philosopher Karl Jaspers, similar revolutionary thinking appeared in China, India, and the Occident). Since then only norms have changed. The reasons for this change are industrialisation, modernity and socio-economic circumstances. For example, although adultery is condemned in the majority of cultures, it is being punished differently in different societies.

The importance of values and norms, C. Coker argued, is twofold. First of all, they condition international and intercultural dialogue. There can be no discussion concerning different values because they are universal concepts. Nevertheless, there can be both dialogue and critique of the relevant norms. Secondly, the importance of values and norms lies in what we understand to be 'humanity'. 'Humanity' is something that is uniting people and bringing them together, and it will be contested in the future along with the present international society. Understanding the history and the implications of the concept is necessary for preserving it.

According to the American philosopher Richard Rorty, humanity has no essence, but it is a work in progress. It is the process of becoming human and the fundamentals of this process are values and norms. They help people escape the Darwinian selection through the importance and influence of culture. According to Professor Tony Davies' 1997 book *Humanism: The New Critical Idiom* there is no essence of humanity and instead humanity is a project. We are humans as much as others recognise that in us. C. Coker pointed out that this is why totalitarian systems failed to apply to their people their concepts of 'real' human nature; simply because human nature is always evolving and changing.

A. Clesse interjected new questions about humanity from a historical and interdisciplinary perspective. He wondered whether human nature is egoistic, selfish or generous, greedy or compassionate. He questioned whether there can be a decent international society without evil and whether we can live without war, destruction, elimination and genocide. He then referred to the philosophical aporia of historical progress and the concept of time; is history cyclical or linear? Many philosophers of the Enlightenment such as Diderot and German idealists like Fichte and Schelling believed that if people, humanity, did not have prejudices and did not embrace any religion they would be able to determine their own fate and be autonomous. Others like Voltaire were more careful and warned about such a naïvely optimistic view of human history and human nature. There have also been writers like Arnold Toynbee who considered history to be a series of challenges and responses and more recently the Harvard professor of history Niall Ferguson who conceives human history in cyclical terms.

For his part, C. Coker traced the origins and the evolution of the concept of 'humanity' and pointed out its importance. 'Humanity' is a Greek and Judeo-Christian concept. Societies of hunters and gatherers referred to themselves as 'peoples'. All others were not recognised as such. On the contrary, Greeks, although they were exclusionists, developed the idea of universal 'humanity'. They indeed distinguished between men and women, barbarians and Greeks but when it came to slaves they recognised that they had souls. Romans described slaves as talking tools, which meant they at least recognised them to have something in common with Roman citizens. The revolution in meaning came when the Romans invented the concept of 'humanity' (*romanitas*, as modern writers describe in short the ideals which inspired the Roman polity and what it meant to be Roman) and all citizens of the Roman Empire became Romans in 212 AD.

The discourse on 'humanity' is a western one that further evolved through the centuries. For Jean-Jacques Rousseau being French was a decent thing. However, this implied that all those who were not French could not enjoy this dignity. That changed after the French Revolution and

the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen which recognised inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights to all members of the human family. Furthermore, Charles Darwin established that all species of life have descended over time from common ancestry and that people are genetically the same. Consequently, when someone recognises this, how can he exclude anyone? A further advancement of the idea of humanity came with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which represents a solid global expression of rights to which all human beings are inherently entitled. 'Humanity' as a concept has changed over the years since it is a story we tell ourselves. We have asserted our right to have rights. This is an important western story that will continue to be effective as long as it continues to be believable. This will be, C. Coker predicted, at stake in the 21st century.

Unfortunately, the dignity of 'humanity' has been undermined by the West itself. During this and the previous century people in the West have come to define dignity in consumerist terms, thus making dignity a hollow concept. What needs to be done, according to C. Coker, is to reduce injustice by redressing human wrongs. This should be a priority for the West even at the expense of promoting the human rights agenda. This is very important. In the past, for example, people who may have accepted an emperor did not accept a tyrannical one. Tyranny is a public human wrong. Therefore, the West should respect the 'other', try to talk their own 'language' and judge them by their own standards and culture. In summary, the West should stop preaching that it occupies the moral high ground because otherwise the dialogue with other countries and cultures will be counter-productive.

C. Coker also clarified that conflating scientific progress with moral superiority is misguided. Science is not equivalent to moral progress and cannot justify any sense of such a superiority. What makes us humans is culture. Culture cannot be explained by science and that is why science cannot explain 'humanity'. It is inefficient and wrong to think of ourselves only scientifically in material or mechanistic terms and not culturally.

2.2 Culture

Subsequently, A. Clesse steered the debate towards the causes of international society's dysfunction. Is it because egoism prevails, or is it because altruism does not exist? Is there altruism, or is altruism in fact egoism, as certain socio-biologists claim?

C. Coker responded to the challenge of this question and explained why humans may be altruists and what the relevant role of culture is. Humans, he specified, are a sociable species and sociability is hardwired in us. Although there are a few people who live alone like hermits, generally humans do not and cannot live on their own.

This generation, he observed, is obsessed with biology like the previous one was obsessed with physics. Nevertheless, we humans are the product of both nature and nurture. According to Aristotle, we are an unnatural species because from the moment we are born we start becoming something different from our nature. We try to cease being the biological creature we were born and through knowledge and culture, to change. We are altruists as a result of sociability and culture.

Following C. Coker's comments on culture, A. Clesse expressed doubts about whether the USA and its culture can continue to provide a model for international society. Isn't their model of the world completely discredited, he asked. Isn't the USA built on genocide? Did it not make use of

the atomic bombs? Has not the American project for the 21st century been seeking an Americanised world? In the end, how much diversity can the USA and its model accept or tolerate in the coming world? In addition, were there in the past or are there now any other models of the world that we could imitate or adapt?

2.3 Character

A. Clesse provoked the discussions on human attitudes that sustain the misfortunes, inequalities and indecency of the current international society. First of all, he questioned the morality of the international system as well as the hypocrisy and complacency of our societies. Is development aid, as Clausewitz might have said, the continuation of exploitation by other means? Why do the peoples accept being poor? Why are there no revolutions? Why is there a rise in extremism? Has the end of toleration and multiculturalism arrived? Is toleration spontaneous and humane or imposed by the state like in the case of certain Scandinavian countries? Could we think beyond capitalism? Is such a system that is based on greed and exploitation satisfactory for the people and if so, why?

C. Coker seized the opportunity to express his views on the importance of human character, on which attitudes depend. He contrasted ancient notions of character with contemporary ones and pointed out the difference it makes if someone has character. He urged the participants to go back once more to the wisdom of the ancient Greeks, in particular of Aristotle and Plato. Both of them considered the character of a person to be of high importance. Plato advised people to understand who they really were. Aristotle argued that people should actualize their potency, i.e. realize their potential.

There is a valuable lesson to be learned concerning happiness. What is important is its pursuit, the voyage and the search for it, not happiness *per se*. The Founding Fathers, for instance, wrote in the US Declaration of Independence that all men have certain unalienable rights, of which one is the pursuit of happiness; making clear that the fundamental right is not happiness itself. Another famous example is the poem *Ithaca* (inspired by Homer's Odyssey) of the famous Greek poet Constantine Cavafy that focuses on the importance of the voyage instead of its end. Quite revealing are *Ithaca*'s last lines:

> Ithaca has given you the beautiful journey.
> Without her you would not have set out on the road.
> Nothing more has she got to give you.
> And if you find her threadbare, Ithaca has not deceived you.
> Wise as you have become, with so much experience,
> you must already have understood what Ithacas mean.

At this point C. Coker elaborated and contrasted this notion of character with a modern understanding championed by specific moral philosophers who consider character to be mere 'situationism'. In short, this means that people's reactions depend on how they feel any given day, depending for example if they feel psychologically well or not. Aristotle, on the contrary, taught that a person's real character comes out in a bad and difficult situation.

C. Coker specified the difference character makes by mentioning the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and the infamous torturing and abuse of prisoners by US soldiers. He clarified that not all US soldiers participated in these inhumane acts. Some soldiers in certain units refused. These people

had character and perhaps the character came from the fact that they were team-mates. In contrast, others, like Chip Fredericks, the highest in rank of the seven U.S. military police personnel who have been charged with torturing prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, performed these acts because they succumbed to peer pressure. They wanted to be popular and part of the team. This is a survival technique and is hardwired in us. However, there were also those soldiers who did stick out and refused to engage in the torture and the humiliation at Abu Ghraib. Certain scientists do not want to know about these people because they do not fit in their social psychology experiments. However, there is a big difference between these two groups and that is character.

C. Coker then emphasized the importance of virtue ethics. People with character may – understandably – be sometimes weak and may do bad things. However, character is important because it makes a difference. That is why we have to go back to figures like Aristotle and understand virtue ethics. If, for instance, character was considered as nothing more than a myth, a social construction, then people would act badly in situations of distress or frustration. This is untrue. The military, for instance, conforms quite closely to Aristotelian ethics. It nurtures the belief (although not always successfully) that soldiers have the option to disobey an order by a superior because they are individuals. Science may have progressed and may have revealed a lot of things about our behaviour and our bodies' chemical reactions but a great obstacle to unrestrained and impulsive behaviour is character, discipline and ethos.

Despite the importance of virtue, C. Coker advised we should not confuse increased international cooperation with virtue. Indeed, at the personal level virtues such as empathy do exist because we are social creatures and we need to be social in order to survive. However, at the international level, cooperation has increased not because people have changed but because cooperation nowadays pays off more than it used to in the past.

G.M. Ambrosi continued the discussion on Aristotelian ethics and emphasized that for Aristotle, ethics was a practical and political science whose goal is the survival of the polis by shaping people's behaviour. People ought to have incentives in order to want to do good in their society; even though some may not want to act accordingly. The solution provided by Aristotle is for people to become masters of the right middle, to have virtue (*arete*).

G.M. Ambrosi continued the discussion on Aristotelian ethics and emphasized that for Aristotle ethics was a practical and political science whose goal is the survival of the polis by shaping people's behaviour. The main problem for the city-states of his time was to maintain autonomy with regard to outside enemies and to avoid social strife within the community. Social stability within the community was propagated for quite practical reasons because in case of too much internal unrest a polis would be vulnerable to foreign invaders and subsequently to slavery of the entire population of the polis. The essence of Aristotle's ethics was to incite the privileged class 'not to overdo it', that is, to avoid alienating the rest of the population to such an extent as to endanger the free survival of the polis. So, the point of Aristotelian ethics was not just to be good, but that people should realize that ethical behaviour in the Aristotelian sense was good for their own well-being.

Concerning the military, G.M. Ambrosi commented that the normal condition for many humans is to have an inhibition to kill other humans. This is a well-known problem for the military because soldiers with an inhibition to kill might not use the available military power at maximum efficiency. Many modern forms of military action are such that they overcome this human inhibition by use of technology. The most obvious case in point is the wide-spread use of bombs

and other unspecific killing devices such as mines. The existence of distance between those firing their arms and their victims alters the perception of fighting and makes it less responsible, less risky and easier to ignore the shame involved in killing. He proposed that a pillar of a decent international society would be to make bombings perceived as shameful because they lead to indiscriminate and inhumane killings.

