

Globalization: Theoretical Perspectives
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Lecture 40
Ulrich Beck: The Risk Society Part - III

Welcome back to the class. This is the final session on Ulrich Beck and risk society. This is also the last session of this particular week; we will be moving to the ninth week with the next class discussing the ideological critics of globalisation. So, let us continue the debate on Ulrich Beck and risk society.

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- 3. Non-compensability: the security dream of first modernity was based on the scientific utopia of making the unsafe consequences and dangers of decisions ever more controllable; accidents could occur, as long as and because they were considered compensable. If the climate has changed irreversibly, if progress in human genetics makes irreversible interventions in human existence possible, if terrorist groups already have weapons of mass destruction available to them, then it is too late.





- The theory of world risk society maintains, that modern societies are shaped by new kinds of risks, that their foundations are shaken by the global anticipation of global catastrophes. Such perceptions of global risk are characterized by three features:

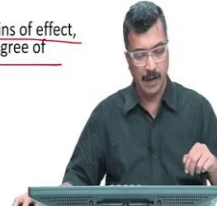
1. De-localization : its causes and consequences are not limited to one geographical location or space, they are in principle omnipresent.

The de-localization of incalculable interdependency risks takes place at three levels:

1. Spatial : the new risks (e.g. climate change) do not respect nation-state or any other borders;

2. Temporal : the new risks have a long latency period (e.g. nuclear waste) so that their effect over time cannot be reliably determined and limited.

3. Social : thanks to the complexity of the problems and the length of chains of effect, assignment of causes and consequences is no longer possible with any degree of reliability (e.g. financial crises).



2. Incalculableness : its consequences are in principle incalculable; at bottom it is a matter of 'hypothetical' risks, which, not least, are based on science induced not-knowing and normative dissent.

- The crucial point, however, is not only the discovery of the unknown unknowns, but that simultaneously the knowledge, control and security claim of state and society were, indeed had to be, renewed, deepened and expanded. The irony lies in the institutionalized security claim, to have to control something even if one does not know whether it exists!



So, in the third thesis, the third point that he is talking about is non-compatibility. The first is delocalisation, the second is incalculableness, and the third is non-compatibility. The security dream of the first modernity was based on the scientific utopia of making the dangerous consequences and dangers of decisions ever more controllable; accidents could occur as long as, and because they were considered compensable.

If the climate has changed irreversibly, if progress in human genetics makes irreversible interventions in human existence possible, if terrorist groups already have weapons of mass destruction available to them, then it is too late. So, this whole question of the scenario that these risks are not in a particular locality, we cannot foresee that we cannot calculate when it happens, where it happens.

The third one is we do not know even how to compensate that, they are not amenable to compensation because the kind of catastrophe, for example, for a nuclear disaster or a widespread consequences of food adulteration or some chemical warfare, these things would be something beyond our understanding of how it can be compensated because they all go beyond the conventional wisdom of danger, harm and negative consequences imposed on people and other sections.

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- key institutions of modernity such as science, business and politics, which are supposed to guarantee rationality and security, find themselves confronted by situations in which their apparatus no longer has a purchase and the fundamental principles of modernity no longer automatically hold good. Indeed, the perception of their rating changes from trustee to suspect. They are no longer seen only as instruments of risk management, but also as a source of risk.
- Tragic individualization-As a consequence everyday life in world risk society is characterized by a new variant of individualization. The individual must cope with the uncertainty of the global world by him- or herself. Here individualization is a default outcome of a failure of expert systems to manage risks.



So, then he argues that the critical institutions of modernity such as science, business and politics, which are supposed to guarantee rationality and security, find themselves confronted by situations in which their apparatus no longer has a purchase and the fundamental principles of modernity automatically hold good, this is a repetition, this is from the second essay, second article.

This is again the repetition of the same point that we argued, the kind of legitimacy that these institutions had, whether political or economic or scientific establishment, their apparatus no longer has a purchase and the fundamental principles of modernity automatically hold good. Indeed, the perception of their rating changes from trustees to suspect. They are no longer seen only as an instrument of risk management but also as a source of risk.

Tragic individualisation, consequently, everyday life in the world risk society is characterised by a new variant of individualisation. Individuals must cope with the uncertainty of the global world by themselves; here, individualisation is a default outcome of a failure of an expert system to manage risk; at this point, I am inviting your attention to Giddens. Giddens's argument about expert systems.

