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Is daydreaming allowed to serious historians? How should we evaluate that type of work? If the reputed English historian Anthony Pagden (UCLA) does it, it must be legitimate. *Beyond States: Powers, Peoples and Global Order* (Polity, 2024) is a slim, manageable, and erudite book of compact global history. As such it is symptomatic of our times, for good and ill. The book looks for general readers with mixed interests in history and international relations, never far away from the West, still a dominant category, at least in the West. There is plenty of hard-pressed "history." References go back to Cyrus the Great of Persia (VI a.C.) via the last Shah of Iran in 1967 (119) and we are invited, almost like Kubrick's *Space Odyssey*, to envision a true peaceful and planetary civilization in outer space in the end. Massive timespaces will feed your curiosity and appetite. A whole lot of "human" history is packed in these 285 pages. This historicism is a tight condensation of political vignettes and references, perhaps too many. Too many are left begging for a greater development. Yet the readers will not get lost if they follow the "plus ultra" to a global federalism.

Beyond the States is the bold projection of a desire for a better future that translates into the withering of the state (Engels, explicitly cited). The terminology is "humanistic" (post-structuralism has not kicked in yet!). The nation(-state) does not hold either. Here, nationalism is a dull or obtuse parochialism and the empires of the past were in essence assemblages of imposition and coercion, so "modernity" is, sure thing, certain to leave them behind (there is no postmodernism!). Pagden (Bexhill, England, 1945) proposes the lesson of history that a global federalism of big units emerges as "the most desirable alternative" (26). Is "global" another word for total, universal? In any case, this federalism is no mega-state, no federal state either. It allows a high degree of cultural, political, legal variations (225). It is not unity, but a union. It feeds off the lessons of the European Union and its principle of subsidiarity, but it is not exclusively Western anymore, although it has its marks and spots. It is more inclusive and exercises "factual consensus."

Pagden's proposal is a "liberal" alternative to Carl Schmitt's Big-Space Politics of a century ago (23, 35, 207, 225). The suggested historical journey for one and all has four parts: the birth of the nation-states, from the national to the international, the order of the world, and a world federation. We leave empirical and archival conventions behind to pursue the teleological thesis of

a global federation of federations. The prose is polite, non-belligerent, cautious, the apodictic is suspended, the hypothetical gains traction, the political theological is secularized, but there is, in general, little detail. The declaration of faith of *Beyond States*: universal federalism is univocally proposed for the whole wide world to see.

The historian writes an enjoyable, readable, professional account that includes many references. He circumscribes the bibliographic majority to the white-male-European-and-Western names of the North-Atlantic in the lingua franca. No doubt, the pulsating heart of *Beyond the States* is a celebrated European-Union ideal that the world will learn, make it its possession, and push it further. The European Union is the emotional and intellectual home of our English expatriate in Los Angeles, whether sun, rain, or thunder. Other parts of the world are add-ons and the U.S. is kept at some distance.

With such excessive and impossible timespaces, thousands of years and nothing less than the theoretical global world, readers will go through a series of quick thick brushes. There are many fascinating vignettes rendered in two or three pages that could go and grow into a few more and the opposite reading. Regarding empires, there is Cirus the Great, Genghis Khan, the "human expansion" of the fifteenth century into the Americas, the "first and second empires" (40-44) and much more; regarding the nation, it is born (44ff), with Renan and Kant (there is a whole lot of Kant!); yet it is not clear, when the nation started: Spain in 1469? England in the tenth, thirteenth, seventeenth centuries? (50). The notion of nation conveys some kind of "union" and this is the general run of *Beyond States*: we are all moving towards greater, irrepressible forms of convergence, trumping over fragmentations and divergences, also dissidences. Before the nineteenth century, nations existed "in one way or another," Pagden adds, but not so the conceptions of nation-state or even nationalism (51). The modern nation will be the assemblage of "microunits" (51). For the nineteenth century, Habermas speaks apropos of "unity" (52). There is an awful lot of Habermas, always quoted approvingly (52, 158).

The notion of democracy pops up. It is a "society without a father" (Kelsen). There is a whole lot of Kelson, who delivers the "happy world" (52, 72, 142-47, 220, 231). Sovereignty yokes nation and state (Hobbes, Bodin, even Laski), but sovereignty is here not the totem and taboo that others take it to be. *Beyond States* traffics in the illusion of a future without limits or boundaries in the final suggestion of something like "global governance."

No absolutism of sovereignty then: the "plus ultra" of big open timespaces. Yet, Pagden is most at home in the European-sourced club of readers and interpreters, with the occasional "diversity" inclusion that does not signify a sustained dissidence or divergence. There is a certain French cosmopolitanism (Kojève, 215-19). There are some Italian elements: Mazzini, the architect

of Italian unification is highlighted (57-60), Meloni puts a face to populism (187), which Pagden opposes. Citations come galore, sometimes circling the U.S. legacy of Woodrow Wilson, but the heart of our historian is not here. There are many citations and the development of many of them could have grown into different trajectories, but this would have been another book. *Beyond the States* is yet another push in the tradition of universalism of eminent political forms of Western origins.