These interventions provided food for thought for the roundtable that followed where participants expressed their points of view. Questions, doubts and dilemmas were presented concerning the correlation between not only character and happiness but also rejection, the utility of the Kantian ultimate commandment of reason as the summing up of morality, the accountability of humans only to their community or to humanity – even at the expense of their community – the exact process of the evolution of human nature, and the usefulness of the concept of virtue to judge human acts at the level of the international society.

3. Virtue and international life

3.1 Leading a virtuous life

Virtue continued to be at the centre of discussions. C. Coker contrasted it with heroism, explained the term and its implications, hence highlighting the importance of his previous intervention on character. The axial age is the age of Plato, not of Homer. It is important to make this distinction because Achilles, a Homeric hero, is not considered virtuous according to Plato. Plato admires Achilles but is also afraid of his a-sociality because he is not reconciled with life and hates death. This may seem counter-intuitive but if one loves life too much, then one cannot find a meaningful goal to die for. Such a goal is a social one and this contributes to peoples' sociality. Indeed, Achilles is not sociable. He has only one friend, Patroclus.

So, what does it mean to be virtuous? Following Plato, C. Coker defined virtue as social intelligence. A virtuous person is someone who manages to combine harmoniously reason, spirit and appetite. Social intelligence, Plato explains, is to lead a respectful life: we are not humans if others do not respect us. It all comes down to how a person will be remembered. Plato also divides people into three categories. The intellectuals have reason. The warriors and the brave people have spirit. The rest, who are the majority, are driven by appetite. Of course these three characteristics exist in each and every one of us but a virtuous person is one who can combine them in harmony. Achilles is not virtuous precisely because he does not combine them well. In addition, this is an important distinction and a lesson that can be found not only in Greek but also in other philosophical traditions such as Confucianism and Taoism.

Living virtuously is a great burden. Jean-Paul Sartre wrote that people are condemned to exercise moral choices. Indeed, C. Coker further pointed out that it is crippling to live with freedom of choice. We are condemned to be judged by our standards.

This conception of life is very different from that expressed by socio-biology and evolutionary psychology. It is not deterministic. It is one that stresses the importance of character and the inescapable reality of making hard choices even against the logic of genes or the chemically "predisposed" reactions that follow people's different psychological moods and circumstances.

3.2 Virtue in international relations

Another question that C. Coker tackled was the meaning of virtue in international relations. Virtues still exist but hold different names. For instance, honour for a state means to be credible and have a reputation (e.g. it can pay back its loans), and trust means transparency.

Hegemony can also be virtuous or not. This point is made eloquently by Thucydides in his history of the Peloponnesian war. Hegemony (*hēgemonía*) for Thucydides was not only naked power but also its combination with responsibilities. Pericles argued that Athens was a unique hegemon because it provided services to the Delian League.[4] The city-states of the league of Delos paid a tax to Athens and in return Athens built a better navy and kept the Aegean Sea free of piracy and safe for trade. However, Thucydides was critical of Athens because it gradually became 'hegemonic' in the way we understand the term today. He said that this was due to a lack of virtue in Athens itself and Athens was going to pay back a price for not being a virtuous hegemonic power. Thucydides mentioned certain reservations about Athenian power. A case in point is the Melian dialogue where the Athenians debated whether they should destroy the city and the Athenian envoy famously said: "the powerful do what they can and the weak do what they must". Thucydides did not write that this showed Athens at its best but at its worst.

A. Clesse then asked whether virtue is correlated with the rise and fall of nations. C. Coker argued that small states have to be virtuous or earn a good reputation or acquire 'soft power'. However, great powers can do what they want – at least to a certain degree. A good example is the USA, which thought that it could do whatever it wanted to do in 2003. Small states, on the contrary, must be very inventive, ingenious and imaginative and they need alliances and alignments. These are their 'force multipliers'.

Returning to values and virtues C. Coker offered an example from the US foreign policy. He first defined three categories of values. The first one is *instrumental values*, whose aim it is to achieve something else, i.e. war is useful in order to secure a better kind of peace. Secondly, *existential values* are something useful in terms of humanity and human dignity. Thirdly, *absolute values* are values that are useful by themselves. For example, they make people happy.

The problem with the third kind of values, which brings us closer to contemporary politics, is reification, which means making something more important than it is. The American project to make the world safe for democracy is a case in point. Is democracy an absolute value? C. Coker could see that democracy possesses an instrumental value because historically democracies have (so far) been rich and powerful. He could see it as an existential value because it gives people a certain dignity that one has a right to determine his future and no one will determine it for him. Nonetheless, he does not regard democracy as an absolute value. What is the point of democracy, he wondered rhetorically. What will happen and what will we achieve if all states become democratic, he said echoing a widespread critique of democracy, to the extent that democracy masks inequality and economic injustices? If democracy were an absolute value then people would say that democracy does not do wrongs.

C. Coker followed the American philosopher's Richard Rorty's critique of the USA who said that the USA should change their goals. Instead of making the world safe for democracy, like in

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[4] The Delian League, founded in 477 BC, was an association of Greek city-states, members numbering between 150 to 173, under the leadership of Athens, whose purpose was to continue fighting the Persian Empire after the Greek victory in the Battle of Plataea at the end of the Greco–Persian Wars.

the 20ᵗʰ century, they should make democracy safe for the world in the 21ˢᵗ century. C. Coker added that the USA assume they are virtuous and that is why they cannot have such a debate. Powerful states do not look at themselves through the eyes of others because they may not like what they will see. No matter how important this is for a meaningful conversation, it is usually the small states that act accordingly. Besides, they must be able to look at themselves through the eyes the others look at them because virtue or reputation or ingenuity and soft power is all they have.

The discussion continued with A. Clesse posing another set of questions on the subject of virtue. How can virtue uphold or be invigorated? How can one prevent the erosion of virtue? Is this a hopeless fight or not? Can we discern *a posteriori* the origins of the fall or the loss of virtue? What kind of morality is this if states become moral when they lose power?

C. Coker approached the issue figuratively referring to the Romanian philosopher and essayist Emil Cioran's *A Short History of Decay* (initially published in French in 1949 as *Précis de décomposition*). In that book Cioran describes the British National Portrait Gallery, the only national gallery of this kind. For the period during the 19ᵗʰ century, when the British Empire was powerful, paintings depicted British as forceful and show them torturing and killing pirates. In contrast, in the 20ᵗʰ century part of the gallery, when the British Empire is in decline, the British are portrayed as soft and they look nice.

Following the discussion on morality G.M. Ambrosi suggested that according to Theodor Adorno everybody believes to have moral competence but this is devastating and annihilates it due to the fact that everything has it – it is not scarce – and everyone holds a different view on it as well. He also mentioned the film series called *The Marx Brothers*. The elder Marx Brother, Groucho Marx, gave advice to his younger brothers and once said that moral values like honesty and reliability are very important in life and thus, if you can fake them, you have made it in life. This is then a cynical variant of Aristotle's advice to be good in the own enlightened interest.

Returning to the Greeks, G.M. Ambrosi talked about their sense of the good. In Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, Socrates claimed to have a *daimonion* (literally, a "divine something") that frequently warned him – in the form of a "voice" – against mistakes but never told him what to do. For Socrates, the supreme judge for right behaviour was *inside* himself, not some outside authority. In many societies the moral educators like prophets and kings invoked fearsome Gods in order to frighten people into social behaviour. It is specific for the ancient Greek lawgivers and thinkers that they assigned the responsibility for socially beneficial behaviour to the citizen of the polis themselves. For instance, the Athenian statesman and lawmaker Solon said that if Athens were to be destroyed, that would be the people's own responsibility because the goddess Athena loved "her" Athens. Thus, destruction of the city could only come from the citizens themselves, namely if their leader became too greedy. Therefore the secularisation of the good is in some sense a Greek invention.

4. Religion and decent society

Searching for a decent international society implies considering the role of religion. The summer seminar engaged in conversations on the issue from an ethical, functional, transcendental and scientific point of view. A. Clesse opened the discussions by touching the heart of the issue: the relation of values to religion. According to Alasdair MacIntyre for example, who is a key figure in the recent surge of interest in virtue ethics, values, such as empathy, sympathy, self-esteem

and respect of the other depend on religion. Others who hold different moral theories disagree. Choosing one's moral theory defines one's opinion on the necessity of religion in society or whether religion can be substituted by something functionally equivalent such as basic rights.

On the relation of values and political religion C. Coker mentioned Nazism and its effort to adjust values. Political religion is an ideology that resembles religion in the sense that it has its leaders/priests, members/believers, books/holy texts. Nazism is a 'political religion' and Nazis tried to create anti-values. According to Heinrich Himmler, Nazis had to have hardness of heart in order to exterminate the Jews. Then they would have to remove all trace that might show that the extermination even happened. In 1943 Himmler also said that the death camps would be later planted with acorns and forests would grow in order for their existence to be forgotten. That shows that even totalitarian regimes recognise that they cannot create new virtues. The virtues we have are the ones we have had for thousands of years.

A. Clesse continued the discussion on the civilising role of religion and whether we can achieve civility without religion. Does not religion soften people and 'tame the beast' in us, as social anthropologists would say? What is its spiritual role? Does it not offer people a sense of self-confidence and serenity? Does it not alleviate suffering, promote the love of the next to you as well as tame people through the fear of punishment of the sinners? If religion did not exist, then in whose name should we abstain from evil? In the absence of religion, would then not everything be permitted, as Dostoyevsky once put it? Can religious values exist without religious creed? Can they be independent of religion? Don't we need a transcendental dimension in life, one that only religion can offer us? In addition, what is the role of reason? Does one need Kant's categorical imperative of reason to be moral or would man be moral despite the categorical imperative; and vice-versa for an immoral man?

C. Coker contended that religion is an innate trait of humans and that is impossible to get away from it. He mentioned psychologist Jesse Bering's book *The God Instinct: The Psychology of Souls, Destiny, and the Meaning of Life* to clarify his point. People used to gossip about each other, even from the beginning. This eventually led to a sense of guilt: should one gossip or is there anyone who overhears? According to the aforementioned book, religion comes from language. We need to have someone who overhears us speak in order to feel guilt about what we are saying about other people.

C. Coker reinforced his point by focusing on religious experience instead of religion. According to William James, a Harvard University psychologist and philosopher whose lectures on natural theology are contained in the book *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, people are mostly awed by religious transcendental experience. James admired people who could feel the religious experience: epiphanies, martyrdom and others. These people can be secular but they can be moved by the existence of something superior. James could not feel that because he was an atheist but many others do feel it because they are believers.

C. Coker further supported his argument that we are a religious species by referring to Alasdair MacIntyre's book *Dependent rational animals*: *why human beings need the virtues*. We are different from other species because we live longer and depend on others. We have the longest childhood period during which we depend on our parents. We also depend on others when we are very old. On the contrary, other species abandon the old ones or challenge them. That is why we have created an extended moral system to defend the defenceless. We even have support groups for people who are invalid, who have disabilities or diseases such as Alzheimer, people who cannot support themselves. People of these groups are called 'second-selves'. A second-self

is a person who represents a person who cannot represent himself. They are what Kant called a second-self, they are 'you'. They know what you are going through. They have gone through it themselves and they represent you. No other species has this concept of the second-self. So, for all these reasons, C. Coker concluded, we have to say that religion is what we are. We are a religious species. We have religion for a reason, and it will remain like that.