I hope you remember that we discussed expert systems and symbolic tokens. So, he argued that in modernity, we established a host of expert systems, a car, an aeroplane or a financial transaction, online financial transaction or a credit card or a health check-up, all these things are based on expert systems because we do not know anything about the pilot who is flying

our plane, about the mechanical accuracy of its machines, of its engine, of its safety apparatus we have no idea about it, we have no assurity about it. Still, we trust, we think that there are experts who have taken care of all these things and given ourselves into their promise.

So, now each of these things, individualisation is a default outcome of a failure of expert systems and managing risk. And here in this light of the impending crisis of this or pervasive sense of danger in a modern world, whether when you eat, we do not know what exactly it contains or in a financial transaction or your internet transaction, your privacy, about your photos, about your message that you send there is no guarantee that it is not being sold or it is not being leaked, it is not being used for unwanted purposes.

So here, every individual is forced to look up for herself for their forms of security, which leads to higher states of individualisation.

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- The individual is forced to mistrust the promises of rationality of these key institutions. As a consequence, people are thrown back onto themselves, they are alienated from expert systems but have nothing else instead. Disembedding without embedding this is the ironic-tragic formula for this dimension of individualization in world risk society.
- However and this is also part of the tragic irony of this individualization process the individual, whose senses fail him and her in the face of ungraspable threats to civilization, who, thrown back on himself, is blind to dangers, remains at the same time unable to escape the power of definition of expert systems, whose judgement he cannot, yet must trust. Sustaining an individual self of integrity in world risk society is indeed a tragic affair.



The individual is forced to mistrust the promise of the rationality of these critical institutions; we know that banking system, of course, all of us have bank accounts, but we know how risky it can be how your ATM, your online transaction can be fudged, a host of other possibilities are there. Consequently, people are thrown back onto themselves; they are alienated from expert systems but have nothing else instead.


Disembedding without embedding this is the ironic, tragic formula for this dimension of individualisation in the world risk society. So, you are disembedding, you are no longer identify yourself with a particular system, but then you cannot re-embed somewhere else.

You have no other alternatives other than these systems of, these systems whose legitimacy are deeply questioned.

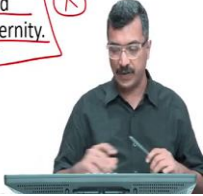
However, and this is also part of the tragic irony of the individualisation process, the individual who senses fail him and her in the face of ungraspable threats to civilisation, who thrown back on himself is blind to dangers, remain at the same time unable to escape the power of definition of expert systems, whose judgment he cannot, yet must trust, sustaining an individual self of integrity in world risk society is indeed a tragic affair.

So, sustaining individual integrity in a world of risk society is indeed a tragic affair. We know that we are forced to live in cities where it is full of toxic air, the or the medical system that we depend upon, it could be exploitative, it can have serious negative consequences so say a host of things we are forced to really depend upon and then find ourselves in a compromising situation.

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- Let me summarize: the theory of world risk society addresses the increasing realization of the irrepressible ubiquity of radical uncertainty in the modern world. The basic institutions, the actors of first modernity science and expert systems, the state, commerce and the international system, including the military responsible for calculating and controlling manufactured uncertainties are undermined by growing awareness that they are inefficient, their actions even counter-productive. This does not happen haphazardly, but systematically. Radicalization of modernity produces this fundamental irony of risk: science, the state and the military are becoming part of the problem they are supposed to solve. This is what 'reflexive modernization' means; we are not living in a post-modern world, but in a more-modern world. It is not the crisis, but the victory of modernity, which, through the logics of unintended and unknown side-effects, undermines basic institutions of first modernity.



So let us summarise, the theory of the word risk society addresses the increasing realisation of the irrepressible ubiquity of radical uncertainty in the modern world, the same point that we discuss so far we are all talking about the delay, it is an irrepressible ubiquity of extreme fate of the contemporary world. The primary institutions, the actors of first modernity, science and expert systems, the state, commerce and international design, including the military responsible for calculating and controlling manufactured uncertainties, are undermined by a growing awareness that they are inefficient, their actions even

counterproductive or the any of these things whether it is military or state apparatus or these things can also be counterproductive.

This does not happen haphazardly but systematically. The radicalisation of modernity produces this fundamental irony of risk, science, the state, and the military becoming part of the problem they are supposed to solve, a critical point. The science, the state, and the army that are supposed to protect you from the external enemy become part of the problem they are supposed to solve.