The chapter on international law speaks of generic "values" (125) and of the "liberal consensus" (125-26), coming out of secularized Christian justice, described as "good for the majority of humanity." The notion of "human rights" is also a Western concept of the universal and a desirable goal as such. Cosmopolitanism "for many" (133) brings us close to "the moral vision of the universal" and, of course, the references are to Kant (134-38). These are too many assumptions that require many more pages. There are not enough counter-narratives. Martti Koskenniemi, mentioned explicitly (127) would suspend such desirables in the ongoing trajectories of many challenges and tragedies, which Pagden eradicates from the future horizon of global governance (126-7). There are references to the United Nations and the International Court of Justice. How are these organizations standing today? Pagden points at the future of the 1930s, John Maynard Keynes's "optimistic vision" of a world of non-belligerent and competitive nation-states (159).

Beyond States is thus an exercise in the Europeanist faith of a globalizing federalism that is within reach or at least not far into the future uncertain, like an oasis in our current desert of the world. But is it an oasis? Is it a desert? The Hegelian universalist state configuration will be left behind (61). Yet its universalism is retrieved (118). This faith in globalism steamrolls all particularisms, it seems. The push-and-pull is towards collaboration and interdependence of bigger and bigger units rising above the limitations of sovereignty. The agent or subject of this convergent history is not defined. Dante's *De Monarchia* is "for many the supposed affinity of peoples of the whole planet" (219-20). Who is this "many"? What is that affinity? Democracy ("collective self-government") is added to the mix of the nation-state. The good names are always in the vicinity of the West. China is not democratic (69). It is not exclusively Western, the Ochollo tribes in Ethiopia, the Zaporia Cossacks, Igbo nation in Western Africa, and "perhaps many others, relatively small communities" (69), have been democratic, but our historian is not going to go to those places for sustained inspiration.

Beyond States affirms an incredible linearity of global modernity, the one coming out of the French and American revolutions (71), coalescing around the moment of the Enlightenment, more European than American, and acquiring its "proper" qualities in the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries. This is the West that matters, the creator and exporter (73-75), with its contemporary NATO and EU articulations. The magic pill? The key factor?: commerce is the oldest and most sustained form of "contact" (76). World is nothing, if not world interconnected. The terminology of the West overtakes that of Europe, with Auguste Comte (93-96), and Mustafa Kemal, "father of the Turks." Where is America (from Alaska to Patagonia) in this Western expansionism? *Beyond States* runs a Europeanist counterpart to the contemporary US-led West, which is not addressed.

This is therefore a self-styled "optimistic" ride. Injustices, slavery, racism and man-woman inequality do of course happen, the refinement of these bad features in the West is "perhaps unknown in the rest of the world" 107-11). Scratch the eggshell: the West is *fons et origo* of most things of value. As I read the text, I keep wondering about the engine of this political machine and who gets to sit in the driver seat. The merchants? The business types? Do these attenuate politics? Classes do not appear. Race plays no big part. What else then? *Beyond States* constitutes a grandiose illusion of a cosmic bird's eyeview of global history of disembodied "humans" passing through the dark clouds and rain and reaching the warmth and nurture of a sun.

Yes, it is commerce that makes us travel from the national to the international and it is in the latter dimension where we "should" settle. From the first century, to the fifteenth, the silk trade, Adam Smith's enlightenment of the commercial society, communication, exchanges, ineluctable modality of modern society "to many" (85), who is this "many"?, and there will be no more war or conquest. Carthage was the first commercial state (85), but where are the most dynamic economic areas of the world today that are not present in this book? The three dominant regions of the world are said to be the U.S., Europe and China (229-32). Looking at the crystal ball, Pagden proposes amalgamations. It is a geopolitical nutshell. Yet, his call is for the cultivation of sympathy, human sociability for the better care of our existence as species (239-41). No technological prowess, no transhumanism, no AI, no Elon Musk or Peter Thiel here. Economy is not per se addressed. Capitalism is missing in action. We appear to be dealing with nominal entities and disembodied ideas.

Make no mistake: this is a liberal modality of "global history." Europe of the European Union is the ideal core (Brexit is a tragedy, 87; and Britain does not appear prominently besides Enlightenment figures). Pagden's core Europe is Franco-German filtered through the Anglo publishing prowess and occasional Italian touches. The author does not linger in the current problems or troubles of "Europe," those of other units get less attention. The portable volume does not, cannot linger in any detail of the political turmoils currently sweeping not only the West, but other parts of the world. Would ASEAN, BRICS, and G-20 be considered federations of the inspirational kind proposed by Pagden? No current political figures are mentioned, except for

Meloni (maybe I missed them). The Germany of Habermas does not show up. The U.S. of Trump is missing in action. The Latin America of Lula, idem. The "Hispanic" world occupies an uneven, marginal timespace, something like prelude to globalization and chorus girl, in the work of this historian who began with Hernán Cortés and John H. Elliot in the Oxford setting. Yet, a better "federalist" future looms in the future. The conversation is served with the esteemed historian in a dignified European club (Paris, London, Rome?), or perhaps in a cute taqueria in Los Angeles, with the option of Chatham-House rules.