G.M. Ambrosi took the floor and raised certain points referring to religion and the idea of the holy. He argued that it is strange to live without a metaphysical reference point in one's life. That becomes perhaps especially clear at the end of one's life. An (unintended) example for this may be found in the movie *The Travelling Players* (O Thiassos) (1975) by the Greek filmmaker, screenwriter and film producer Theòdoros Angelòpoulos. There is a scene depicting a group of communist revolutionaries at the burial of one of their comrades. Being atheists by conviction they had no priest and no established funeral rites. All that was left to them was to clap their hands for their comrade. It was meant to be a heroic gesture but in fact it was a pathetic ending.

He then referred to the ancient Greeks who believed that organizing and maintaining a decent society was the responsibility of the members of that society. That was the conceptual basis of Solon's reforms that laid the foundations for Athenian democracy: people are responsible for themselves and must act for the coherence of their societies by seeking at least a modest level of social justice.

That does not mean that the ancient Greeks did not have a deep sense of being in awe and of worshiping sacred places. Indeed, the classical Greek art is deeply religious. But the might of the Gods concerned the fate of individuals. The fate of society was the responsibility of its members – to have good laws and to keep them. In the classical period of ancient Greece even the gods were bound by laws and by the right proportion in their interrelations. That is why they were represented by planets like Venus, Mars, Jupiter, which have their set paths on the sky and thus demonstrated eternal orderliness.

In modern times this idea of celestial order became important again when Newton and Leibnitz discovered the differential calculus and learned that the paths of the planets can be described as solutions of mathematical extreme value problems. This is the modern origin of the idea of God as the divine mechanic who sets up the "best of all worlds". But it is worship with a vengeance: after God set the optimal world in motion, there was nothing more for him to do in this world but to watch it unfold without any further intervention from him. This was the mental set-up with which Immanuel Kant then dealt in his three *Critiques*.

Three main issues were raised in the roundtable that followed focusing on values, Kant and religious experience. One participant expressed the need for flexible values in order to create a decent international society, a trait that religious values do not possess because they are absolute values.

Another participant reinvigorated the discussion on Kant by stating two things. First of all, the Kantian analysis of morality is based on terms of justification: morality is based on freedom and justice. Kant did not state that knowing the categorical imperative would make someone moral. Secondly, in Kant's moral philosophy God is a necessary postulate. He is the one who grants justice (as the proportion of happiness and moral perfection).

A third participant stressed the importance of religious experience. He first clarified that fundamentalism does not make a religion bad. Fundamentalism exists in all religions. Religion,

he added, can be useful if people concentrate on the religious experience instead of the differences among religions. More specifically, if people keep the sense of morality to which religions subscribe but without subscribing to one religion, just keeping the religiosity or the piety of the religious experience, this may move the world forward.

In turn, C. Coker commented the last intervention and mentioned Genghis Khan and John Mann's 2004 book *Genghis Khan: Life, Death and Resurrection*. In this book Genghis Khan is portrayed as an ecumenical figure. He believed that no religion had access to the whole truth but only to a part of the truth. Therefore, he wanted only the four big religions or religious traditions, Taoism, Christianity, Islamism and Judaism, to exist in his empire. In this way, a dialogue between religions would be enabled and that would lead people to access the truth.

A. Clesse and C. Coker developed on the key role played by the idea of the holy in Western civilization. A. Clesse said most of the "High Western Art" was produced in veneration of God. Another great source of inspiration was veneration for women. But since "there is no longer God, and no women to venerate anymore", what we are now seeing is a decline of art. A. Clesse challenged the participants to recall when the last piece of music, the last great painting or the last great novel were created – inferring that without high art society is decaying. He examined whether anxiety could also be at the root of art. Could the fear of dying, of disappearing, also lead to the creation of culture and art? A. Clesse also observed the changes brought about by democracy in high art. He acknowledged that while high art used to be available to the upper class, democracy implies that everyone should have access to culture. Can this "culture for all" still be honestly called "culture"? Should culture be "exclusivist" in nature? In that context, a participant said he was optimistic that the low level of culture society reached could actually spark a new desire for high art.

C. Coker agreed that Western societies "don't address God any longer". In high art, the celebration of the Godhead had been replaced by that of humanity. Coker claims we are now celebrating ourselves. We think we are the most important; we are the centre of our universe. Loss of faith also deprives humans of a higher moral authority, leaving them alone in face of totally new moral questions. All the moral questions that are now in our minds about in-vitro fertilization, cloning or genetic engineering – we no longer address to God – we address them to ourselves. C. Coker suggested that there is a certain trivialization that results from "taking God out of the equation", and he agreed with A. Clesse on the concept of the holy: for him, not finding place for the holy in one's life makes one a diminished human being, doomed to the perils of consumerism and materialism. In addition, A. Clesse wondered whether a "religious Esperanto", which would combine the values of the monotheistic religions, is possible.

II. Part[5]

5. Values and models for an upcoming society

A. Clesse detailed the background of the term "decent society". The term, rarely used in social sciences, was introduced by Avishai Margalit in *The Decent Society*, in which he explained that the cornerstone for such a society is "the absence of humiliation". What would be the values of a future decent society? Are values rigid or do they evolve? For C. Coker, values do evolve, as Alasdair MacIntyre writes in his book *After Virtue*. The main change in our value system over

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[5] by Corina Ajder

the past 100 years was "recognizing that we are the dependent species". We have admitted to ourselves that we depend on the care of fellow humans in order to survive during the early and late years of life – despite the disguise of this dependency through culture.

A. Clesse finds it contradictory that the West is still trying to spread its values to Afghanistan, Iraq and perhaps Libya when the Western model "is irremediably broken and has lost its substance". A. Clesse defied the participants to consider whether the European Union could be a viable model for global governance. However, he asserted that this would be difficult to accomplish since "the basic ethos of the European Union is gone". The functionalist approach which was the fundament of the EU structure, and which implied "keeping politics out", since "everything that is political is controversial" (Jean Monnet), has vanished.

One participant doubted the feasibility of the EU model on a global scale, due to lack of political integration in the EU. For him, the EU is just a project, which is not yet fully accomplished. He doesn't see how at this stage the EU model of political integration can be exported. However, from an economic perspective the EU is "a success story". A. Clesse reacted by questioning whether this claim was still valid in August 2011, when there are doubts about the survival of the monetary union itself. The participant insisted that although the monetary project may fail, the single market as a project has been successful. The most important accomplishment of the EU is that there are no borders; there is free movement of goods, capital and services. A. Clesse wondered whether economic integration can survive if the monetary union were to fail, or whether the latter shall result in the collapse of the entire system. A. Clesse asked whether the EU was a model only for a certain period of history. Has it now become obsolete?

G.M. Ambrosi took a closer look at the European model and the principles and values on which it is based. He explained that the EU is a customs union with no trade barriers between member states, and that expanding such a model to a global level implies that there would either be no need for an organization such as WTO, or that an extended WTO could be a model in itself. He claimed that some of the principles of the EU, such as subsidiarity, are rooted in the social conceptions of Catholicism. Subsidiarity arose as a concept in 1931 in response to the totalitarian regimes of the time, when the Churches were worried that the "smaller units", such as they themselves, would not have any role to play in a society organized "from cradle to the grave". Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi advocated the principle of subsidiarity in his 1937 book *Total State against Man*. Other values, on which the EU was founded, such as brotherhood, resemble the Catholic concept of personalism. Jacques Delors claimed, in that context, that the basis for organizing the society should be the respect for the other. Delors also supported the idea that the state's role was to enable people to fulfil their own potential, which could be achieved through enabling access to education. These and other principles and values were the basis of the EU model at the time of its establishment.

The discussion shifted to other concepts, like equality. A. Clesse asked what the causes of inequality in the world may be. Is it because some are more intelligent than others? And if that were the case – should it be reflected in higher wealth for some than for others? There are those who argue that a similar level of IQ would be reached in everyone if all people were born and raised in a similar environment with similar conditions. How would a society where everyone is at exactly the same level of intelligence look like? What would that mean for a society? Is that feasible? Would it be boring? How could one bring it about?

A. Clesse mentioned the findings of a study which emphasized possible differences of intellect between races and the concerns of 'racism' it triggered. The study also stressed the difficult

conditions in which some are raised. How can a brain function well, when it is being brought up in a depressive environment? He also criticized the world for discussing equality hypocritically. "Nobody can say that one nation is intrinsically superior, especially after the Nazi pyramid of races. The debate is poisoned". A. Clesse recalled the case of Edward Wilson, the father of socio-biology and a professor at Harvard, who was chided for publishing his findings on animal behaviour and human nature, because they emphasized possible inequalities between races, sexes and human intellects.

A. Clesse said that many philosophers and thinkers, including Friedrich Nietzsche, shared the view that "some are born to dominate, and some are born slaves", although he admonished that this picture of humans is questionable, since it is based on the idea of a stable, fixed nucleus or an essence that cannot evolve.

On a different note, A. Clesse evoked Jean-Jacques Rousseau's views who saw private property as "the original sin", claiming the "loss of paradise" came after the first man said – "this is mine", and put a fence around it. For A. Clesse, too, property causes longing for more and more – far beyond one's reasonable needs. (The issue has been treated at large in Robert and Edward Skidelsky's manuscript, *How Much is Enough?*). A. Clesse tried to envision equality in a real-world setting. How would such a society be established? Would it be by proceeding in a liberal manner or by force? Would the latter destroy the ethical basis of what is to be achieved? For him, we are now living in increasingly repressive societies, resembling more and more police states. A decent society would need to be based on trust; it would be a place where nobody carries a gun, and where people do not need to lock their doors.

A. Clesse also considered the possibility of a minimum income for every citizen of the planet. Would it be achievable? How about the possibility for every citizen to have a right to a minimum level of well-being – in the area of health care, justice, social protection and employment? Who would enforce the implementation and respect of these standards? Does it imply the abolition of national and other borders? Would a world without borders eliminate rivalries between countries, making institutions such as the army and the police unnecessary? He wondered whether this "paradise-looking" scenario would not turn into "hell", given that the "essence of human beings is restlessness"; man always defies the limits imposed to him by others or by himself.

A. Clesse criticized the current political left for being too preoccupied with preserving their comfort instead of trying to bring about change. After ten years with the world social movement, he withdrew from it with frustration and the conviction that there was *"no left left"*. However, if not the political left, who else could be an agent for change?