That is what reflexive modernisation means; we are not living in a postmodern world. Still, in a more modern world, it is not the crisis but the victory of modernity which, through the logic of unintended and unknown side effects, undermines the primary institutions of first modernity; I want you to underline this section maybe and then have a very close look at this particular section.

Here he has defined it well; what does it mean to be late modernity? This is what reflexive modernisation means. We are not living in a postmodern world, and this is a point that I have been repeating ever since the beginning of the course when we talk about Giddens or Harvey or Beck, that they are against the argument of a postmodern world. Still, they argue that modernity has become radicalised; it has become so successful. The success of modernity has brought in all these uncertainties and complexities, which through the logics of unintended and unknown scientific undermines primary institutions of first modernity.

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- How does the proclaimed enlightenment function of global risks express itself? Six components, which make up the 'cosmopolitan moment' of world risk society:

1) involuntary enlightenment: Global risks have two sides: the probability of possible catastrophes and social vulnerability through catastrophes. The world will be forced to acknowledge and act upon the vulnerable sections who are deeply affected by the emerging risks and catastrophes.

- and 6) the possibility of
• alternative government in a globalized world.



Now, how does the proclaimed enlightenment function of global risk express itself? Six components make up for the cosmopolitan moment of world risk society. In this part of this essay, Beck again looks into the possibilities of the creative cases of various organisations. He argues that a cosmopolitan moment comes into the picture, something very different from the traditional world and the modern world. We will be forced to act in it with more cosmopolitan energy and cosmopolitan spirit.

And this kind of argument, this kind of line of thinking, even this optimism can be seen in many of Ulrich Beck's statements when he talks about cosmopolitan sociology; when he talks about the sophisticated state, cosmopolitan society, cosmopolitan moment, he believes that these difficulties will push you to become more open-minded to be more accommodative of the other and then to be more inclusive, to be more sensitive to other people's identities and other things. Still, we do not know because Beck wrote it in 2005 when we had far better optimism about positive globalisation. Now, sitting in 2020, I must say that not many people share the enthusiasm and the optimism that Beck shared about the prospects of globalisation.

So, that is what we will discuss in the coming class. Now, there is a severe crisis of globalisation. Many of the positive, glorious, glamorous, romantic things we anticipated about globalisation have not come true, and there is a reversal, of course, not to the original position. Still, a different direction is taking place, so he says that involuntary enlightenment will occur due to this impending scenario of a global risk society.

Global risks have two side effects, two sides, the probability of a possible catastrophe and a social vulnerability through disasters, one is the potential, the likelihood of a possible disaster and the social exposure through tragedy, how the vulnerable section is seen as bearing the brunt of disaster and then people are forced to acknowledge that. And he gave, in the article, gave the example of cyclones in the US and where the whole world was forced to look at the poorer section of the US.

So, he says that this global crisis will turn attention to the poorer section and then everybody will be forced to recognise and reconcile with the whole situation. The world will be forced to acknowledge and act upon vulnerable cells deeply affected by the emerging risk and catastrophe. I do not share this kind of optimism that any disaster naturally forces everybody to take account of that.

I do not share that kind of optimism because unless there is some very radical redefinition in much more significant, much deeper structural issues like capitalism or the nation-state, nothing much will happen. And the possibility of alternative governments in a globalised world, again he is optimistic of that. He believed that the European Union would become an example of a global, alternative cosmopolitan state. Still, we know that even the European Union suffered a setback with the Brexit, and we are not seeing anything as of now in that positive sense where nation-states will become better and other things.

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2) enforced communication across all differences and borders:

Risk is the involuntary, unintended compulsory medium of communication in a world of irreconcilable differences, in which everyone revolves around themselves. Hence a publicly perceived risk compels communication between those who do not want to have anything to do with one another. It assigns obligations and costs to those who refuse them and who often even have current law on their side. In other words, risks cut through the self-absorption of cultures, languages, religions and systems as well as the national and international agenda of politics, they overturn their priorities and create contexts for action between camps, parties and quarrelling nations, which ignore and oppose one another.



The second one is enforced communication across all differences and borders, so this is again yet another point, Beck argues, will be a forced moment of cosmopolitanism that risk is the involuntary unintended compulsory medium of communication in the world of irreconcilable differences in which everyone revolves around themselves. Hence a publicly perceived risk compels communication between those who do not want anything to do with one another.