The question of extreme poverty was examined further. Can we imagine a world without slums? A. Clesse recalled some of his visits to slums around the world where people live in deplorable conditions. "When you go to a slum, you see people who are extremely exhausted. They want nothing but survive". A. Clesse was disappointed that during a visit to Nairobi, some of his fellow leftist friends were "scared to death" to join him during a visit to a local slum. He maintained that he has never been attacked in a slum and that people were eager to talk about their situation in hope of support. C. Coker cited Mike Davis' book, *Planet of Slums*, which revealed alarming statistics: there are about 220.000 shanty towns in the world at the moment, in which people live in self-fabricated housing with less than one dollar a day. Of the 3 billion people programmed to enter the world between now and 2050, 90 per cent will be born into slums. However, A. Clesse disagreed with Davis' claim that there is not enough money to make a significant change in the slums. He believes that money must be used cleverly in a more useful

and productive way. A. Clesse argued that extreme poverty can be eradicated only through radical change.

A. Clesse was sceptical that this change would be supported by the upper layers of society. As an example he described the German Green Party as extremely conservative; furthermore, in its quest to abolish nuclear power, it is actually consolidating the establishment of society instead of abolishing it. A. Clesse concluded that "the revolutionary potential in our society is a *quantité négligeable*". He encouraged the participants to think of mechanisms which could be used for a potential redistribution of wealth at the global level, and he suggested, as a starting point, the redistribution of wealth at the national level. Nevertheless, he wondered whether the concept of redistribution is feasible when "global socialism is something most people don't want".

G.M. Ambrosi claimed that 'the federalism of small units', as propagated by Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, could play a role in moving towards a decent society. Coudenhove-Kalergi was known as visionary advocate of the idea of European integration from 1923 on. But faced with a Europe dominated by totalitarianism in the 1930s, he devoted his main efforts to the rejection of communism and fascism. His ideal was a combination of enlightened British liberalism and Swiss-type direct democracy. In his book *The Totalitarian State against Man* (1939) Coudenhove-Kalergi promoted a new revolution of brotherliness based on the principle of mutual recognition in the context of federalist cooperation. G.M. Ambrosi himself advocated self-organisation and mutual respect in a future decent society.

A. Clesse warned that concepts like "autonomy" have possible negative implications. He claimed that the state is interested in reducing the dependence of the people on each other, since that would create a stronger dependence of these individuals on the state. "We were indoctrinated that dependency on each other is something bad, but we see the perverse effects of losing this". For example, A. Clesse pointed out that individuals are becoming more and more lonely and depressed. He cited the social organization in the Arab world which is built on "large families, and solidarity between generations". For instance, the old people who cannot work anymore are respected and honoured; they are not sent away, as it sometimes happens in the West. "We feel our inferiority in many realms. That makes us aggressive. So we pick on other things – headscarves, the fact that women are not allowed to drive a car… (We say) that must be something against human dignity!"

C. Coker stressed the new kinds of inequality created in the 21st century. He argued that participative democracy shaped "viral inequalities": we no longer measure inequalities purely in socio-economic terms; even the underclass is guaranteed three meals a day and a decent standard of living. The problems with the underclass are their worsening health condition and lower life expectancy. For C. Coker, the future of participative democracy depends on finding solutions to these issues.

A. Clesse also indicated the increasing issue of obesity. He gave the example of India where large parts of the new middle class are becoming obese. Likewise, the typically slim Chinese waist-line is also starting to change, at least in the middle class. A. Clesse suggested that obesity is closely related to mentalities in some societies, that it is considered a sign of wealth.

The speakers focused in more depth on the role of mentalities in a future decent society. A. Clesse provoked the participants by asking them to consider whether a decent society presupposes a convergence of mentalities. He wondered whether the differences in mentalities are truly fundamental and whether technology shall change them, and how.

In *Demystifying Mentalities*, G.E.R. Lloyd, quoted by C. Coker, compared the mentalities of Ancient Greece and Ancient China, and concluded that there were no fundamental differences between the two societies. The absence from Chinese society of concepts like the Euclidean proof or the sophistication of the geometry does not mean, as some have asserted, that the Chinese lacked the "scientific mentality" of the Greeks, but rather that they were setting themselves different problems. However, C. Coker acknowledged there are "good mentalities" and "bad mentalities". An example of a bad financial mentality is the attitude of many Greeks before the crisis. He acknowledged that there is a certain culpability in the actions of the European Central Bank as well, which ignored the fact that Greece was breaking the rules of the Eurozone.

A. Clesse compared the Greek and the German contemporary mentalities. For him, the German mentality implied a "herd instinct" and a sense of servility, a "blind obedience" that "led them into the Third Reich and into Auschwitz". Greeks, on the other hand, are more individualistic but also less disciplined. A. Clesse further described Sweden in some respects as "a totalitarian society", and called the Scandinavian society "very hypocritical". Despite claiming that tolerance is the foundation of their culture, most initial reports in the Norwegian media after the Utoya shootings prejudicially blamed Muslims. Most Norwegians found it difficult to cope with the fact in reality that "one of them" was responsible. In an effort to reject th hypothesis that the killer is "a product of their good society", he is now being labelled by some as "mentally deranged". For A. Clesse, the antidote for an alarmingly hypocritical society is Camus' *L'homme révolté*; he encouraged young people not to be passive and instead to take an active part in changing society.

A. Clesse also challenged the participants to identify potential prerequisites for a violence-free world. Could the solution, as some argue, reside in the manipulation of the brain? This would certainly constitute a very perilous solution. In this context, he condemned the killing of animals for human consumption. His dream is that someday people will be unable to eat meat, and will regard eating animals as cannibalism. A. Clesse said that a majority of the new vegetarians are females, and that from a functional perspective, being a vegetarian even for dietary reasons, instead of ethical reasons, is still positive. He expressed his aversion to the killing of animals for pleasure. He found it contradictory that despite our own cruel behaviour we tend to label animals as "beasts". It is humans who turn animals into "cattle" and "beasts".

The discussion moved to the concept of progress. We like to think that the history of humanity has been a history of progress. Has there really been progress in human history? How about moral progress – has there been any over time? In that context, A. Clesse cited the European Enlightenment, adepts of which thought they were bringing about never-ending progress.

C. Coker also pointed out that the entire idea of progress is a construction of the Enlightenment, when Europeans had made impressive steps, such as the industrial revolution. The concept of progress was, however, absent from the pre-modern age. There was only the concept of a 'Golden Age' people wanted to return to, and everything that was regarded as best was in the past. For C. Coker, discussing progress should be replaced by discussing the world's increasing complexity. When historians look back, they say that societies become more complex over time – both in physical and nonphysical terms. The discovery of psychology – a concept unknown to the Greeks – revealed that people, too, were more complex than they appeared. However, not fully understanding our complex world led us into the financial crisis, for instance: we have created such a complex financial system, that we do not know how to manage its fall. In fact, just because the world becomes more complex, it does not necessarily become more stable.

C. Coker also worried about the long-term effects of climate change. Although in short- and medium-term climate change will benefit some countries, like the Nordic states, in the long run some other countries, like Bangladesh, may be flooded.

A. Clesse further discussed the concept of 'success'. Who are now our heroes? Who has replaced Achilles in our contemporary society? In the economic world, one needs quick intelligence and a dose of ruthlessness to succeed. What would the qualities of a decent man be? Can we imagine a society made up exclusively of thoughtful people, a comparable level of intelligence and driven by virtues, values and the same moral impetus?

C. Coker pointed that every era has its own heroes. Even so, Coker recalled that for Plato, Achilles lacked the qualities of a hero being short of emotional intelligence and "too much in love with life". To A. Clesse, a decent man is "a human being who cares". He endorsed Schopenhauer on the crucial importance of compassion and empathy. A decent society should be built on compassion.

6. On evil and war

The discussion moved to the role of evil in a future society. Referring to Terry Eagleton's book *On Evil* A. Clesse tried to envision a society where the effects of evil would be minimized or fully eliminated. If full removal of evil is not possible – how can it be reduced to a minimum? G.M. Ambrosi recalled the solution of the mystics, among them Meister Eckhart, who claimed there is no evil to start with. He also did not think there is a separate God. "Every moment, you must create God, you must abandon yourself to God, and you are God. Everybody is, in a way, God".

C. Coker interjected that "war was the greatest single evil of all". Referring to A. Clesse's question on how to minimize evil, C. Coker claimed that we need an incremental approach to evil in the world. Since war will not disappear during our life-time – our mission is to make it less inhumane. C. Coker quoted John Keegan, who wrote that war is not inhumane *per se*; it was the *coercion*, *impersonalization* and *cruelty* of the 20th century's wars that were particularly appalling. Minimizing the weight of these issues may eventually 'humanize' war.

G.M. Ambrosi agreed that war is not in itself a problem. On the contrary, he recalled Heraclitus' idea that "war is the father of all things", meaning that competition engenders progress. He also quoted Carl von Clausewitz who, at the beginning of the 19th century, was convinced that wars were becoming less cruel for the civil population due to the progress of civilization. The subsequent reality of warfare was, of course, the diametric opposite. Thus, Clausewitz' observation is in fact a distant aim, the realization of which is still requiring much civilizing influence on mankind.

Speaking of weapons, C. Coker explained how many of them had been specifically designed to be inhumane. For example, what makes the landmines so cruel is that they are indiscriminately aiming at both combatants and non-combatants. This approach to building weapons is, nevertheless, changing – as most weapons are now designed to be more humane. C. Coker cited the example of non-lethal weapons, which are designed to disarm and not to kill. They are built to neutralize the enemy for a limited period of time, without doing any permanent harm. For example, sonic bullets produce sonic sounds that give a heavy migraine; super guns glue one to the weapon, so one can't actually press the trigger. In that context, A. Clesse recalled the debate

about the neutron bomb – which was constructed to kill people but leave buildings intact. He described it as "the ultimate perversion", while C. Coker called it "a capitalist weapon", aimed at protecting property. Additionally, A. Clesse wondered whether perfecting weapons and the military would not in fact make war more inhumane – in the situation where the risk for casualties would not be equivalent on both sides.

C. Coker developed on the concept of "cruelty" as manifestation of evil. He compared the behaviour of animals to those of humans in the situation of torture: unlike cats, who play with their mouse for amusement before they kill it – humans torture in order to humiliate. C. Coker endorsed the idea by Milan Kundera who said that "we torture the vulnerable, the people who can't fight back", which is what makes torture so cruel. Thus, the aim of torture is to deny people their basic humanity. Jean Améry, a survivor of the Holocaust, said in this context that "being slapped by a fellow human being is about the most humiliating experience you can have", and that he lost his "faith in humanity" with that first slap.

Another instance of extreme cruelty was the Soviet practice of shooting every soldier who deserted the battlefield – unlike the Romans' practice of executing only every 10th deserter. It was the scale of cruelty that made the 20th century particularly appalling, and lessons should be drawn from that in building a future society. C. Coker claimed that contemporary society does not have any more world historical figures. Although we live in a world of political mediocrity – we are also living in a safer world: millions of people are not dying anymore for the wacky ideas of such figures.

C. Coker said that "the flat world" we are living in is a result of our disinterest in history. People are not willing to die on the battlefield anymore. However, they find war stimulating, and it glues them to their TV sets. He argued that boredom is the main trigger for war. A similarly stimulating activity is sports – which could become an alternative to war. Coker shared Umberto Eco's prediction that sport will replace war in the 21st century. Sport is competitive, martial and the behaviour of a great sportsman is similar to that of a soldier in many regards.

A. Clesse criticized the tradition of American war since World War II. He thinks the American superiority of technical means makes their fighting cowardly, and does not substantiate their attempts to present the American military as 'heroes'. He condemned the attitude of most Western people towards the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan. "They don't care about how many children get killed in Afghanistan. People are slaughtered in Afghanistan, and nobody protests". He further challenged the notion of "a war that would end all wars". A. Clesse recalled Bill Clinton's allegation about the war in Serbia – that it would be "the last war". The Iraq war was a "much more massive war", and the situation there is worsening day by day. If there is no real moral progress, he asserted, "the next war may be the most destructive of all".

A. Clesse and C. Coker envisioned what could possibly trigger wars in the future. A. Clesse predicted that nations would go to war for resources, and that some of the future wars will be fought over water instead of oil. C. Coker, by contrast, expected nations to go to war "for the market share". However, he acknowledged that war cannot increase a nation's market share, since global markets are among the first victims of war. Another source of conflict may be the nations' crumbling economies, and the "national card" played by some politicians in order to gain popularity.

7. The role of the USA

A. Clesse asked the participants to consider possible scenarios in case the American societal model collapses. He accused the USA of being "the ultimate demolisher of Western culture", and said that the American model implies a loss of the sense of dignity, honour and beauty – leading to what we are now witnessing, namely a 'plebeianization of society'.

C. Coker responded by describing the American model as "the age of the Common Man". He recalled George Steiner's essay, "The Archives of Eden", where he wrote that "America made common humanity feel at home in its own skin". In other words, there is nothing to be ashamed of in being common, but such a concept is incompatible with culture, since the "Common Man" is mostly interested in consumption. He mentioned Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, and John Lukács' *A Thread of Years*. Both authors acknowledge the presence of "an American aristocracy" in the USA. John Lukács argued, however, that this American "Brahman class", disappeared in 1968 with the Vietnam War. C. Coker explained "the aristocratic principle" through the Greek concept of "balance in society". Plato wrote that every society must have a balance between reason, spirit and appetite – and the aristocratic element comes to measure these. The aristocratic element also implies excellence. For C. Coker, excellence is indispensable to every society. "A trashy celebrity culture, a Big Brother culture – is not excellence". He also asserted that the political system in the USA is dysfunctional. This state of affairs is a result of the depth of hatred between the Senate and the House of Representatives, which developed naturally within the bicameral constitutional system in the USA. He claimed, however, that Europe, too, is in a very weak political situation. "There is a desperately sad bunch of politicians running Europe at the moment".

8. Relation between the sexes

A. Clesse reflected on the role of women in a future society. For him, the more sophisticated a society is, the greater the differences between men and women are. However, this difference is shrinking in today's Western society. He criticized feminism for being a form of ideology that has destroyed not just men but also culture in most of the Western world. For him, feminism is based on the hatred of men. "They see heterosexual intercourse as rape, they write that penetration is rape". He explained by suggesting that feminists argue that if there is to be any relationship between man and woman, they must avoid this traditional form of intercourse. They want an emasculated, if not psychologically castrated man – one no longer able to perform this kind of intercourse, which these feminists see as a humiliation, as domination…" Is that something that should be spread, implemented beyond the West, worldwide?

He admitted, however, that in some sense he, too, is a kind of 'feminist' – by recognizing the role of women in civilizing men. Women changed men even in their basic instincts, and made them refrain from their worst behaviour. The historic opposition of women to war, for instance, – can even be explained biologically: women have an awareness of how difficult it is to preserve life, given that only 150 years ago, even in the most developed countries, they lost on average more than half of their children throughout their life. Part of the reason for that was external insecurity and man-made disaster, including war and conflict – which made additional security from men necessary. This need is now gone.

C. Coker reacted by expanding on an idea pointed out by G.M. Ambrosi that governments must allow their people to fulfil their potential. G.E.R. Lloyd says that our abilities are only

transformed into capabilities when the system is supporting this conversion. Failure to recognize women's potential has limited the role that women played before the 20th century, when the only realization they could have was motherhood. There was a lot of potential left unutilized before the 20th century, and there is much potential that is still unutilized today – such as that of the women in Saudi Arabia, for example.

An animated debate over the situation of Muslim women erupted between C. Coker and A. Clesse. For C. Coker, the only reason why men in the Muslim world want women to be covered is so that their lust is not arisen when they see a beautiful woman in the street. While this philosophy might be a social mechanism for avoiding rape, it is the 'theology' of the issue that Coker regards with reserve. The idea that God himself is outraged by women who do not cover their heads is incompatible with God's will to make us naked. God was not outraged by our nakedness; it was man who became outraged at his own nakedness once the concept came to his mind. C. Coker recalled that in Christianity, too, women were expected to cover their heads when they walked into a Church, but that this tradition faded in recent times.

A. Clesse confronted C. Coker for basing his assumption on the "wrong premise that Muslim women are subservient, inferior, unintelligent and cannot decide for themselves". A. Clesse also criticized C. Coker's approach for disregarding the opinion of Muslim women themselves. He denounced the pressure to make them change, and make them Western and modern. He thinks this pressure revolves not only around the headscarves they are wearing but also around "making them psychologically like a modern Western woman", a feminist model internalized by many women. There are plenty of Muslim women who are wearing a headscarf at their own will and are not pressured by their husbands. A. Clesse maintained that the rationale of the headscarf is cultural and religious in nature and has nothing to do with the arousal of men. He regards any attempts to "defend the rights of Muslim women" as hypocritical, their real goal being "to destroy Muslim culture".

A participant interjected that despite the West's obsession to chastise Muslim women in their choice to wear a headscarf – the final choice to wear it or not fully belongs to those women. They should neither be pressed to wear it, nor not to wear it.

A. Clesse asked rhetorically whether we could then give the Muslim women a right to be shocked about the Western behaviour of women, which most of them find promiscuous. A. Clesse also stressed the changing relationship between the sexes. "The model for young people is no longer man and woman – it is something else; it is some androgynous creature". For him, the present society is full of paradoxes, such as the victimization of homosexuals, on the one hand, and the failure by the society to acknowledge the risks of same-sex adoptions, on the other hand. "If only 10 per cent of these homosexual men have paedophile tendencies, what does that mean? (…) Children cannot defend themselves".
A. Clesse emphasized some more paradoxes of today's society. He pointed out that despite the tendency to militate for the right to life, and the integrity of all human beings, society is nevertheless allowing abortion – the killing of the "not-yet born". For A. Clesse, this practice is "atrocious" because the victims cannot defend themselves. The utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer evokes, in that context, that accepting abortion implies that the killing of infants should be allowed as well. A. Clesse also remarked that, ironically, the wealthy, educated societies continue to de-ethicize abortion. He encouraged the participants to further examine the issue in their working groups.

A. Clesse also noted that a future model for society might comprise a convergence of the sexes. According to him, we are now witnessing an "androgynization" of society. "The heterosexual act resembles more and more the homosexual one". The encounter between the sexes which was built on differences – on mystery, on not understanding, on enigma – is now becoming very trivial, which has helped boredom set in. That would explain why people now separate for futile reasons.

This convergence of the sexes raises further questions. Can one fall in love with someone who is similar to oneself? And if not – if it is really mystery and "otherness" that leads to strong feelings – do we want an emotionless society, trivial as it will be?

A. Clesse encouraged the participants to reflect on the concept of femininity. In the social elite – and not at the level of the lower classes – men shared a fascination for femininity. It used to be associated with the inscrutable, the unpredictable, the capricious, even the frivolous – and above all with mystery. For Sigmund Freud, "Was will das Weib?", or "What does woman want?" remained an enigma even after a lifetime of analysing women's behaviour.

G.M. Ambrosi recalled William Blake's reflections on the same topic:

> What is it men in women do require?
> The lineaments of gratified desire.
> What is it women do in men require?
> The lineaments of gratified desire.

In this he saw men and women as equal. Maybe this poet of the 18th century was more 'Freudian' than Sigmund Freud himself.

A. Clesse maintained that in their effort to attract men, women have always tried to hide what they might call 'disgusting'. Conversely, extreme feminists like Andrea Dworkin or Charlotte Roche are trying to make men disgusted of women. A. Clesse worried that the practice of encouraging husbands to be present at the birth of their children can also deeply affect men. "It shocks many of them, and afterwards they have a different approach to the woman they live with, and some lose parts, and some the whole of their libido towards that woman".

G.M. Ambrosi developed further on the intention to ugliness – a notion going back to the classical Greeks, who hanged the head of the Gorgon on the entrance to the houses and temples. Gorgon was a female head of utter ugliness that was supposed to keep away the bad spirits. Relatedly, A. Clesse evoked the Latin term 'vetula', which symbolized in the Roman times "the old, disgusting, woman". The vetula is a counter-figure to the eros, to beauty and perfection.

For A. Clesse, the modern woman is not any more interested in seducing men. The society's approach to marriage is more and more functionalist, and marriage is built as a partnership. Can such a marriage without attraction last? Do men no longer need femininity? Will delicacy, a sense of beauty, sophistication, refinery, intuition or empathy – qualities traditionally associated with women, especially in the bourgeois society – be needed in a future decent society? For A. Clesse, the intentional or unconscious loss of society's "motherly qualities" may lead to an impoverishment of civilization itself. The so-called "starke Frau", or "strong woman" is ashamed of whatever is feminine, and associates femininity with weakness. For A. Clesse, femininity is strength, not weakness. He clarified that he does not see women as being in any way inferior to men. On the contrary, "when bringing everything into the equation, the minuses and the pluses",

women appear to him to be superior. However, this superiority resides in their grace and delicacy, and a female football player or a woman in uniform "will always be inferior".

C. Coker described the situation as a "crisis of manliness". Manliness is a concept that was only discussed seriously at the end of the 19th century. That is why laws against homosexuality, for example, were enforced very severely for the first time in the 1890s – Oscar Wilde was one of its victims. Effeminacy in men was punished by the courts, because there were concerns about society failing to be masculine enough in the potential struggle for survival. Fascism is often seen as a desperate rearguard attempt to be manly, because it preached the values of manliness in every respect, and certainly subordinated women in a way that communism did not officially – but effectively did. C. Coker evoked Harvey M. Mansfield's book *Manliness*, where he said men should rejoice in being manly, for which he was universally condemned by the Harvard community.

In this gender role architecture, A. Clesse sees men as being "much more confused and puzzled than women are". Since the state took the position of power men used to have, the latter "don't see a place anymore in this society". Manliness has no object without femininity, and vice versa. Therefore, "rejoicing in manliness" is directly proportional to preserving femininity. A. Clesse concluded by quoting a number of recent studies and surveys that prove that despite the growing emancipation of women, they are becoming more and more unhappy. Is this what we want for a future decent society? C. Coker claimed that could be an effect of what Max Weber called the "disenchantment of the world", based on the "death of magic". He agreed with A. Clesse that taking romance out of the set and magic out of society makes people very unhappy and disenchanted.

9. Consumerism in the current international society

C. Coker examined further whether consumerism could be a sustainable ideology for a decent society. For him, consumerism is hollow, since it replaces the concept of happiness with that of "a form of gratification achieved by purchasing merchant goods".

C. Coker and A. Clesse agreed that consumerism was a key trigger for the world financial and economic crisis. C. Coker claimed we have been living off credit ever since real economic growth stopped in the 1960s, and that we are not being productive enough at the moment. A. Clesse raised the issue of credibility, and skill – areas where the West held a certain superiority. "The West is losing its cultural monopoly". The present times, and the financial crisis, are marked by anxiety at all levels. He criticized the current financial system, claiming it is based on speculation and on making a lot out of nothing.

G.M. Ambrosi described the conflict between the so-called "Europe monetarists" and Germany, in their initial approach to the Euro. Unlike the former, Germany insisted that European monetary integration should only follow real political integration. A. Clesse recalled that it was also Germany that suggested the "convergence criteria" for joining the eurozone. This idea implied that the European economies should converge towards the higher standards, such as Germany itself – imposing a strict discipline for member-states aspiring to adopt the Euro. For A. Clesse, that was part of the reason why Greece has collapsed. Such rigid standards as those of the eurozone, besides enforcing one cultural model upon another, can also suffocate the development of some economies, since countries now lack for example the possibility to devalue their own currency and thus facilitate exports.

G.M. Ambrosi pointed further to two potential ways to help the economy develop. The first approach is liberating the markets, and "liberating society from itself". He welcomed A. Clesse's proposal of a societal "constructive deconstruction". The second approach is to pose additional demands to the economies, which would enable them to use the currently existing idle resources more fully.

Examining consumerism, C. Coker described the demonstrations of 1989 as "the biggest consumerist revolts in history". "These protests were not about freedom. Those people were demanding the same standards of living that they observed on their TV sets". The protesters regarded democracy as "means to buy material success", which was natural since history showed that the richest countries in the world for the last 200 years have been democracies. China is, however, expected to break that sequence, and become the most powerful country in the world without being "a Western-style democracy". C. Coker explained that consumerism is so dominant that it has penetrated seemingly incompatible fields like religion. In Pentecostalism, "The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God" has its own TV station, pop groups and its own bank.

A. Clesse described the conspicuous behaviour present in some societies as a Calvinist tenet, where the display of wealth is seen as paying tribute to God, and wealth itself is validation for being "the chosen one". "God chose me, and he shows everybody that it's me. He makes me rich in this life already".

Finally, C. Coker challenged the participants to identify ideologies that might prove alternatives to consumerism, since "consumerism is a dead end, and it's making people very unhappy". In that context, he recalled a comment by Robert Gates (US Secretary of Defence 2006-2011) in one of his lectures in front of US soldiers in 2008, where he claimed the USA is spending US$700 billion per year on defence "in order to stop the next -ism from appearing". There are many forms of -isms in the world – precarious ideologies such as islamism, fundamentalism, post-capitalism, communism or liberalism. However, at this moment in history, Coker finds it difficult to predict what ideology could possibly replace consumerism.

10. The role of new technologies in a future society

C. Coker spoke about the revolution in technologies and the future of the world. He considers that a central issue of our future will be the role of computers and robots, the role of technology in our societies. There is an increasing international concern with such questions and there are specific institutes such as the "Future of Humanity Institute" at Oxford University that investigate them. For example, which are going to be our relations with machines if they become more sophisticated? Generally, computers have superior analytical capabilities than humans but they do not have self-consciousness. Nevertheless, if they would acquire self-consciousness what would happen? Wouldn't they represent a new species? Would we have to share the planet with them or would they only be interested in solving higher mathematics? We believe that we are the superior species but what will happen if we will have to live with computers which have become self-conscious?

C. Coker gave the example of Foxconn, a high-tech Taiwanese company, which announced its plan to replace one million workers with a million robots by 2016. In *The Principles of Scientific Management*, Frederick Winslow, quoted by Coker, wrote that a robotic system requires more human skills to be managed, and that humans will be therefore given more responsibility than

they have now. Hence, at least at the managerial level, human beings would not be replaced by robots. At the enactment level, however, companies would prefer robots to people since "robots don't suffer from stress, robots do not go on strike, and robots don't commit suicide". These robots are very expensive, which would make the cost of labour higher than the cost of the capital in the initial stage. Coker asserted this would completely change capitalism, and the current way of understanding how the market works.

Another example brought by C. Coker is that of Philips, which is now developing a gadget that stores personal information – such as one's tastes in music or food – aimed to be used as a connector at business conventions: the gadget is built to signal when two people with similar interests pass each other, thus facilitating their communication. C. Coker considered the idea with reservation, claiming that the epitome of such conventions is to discover people through conversation. Moreover, similarities are not the only possible connectors between people; people with different interests can also find each other interesting. "Now we will have a 'blinking'" system, and we don't have to talk to one another very much. It's a shortcut".

Moreover, C. Coker shared Erich Fromm's concern that we ourselves would become robotic – especially in light of the mechanization of labour and of regarding human beings as resources to use. In that sense, some recent projects are aimed at scanning people's brains during office hours, to check if they are concentrating at work. "That is the robotization of man; being monitored by a machine". Recently, *The Economist* published an article about the newest job that has been given by the US military to MIT researchers, which is to design "a robot with consciousness". C. Coker also disclosed that he is working on a book on military robots. He is interested in the "moralization of weapon systems", given the recent tendency to produce weapons with an ethical code, a set of algorithms. His particular area of interest is about military robots that able to target at their own discretion.

A. Clesse reacted sceptically to the idea that robots could be held morally responsible for their actions, and asked rhetorically when we shall witness the case of the first robot put on trial at the International Criminal Court. C. Coker agreed that the development of technology raises completely new ethical questions.

11. Final remarks

A. Clesse gave the floor to the participants to share their thoughts. Everyone was encouraged to express their views on the matters raised during the seminar, and to put forward possible scenarios for a future decent society. Most participants stressed the importance of openness and empathy for a future decent society. They agreed that its ethos should be cooperation, mutual trust, tolerance and responsibility. The students expressed their wish to reduce the gap between big powers and weaker countries. However, some participants cautioned that in doing that, one needs to bear in mind "the limits of equality".

A number of participants expected the future decent society to emanate from the level of "smaller-units". For them, an active civil society can succeed in areas where the government institutions fail. In that sense, they claimed the change should be done "from the bottom up". Some tried to predict the kind of struggles we would have in the future. They agreed that resources will shape not only states' foreign policies, but also the behaviour of transnational private enterprises. Others claimed that national frontiers will remain a subject of dispute between states in the future.

The <u>participants</u> also stressed that the Western powers have added complexity to the settings of third-world countries, by colonizing, and imposing their culture to these places. However, the West is reluctant to take responsibility for these new complexities they created. Further points have been raised about the need to redesign war according to our changing society. Mary H. Kaldor was quoted, in that context; her idea was that "a more complex type of army" is necessary – one which would include, for instance, sociologists, who would be able to tackle a higher range of problems.

A <u>participant</u> wondered whether the future society will be a depressed society, turning to drugs as a coping mechanism. The student was worried that we are heading toward "a world without love", which as Helen E. Fisher predicted in *Anatomy of Love* would be "a deadly place". Another <u>student</u> focused on the role of technology and mentioned the Romanian scholar Lucian Boia, who claimed that the more technology has advanced, the more it has discovered things to destroy us, rather than to save us.

Referring to C. Coker's idea on the increasing complexity of societies, another <u>participant</u> stressed that we might suffer from "blurred visibility", which blocks our view of the processes in today's society. It is, therefore, hard to distinguish clearly the direction where humanity is heading. Some were, however, concerned, that most utopian designs as those discussed in the meetings have the potential to become totalitarian projects. A better alternative to these designs would be "a change in the mentalities of the people", one implying a greater sense of citizenship in each of us. We need to move away from the understanding of ourselves as subjects and move toward the understanding of ourselves as stakeholders in any future project.

Summary and concluding remarks

The seminar analysed and criticised the current international society at many levels and tried to discern sources for hope or possible change. A great variety of approaches such as philosophical, sociological, socio-biological, economic and political thinking was used in order to understand and assess the quality as well as the complexity and inconsistencies of this world.

At the level of international political organisation, US hegemony was criticised. It has lost its vision, it generates injustices and it is based on a flawed culture. The discussions also revolved around the other pillar of the West that sustains American hegemony, the EU, and whether it can serve as a possible model for the world. The discussions were divided between the idea that the EU has no *telos* and it is an unsustainable model, and the idea that the achievements of the EU are important on their own.

At the level of ideology, aspects of liberalism and in particular of its American version were examined. They were put in the context of international society and human behaviour and how they shape them and influence them. Individualism and its consequences were at the centre of criticism. Utilitarianism was considered a flawed basis for ethical behaviour. Consumerism was presented as an unsustainable ideology for a decent society since it replaces the concept of happiness with a preoccupation with the acquisition of consumer goods. The relation between the sexes was deemed to have a negative cultural impact because it has lost its romance for the sake of equality leading – through feminism – towards an androgynous civilisation. Another liberal idea or 'myth' that was discussed was the concept of progress. The feasibility of human progress was approached from the perspectives of both nature and nurture. Religiosity and the idea of the holy were also connected to individualism, human nature and cultural progress.

Throughout the discussions contemporary attitudes of complacency and tolerance were mentioned. A disappointment with the movements of alter-globalisation was expressed. The inadequacy of the left was stated. Different perceptions about how to fight problems emerged i.e. incrementally or by minimising evil. The impact of technology and the ethical dilemmas it may raise in the future were depicted.

At the end of the course, A. Clesse addressed the participants more personally and expressed his understanding of the role of intellectuals as well as the importance of beliefs and doubts in an age of hypocrisy and complacency. According to A. Clesse, an intellectual has to be moral and take nothing for granted at the socio-political level. His ambitions must go beyond the conventional wisdom. He has to be willing to challenge ideas or explanations that are generally accepted as true by the public or by experts in a field and our mode of thinking.

This summer seminar, he said, the eighteenth consecutive one, is an excellent opportunity to raise such issues because this is not a purely academic meeting. It concerns personal beliefs as well. Therefore, the participants, either as future intellectuals or as responsible citizens, should realize the importance of honesty. They ought to confront the hypocrisy of the society and be eager to come up with something radically different. A. Clesse prompted the participants not to waste their time but instead to seek alternatives. People and especially people in countries in economic, social and societal crisis cannot afford to be inefficient. They have to be efficient, challenging and honest. This is long overdue, especially in societies in the West that are some of the most hypocritical societies of all times. They are in need of change, a change that can only be social and based on challenging past beliefs. The best starting point is nothing else but personal and intellectual integrity.

Alexandros Koutsoukis (I. part)
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Appendix I

Working Group 1 Report

A critique of the current international society

The first working group's critique of the present international society was based on the framework provided by the seminar's agenda. Therefore, the debates were structured around many issues that were already or would be subsequently raised during the lectures. In addition, the elaborating on specific issues was useful for the seminar itself since it informed some of the plenary discussions that followed. The report is divided in two parts. The first one explores specific positive aspects of the contemporary society and the second part investigates the negative ones. What is striking is the interrelationship between the positive and negative aspects of reality.

Part I: Positive aspects of the current international society

Initially, the working group concentrated on positive aspects of human nature, such as empathy and solidarity, and focused on discerning them in features of the contemporary world and in the constitutive parts of the international community. It was maintained that they exist in institutionalized form in the contemporary global legal system and civilization and that this is a significant change and improvement in relation to the past. In addition, they represent not only a measure of global consensus towards the respect of important values but also a challenge of the orthodoxy of the norm of sovereignty; humans seem to become more sensitive towards other peoples.

More specifically, solidarity, empathy and recognition of the equality and dignity of other civilisations and peoples are evident in important documents such as declarations and treaties on human rights (i.e. Universal Declaration of Human Rights), the environment (Kyoto Protocol), and war crimes and inhumane acts (Geneva Conventions). Moreover, they are embodied in specific international actors such as the UN, important NGOs and think-tanks.

Other positive aspects of the global system of international organisations are developmental policies and the – unfortunately unfulfilled – United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals which aim to help less developed countries overcome economic crises or emergency situations and try to bridge the economic gap between them and the developed countries.

In addition, the group praised the turn towards humanitarian intervention and the UN's new 'doctrine' R2P, 'Responsibility to Protect'. The recognition of this kind of human duty has been long overdue. Humanitarian intervention is the materialization of the emergence of the value of human rights. The focus of this practice is civilians and the brutalities they may endure, not just the state and its sovereignty. This change was not accepted uncritically by the group because it may occasionally represent rationalization of imperialistic interests. Nonetheless, it was realized that it constitutes a revolution in the meaning of the state as an entity entrusted with absolute and unchallenged power. It is not any more. Harming one's own citizens does not go unchallenged anymore. At last, the epicentre of attention of the international community is not only the states but also human beings and their sufferings.

Last but not least, all the aforementioned developments could not have taken place without developments in technology and communications which offer solutions to a lot of problems. It is through them that we can be informed about developments in distant parts of our planet and take action. It is due to them that we can tackle problems such as the global environmental crisis. This analysis does not mean that the group attuned itself to a naïve techno-enthusiasm. It actually took a critical stance towards technology characterising it as an accomplice of the modern logic of treating our planet as a "standing reserve" which has resulted in exhausting the earth's natural resources and making it reach an ecological imbalance and endanger our habitat. Nonetheless, technology has significantly developed our civilisation and it is up to us to reflect critically on its repercussions and overcome them constructively. Especially in times of crisis such as the current environmental one, we cannot rely on techno-phobic solutions and retreat to the past denying the effectiveness of technological solutions. We do have the tools to create a better world; we just have to invest in technology with the appropriate logic and constantly evaluate its purpose.

Part II: Negative aspects of the current international society

Subsequently, the discussions focused on the negative developments of international society. First of all, the group identified certain facets, acts and aspects of international society that were judged inhumane such as war, torture, atrocities, genocide, extreme poverty, economic exploitation, pollution and lack of tolerance. Unfortunately, it was added that these bitter realities not only exist and are practiced even by western states but they also very often remain unchallenged or – even worse – become justified.

The group also touched upon the ineffectiveness of international law and international institutions. Various reasons were identified. Firstly, international law is not universally accepted and thus insufficiently supported. Secondly, there is no effective infrastructure for preventing conflicts. Thirdly, conflicting national interests are often more important than the necessity to find a common solution to a problem and make lofty intentions materialize into actions.

Additionally, this lack of consensus on the aforementioned issues is evidence of the short-sightedness and hypocrisy of our countries and leaders. This does not only show that they merely think about their narrowly conceived short-term national interest. The endorsement of this perspective also illustrates a lack of consideration for the future generations.

Furthermore, the current economic development is on an unsustainable track, and the meaning of the words "sustainable development" is hijacked by conflicting interpretations and concerns. There is a constant tug of war between developed and less developed countries, between considerations about economic development and competitiveness and a cleaner environment. The environment always seems to be less important than other considerations. Priority is always given to other national concerns. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that any actions undertaken relate to tackling the current consequences and do not deal with the prevention of pollution.

International society appears to be very hypocritical in terms of its dedication to global development. Not only are the current efforts inadequate but most importantly the will and determination of the countries that constitute the international society is unconvincing when looking at their high military expenditure. It is no wonder why there is not enough money for the goals of training peacekeepers or supporting the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

The use of technology is in part responsible for this situation. Our social systems increasingly depend on technology and follow the time and speed of technology. Both features are different from the ones the human body can cope with. As a result, our understanding of the world is mediated by technology and is not empathetic enough. People handle reality; they do not try to understand it through living experience as they did in previous periods. They simply do not have enough time to think differently. Speed makes us more productive but this is a blessing in disguise.

A case in point is nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence, which is considered to be the reason for the extended post-1945 peaceful period in the West. Nonetheless, this is doubtful because it actually means that peace is secured not due to a qualitative change in human perceptions and in human culture but to the common fear of destruction. How humane is that? Which kind of decent international society would like to be based on such foundations? Securing peace through the threat of destruction and basing humanity's future on the fear of mutual destruction is not sensible, it is inhumane and indecent.

If this is evidence of the ethos of the Western-lead international society, then it is understandable why there is widespread concern about the future of the world. The current leading powers use double standards and are still characterized by ethnocentrism. A time when these inconsistencies of the West would face reality and become problematic has arrived and this makes the western (inspired) world to be in crisis. The rise of the BRIC countries for instance or the rise in religious fundamentalism will further accentuate contemporary national and international problems and make them more salient and visible. However, the leading powers have not so far shown a big sense of responsibility. It seems they merely are concerned about their prestige and power and not because of what is really at stake, namely that their world order has proved ineffective for their own peoples.

Conclusions

Maybe this sense of decline and the resurgence of new powers is the 'return of history'. The real issue however is not theoretical. It is who will be on the right side of history and this does not depend on self-appraisals. It hinges on improving what is in need of reform and that is us; both our world and our understanding of how we came to live like that.

In sum, the idea that we are living in a unique and unprecedented era, at the pinnacle of human achievements is not self-evident anymore. Unfortunately this has been a widespread view. The so-called and now severely challenged idea of the end of history, a general sense of boredom and an increasing interest in material needs and consumerism, both before and during the global economic crisis, are evidence of how misguided this perception of reality has been. In short, the West is trapped in a short-minded conformist *zeitgeist*. Unless it reinvents itself or it reinvests in its values, it will face both moral and material decline.

It must have become obvious by now that many of the positive and negative aspects of the current international society, which have been identified, represent the other side of the same coin. However, that is neither irregular nor abnormal nor bad. The emergence of the "new" cannot come from parthenogenesis. It rests on the past. Change is informed by the past because the past consists of both a negative and deficient side as well as a positive and inspiring side. Let us contribute to make the next international society rely on a better synthesis of the "old" with the "new".

Working group 1

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Appendix II

Working Group 2 Report

The most important values and norms for an upcoming decent international society

The group answered a series of questions in order to define the most important values and norms for an upcoming international society:

1. How should *values* and *norms* be defined?
2. Does the international society need values?
3. What are the values that a decent international society requires?
4. What is the place of norms in international society?

First of all, the group agreed on the following definitions regarding values and norms. Values are abstract and general, concepts that spread and are taken for granted by people. Moreover, they have an ideational feature and are culturally transmitted from people to people.

The group put forward the following characteristics regarding values: they are *shared*, can be both *individually* or *collectively defined*, have a *high degree of importance*, a *general character*, *intrinsic worth*, *emotional attachment,* and a *binding role* for a community.

Norms define different patterns of behaviour and represent the practical application of values. They are differently institutionalized in different countries and they are usually socially sanctioned. They can be regulative, constitutive or prescriptive.

Furthermore, the group agreed on the following inter-linkage between norms and values**:**

- values become norms if they are imposed;
- norms and values gain a normative aspect within the Western thinking;
- both values and norms change and have changed during the course of history;
- language is a stepping stone in defining/understanding values and norms;
- both values and norms are socially constructed;
- there is an exhaustive list of norms and values; therefore, it is impossible to rank them according to their importance;

Secondly, the group moved towards answering the intricate question regarding the need of a decent international society to rely on values. The group agreed unanimously that an international decent society needs values in order to exist, to function, and to survive. However, values should be neutral. The group agreed that their point of interest remains *universal values* and not individual, collective or nation-/country-specific ones. It was considered that values should form the basis of discussion about a decent international society.

Thirdly, the group agreed on the following values as being important for a decent international society:

- humanitarianism;
- life (as value): self-preservation;
- rationality;
- transparency;
- justice as fairness;
- consistency regarding law and norms.

The values are neither ordered according to their importance nor listed in a preferential manner.

Fourthly, the group went on discussing the place of norms in a decent international society:

- The group agreed that despite the importance of values in an international society, the latter is defined according to the norms that exist;
- The group forwarded the following keywords in defining norms: they should be *encompassing,* they should represent a *joint effort* (bottom-up + top-down approach).
- This led to one of the most hotly debated issues within the working group: "Who is the norm-giver?" – the group agreed that within a decent international society, the norms should be promoted but not imposed (and their roots should be a *via media* between a top-down and a bottom-up effort);
- The group agreed that the most important norms within a decent international society remain: *human rights*, *ecology* and, *economy.*

Last but not least, the group discussed the current manipulation of values. The debate also revolved around values as interests, and around the constant mixture between values and interests. In this context, the group unanimously agreed that the state is incapable of promoting values and that this task should be performed by the civil society.

Working group 2

Ionel Androne (Romania)
Alexandra Sabou (Romania)
Sergiu Delcea (Romania)
Emil Veselinov Milanov (Bulgaria)
Philippe Hoffmann (France)
Sorana Cristina Jude (Romania)
Alexandru Daniel Moise (Romania)
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Appendix IV

Research Survey

During the 2011 Vama Veche Summer Seminar, the Director of the Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies Dr. Armand Clesse invited the participants to contribute to a research survey of their perceptions concerning the foundations of a decent international society. More specifically, Dr. Clesse posed the following question: "According to your opinion, which are the five most important virtues for a decent international society?"

The results of the survey are summarized in the following list as well as in a pie chart at the end of the appendix.

The 6 most important virtues for a decent international society

1) Courage (10 votes);
2) Honesty (7 votes);
3) Justice (5 votes);
4) Empathy (4 votes);
5) Responsibility (4 votes);
6) Transparency (4 votes).

The first thing that the survey points out is the importance of courage. It seems that building a better world is difficult and demands overcoming a lot of obstacles, hence the need of courage.
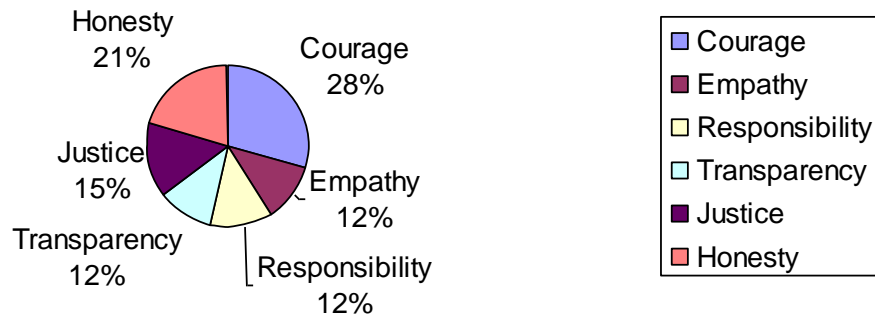
Secondly, it is evident that religious virtues are partially turned away. This does not mean that people are heartless but that they did not choose to mention many religious virtues. For instance, in the Catholic catechism there is a list of seven virtues which consists of four cardinal virtues; prudence, justice, restraint or temperance, and courage or fortitude, and three theological virtues; faith, hope, and love or charity, that were adopted by the Church Fathers. Of those virtues only two, courage and justice, were mentioned by the participants.

Despite the lack of religious virtues, empathy was an important addition to the survey because it is a virtue that goes beyond one's self and relates to others. More specifically, empathy focuses on feelings and the understanding of the other. It is the capacity to recognize and, to some extent, share feelings (such as sadness or happiness) that are being experienced by another sentient or semi-sentient being. Someone may need to have a certain amount of empathy before he is able to feel compassion.

An additional conclusion was the confusion of virtues with other concepts. For example, rationalism, which is a way of knowledge justification, was mentioned. The respondents also cited principles, senses of behavioural conduct, ways of thinking or features that relate to virtues but are not. A case in point is credibility which has two components: trustworthiness, which is a virtue, and expertise, which is not. Ambiguous concepts such as consistency were also included. Consistency may be useful sometimes but in certain cases an inconsistent change may be necessary to secure an important outcome. It is frequently said that academics value consistency too much even at the expense of renewing their theories whereas politicians often willingly act inconsistently in order to profit from new events and changes. Consistency is better conceived as a medium instead of a goal.

6 Most Important Virtues For A Decent International Society

Honesty 21%

Courage 28%

Justice 15%

Empathy 12%

Transparency 12%

Responsibility 12%

- Courage
- Empathy
- Responsibility
- Transparency
- Justice
- Honesty

Appendix V

Trying to find ways towards a decent humanity

The title proposed for the present seminar, *Searching for a decent international society*, is hardly a common one, and covers more than one concern. Dignity is paramount to all human rights, and often commendable as an ultimate desideratum. However, decency is something different. It is an old Latin term defining a trait of character and behaviour: utility, convenience, propriety. Decency comes from: *decens*, present participle of *decere*: to be proper, to be right, to be fitting. The word *decency* can be found in all languages. In English, *decent* means: according to the standard of good taste, modesty and respectability; it is sometimes equivalent to being generous, friendly, willing to help the others. In Romanian, a decent person is respectful, "knows his or her own place.''

However, it can also be seen in a broader sense. To speak decently obviously means not to use inappropriate, uncivil and rude language. But the history of the term suggests the observance of *measure* – which is in fact the very classic definition of wisdom (*Est modus in rebus. There is a proper measure in things.*). Therefore, decency has connotations associated with the behaviour of individuals and societies, with the management of political and economic issues and with the individual or collective mind-set.

That were some basic clarifications in order to try now to answer the question, Can a society be decent? Is it decent nowadays? And if it is not, what would be the list of the main "indecencies" that should be eliminated or rectified?

My answer would be that *our society is indecent in many respects, and that it could be far more decent in the future than it is nowadays.*

The most striking and painful example of indecency is *war*. It is a state where people get killed, a continuation of the old primitive practice of human sacrifice. From one thousand casualties on, a conflict would become a war. Why would people go to war? For one single reason: their incapacity for peaceful conflict resolution. Whose incapacity? The political elite's. It is the incapacity of all those unwise minds, of those shivering with fever who cannot stay civil, of the ambitious who do not want to behave themselves, of all those overtaken by *indecency*.

War – be it utopian, rational or emotional – could be eradicated. Realistically speaking, we have reasons to hope that the multitude of current wars (about 30 going on today) will not escalate into a third world war, and that the rate and strength of violent conflicts will decrease.

Another cancer of our times – where there is no blood shed as in wars, but whose toll is even higher – has to do with the *economy*. The system of activities under the umbrella of economy, whether at world or national level, shows a rift between the privileged and those who suffer from starvation. The victims of underdevelopment, malnutrition, chronic diseases and infant mortality, always present on the TV screens of the affluent world, would naturally bring about action: immediate relief, Red Cross aid, assistance campaigns, resounding plans of eradication etc. But none of these gestures touches the root of the evil, i.e. poverty and backwardness. Still, we have received encouraging signs coming from the new category (about 40 countries) of emerging economies, who have managed to cross the threshold that used to separate "the developed" from "the underdeveloped".

The world has sufficient resources for the unfortunate (a quarter of the world's population). Theoretically, food is produced for everybody, but not everybody can get enough of it.

Crises are diseases (some would say inevitable, which is wrong) of the present economic system. We can hear the officials say that the crisis has come to an end, though it continues its course just like the long coma of a comet. For many decades to come, we will stay under the sign of the 2008/09 crisis. What has set off this crisis? The indecency of some bankers who wanted quick gains by ways of unwise means, a toxic mixture of greed and arrogance caused by granting real estate loans.

We know who triggered the crisis and when. But less is said about the economic doctrines like the extremist neo-liberalism used as the theoretical basis that is still on some people's minds. The crisis has taught us all to use the "litmus paper" which would help us identify dangers and risks, whether in politics or economy, culture or mentalities. We can recognize *extremism* under all its forms; two forms are particularly virulent and disastrous: the ethnical extremism which borders on racism, and the religious extremism, usually fundamentalism.

Apparently *culture* is an area spared of these dangers. But it suffice to read Horatio, who had predicted the fall of the Roman Empire caused by the invasion of a highly permissive and exalted Greek culture. He has described it as an « indecent culture. ». He predicted decay in culture which would then lead to the fall of the whole Empire.

One should not overlook these dangers nowadays. The consumer society, an invention of the rich driven by gain as the only variable accepted by their economic mind, brings about the pre-eminence of the form over the content, the obsession with the present instant and the sacrifice of the long term. More seriously still is the increase in manipulation techniques that go beyond the commercial sphere and culminate in the individual's blind and uncritical submission to the ruling of a governing clique. In such cases democracy becomes pure demagogy. The place of critical realism is taken over by legends, myth, fiction and beliefs.

This leads us to the topic of collective mind, or - to use a more familiar term - mentalities. How does a mentality come into being and how does it last? We do not need to go too far back into the past in order to find totalitarian regimes tolerated or accepted by entire societies that have marched blindly towards perdition. The collective mind can fall for astute manipulation, which nurtures it fraudulently with myths sold as truths and beliefs disguised as facts.

For instance the *weakening of the state* : Attacked by neo liberals (interference), questioned by sociology (minimal state), placed under the pressure of globalization and regional integration (given up sovereignties), states have become ever less authoritarian, being served by ever more weakened institutions, impoverished to the extent that they cannot carry out their financial obligations towards their citizens; all has sunk in the economic crisis. Which is the myth that replaces the state? The myth of the market? Common sense – when it exists – can tell us that the market cannot (and it was never meant to) solve any problem of general concern. It does not ensure the air that we breathe, the water that we drink, the food that we eat, nor does it provide for the citizens' health and education, nor for the roads and infrastructure. There is, of course, the sphere of private interest, but it does not coincide with the sphere of public interest. The latter falls on the state, actually designed by the society as the supreme manager of the means expected to satisfy the general interest. When the crisis makes cash (money) unavailable, private institutions, companies and banks line up to help the states they themselves have weakened, and keep them from collapsing. In emergent countries the economic miracle has been accomplished

by the states which in the West are accused for their undemocratic authoritarianism. However, even the righteous philosophers went to the length of saying that authority should not be taken for totalitarianism or the infringement of democracy.

Justice cannot operate without the state and its authority. Who watches over the observance of laws, over the enforcement of the rules that keep the individuals together in a common social environment? Human rights can only be grasped by showing the other side of the coin: the citizen's responsibilities. This is what the first form of the Declaration drawn up at the end of the 18th century stipulated: rights and duties concurrently.

The collective mind can grow ill when extremism gains followers. All trends of thought beginning with *neo* or *post* can be suspected of indecent exaggerations. Extremist neo-liberalism weakens the state up to annihilation, neo-conservatism proclaims disobedience to rules and conventions, which leads to wars, postmodernism suppresses the truth and destroys the grounds of "scientific ethos." A decent science does not proclaim to have found the absolute truths, nor does it reduce reason to theoretical formalism.

This is where *education* comes into our debate. All spheres of social activities, alongside the individual or collective behaviour, depend on the process of learning. Decency can be learnt; it can become a habit. Indecency propagates by way of imitative learning. There is little decency in the contemporary pedagogical doctrines that do not involve work and effort, to say nothing of the discipline and concentration needed to counteract the anarchic dissolution of incoherent minds.

I will not go into all the aspects of the matter. I will just look at the kind of decency that accepts the diversity of both, cultures and individual typologies. A decency which does not reject different opinions which should enjoy freedom as long as they don't slip into extremism. That is the only restriction required in order to defend decency. Exaggerations are used by art and literature. Literary schools, starting with the classical and Romantic writers, have all exaggerated. All philosophies have followed monist conceptual formulae. Everything is will, everything is thought, everything is existence. They have balanced out in time. Tolerance should only be sacrificed in one sole instance: when it deals with intolerance. No belief should be refuted as long as it is not fanatical and does not deny the dialogue.

Indecency might be tolerable as long as it does not produce monsters and does not invade people's minds with a collective plague.

Prof. Mircea Malitza

Bucharest, July 2011

Appendix VI

Summer Seminar

Searching for a decent international society

15-20 August 2011
Vama Veche, Romania

A G E N D A

Monday 15 August		
18.00 - 20.00	**Session 1:**	The present international society: What is decent and what less so?
Tuesday 16 August		
10.00 - 11.00	**Session 2:**	Human nature and international society
11.00 - 12.00	**Working groups**	
18.00 - 19.00	**Session 3:**	Virtue in international relations
19.00 - 20.00	**Session 4:**	Justice in international society
Wednesday 17 August		
10.00 - 11.00	**Session 5:**	The role of religion – dividing or uniting people?
11.00 - 12.00	**Working groups**	
18.00 - 19.00	**Session 6:**	Possible key values for a future international society
19.00 - 20.00	**Working groups**	
Thursday 18 August		
10.00 - 11.00	**Session 7:**	Democracy, capitalism, socialism - or else?
11.00 - 12.00	**Session 8:**	Utopian designs
18.00 - 19.00	**Working groups**	
19.00 - 20.00	**Session 9:**	Is there a need for a radically different international economic order?
Friday 19 August		
10.00 - 12.00	**Session 10:**	Institutions for a coming international society: reforming the existing institutions or replacing them?
18.00 - 19.00	**Working groups**	
19.00 - 20.00	**Session 11:**	The ethical prerequisites of a just and peaceful international order
Saturday 20 August		
10.00 - 12.00	**Session 12:**	How to implement new ideas for a more decent international society
12.00 - 12.30	**Closing session**	