It assigns obligations and costs to those who refuse them and who often even have current law on their side; in other words, risks cut through self-absorption of cultures, languages, religions and systems as well as national, international agenda of politics they overturn their priorities and create a context for actions between camps, parties and quarrelling...

What he says is that this scenario of an impending risk will force everybody to communicate with each other, you will not be able to be comfortable in your silos, you will be forced to deal with the other, you will be forced to communicate with the other because these global, these risks are of a worldwide character. They are universal, and any solution is possible only by communicating with the other by collaborating and cooperating with the other.

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3) the political power of catharsis: the possibility of catastrophes to produce political catharsis.

4) enforced cosmopolitanism: global risks activate and connect actors across borders, who otherwise do not want to have anything to do with one another. I propose, in this sense, that a clear distinction be made between the philosophical and normative ideas of cosmopolitanism, on the one hand, and the 'impure' actual cosmopolitanization on the other.

5) risk as a wake-up call in the face of the failure of government

6) Possibility of alternative government



The third one, he says that political power of catharsis, the possibility of catastrophes to produce political catharsis, where these risks can have a sense of catharsis for the political actors to make them more kind, to make them more understanding, to make them react with more sense of compassion and other things and the fourth one is the enforced cosmopolitanism, global risk activates and connects actors across borders who otherwise do not want to have anything to do with one another.

I propose, in this sense, that a clear distinction can be made between philosophical and normative ideas of cosmopolitanism, on the one hand, and the impure actual cosmopolitan nation on the other. So, here he is talking about how these risks can bring in the sense of force to cosmopolitanism where you will be forced to interact with the other, accommodate the other or be friendly with the other and accept the other and all these things he considered as the impure, not the hostile dirty or actual cosmopolitanisation on the other.

And he says that this is very different from the philosophical understanding of cosmopolitanism, which comes from a much more extensive enlightened knowledge of the world that you think you are all part of the same world. There is nothing radically different between you and others. You need to develop a political philosophy that must include the other cosmopolitanism's political foundation.

But the second one, this impure one, the real one, he says, can also take place. And here, he makes this argument about cosmopolitanisation. In one of his lectures, maybe you will find

on YouTube he brings up this argument about a forced, sophisticated government where because of the migration with the, say, for example, Europe. Europe is experiencing a forced cosmopolitan country where they are forced to acknowledge the other in their neighbourhood, in their own houses, and in society. It is not coming out of generosity or kindness to accept and accommodate the other.

It is a process of economic processes; it is a product of war, it is a product of famine, it is a product of global misery, you are forced to acknowledge others, and that can have very negative consequences as well as what we see the rise of xenophobia, the rise of nationalistic, jingoistic posturing, so all these things are a process of this enforced course of politicisation. And the fifth one is the risk as a wake-up call in the face of a government failure.

Beck talks about whether we will redesign our forms of governance with better energy, sensibility, and better ideas rather than making it more and more centralised, hierarchical and then bureaucratic. And the sixth point, which by mistake appeared in the previous slide, is about a possibility of an alternative government as maybe something similar to a cosmopolitan state. This state is not bogged down by the idea of defining its member and then treating the other in a discriminatory manner. This state has the kindness to look at every people as belonging to their people.

So, these are the main arguments of Ulrich Beck regarding his theorisation on risk society. So, as I mentioned in one of the previous classes, Ulrich Beck became a point of discussion among many journalists and many public media, especially in the background of this Covid 19 pandemic because many of these points that he elaborated on so far are very applicable in the new era of, the new normalcy that we are undergoing currently.

His idea about how the state governments work, how the scientific community had no clue about how to deal with the virus, to deal with it, to make sense of it, the kind of projections, the type of statistical projections, the variety of the various ways in which they wanted to deal with the things, so Beck became a vital reminder of a very rigorous sociological analysis of our contemporary times.

So, to summarise, Ulrich Beck, the German sociologist, is a very, very important figure in contemporary social science as a theorist of late modernity, theorist of reflexive modernisation, theorist of risk society, he is a prolific writer, a critical voice, a significant figure in the globalization literature.

So, we are closing this chapter, the eighth-week chapter, where we discussed Ulrich Beck as a significant scholar and looked at his arguments about state and risk society; we will move on to the next week where we discuss the critics of globalization, especially two people, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt are very famous for their thesis by the name of The Empire. So, see you then thank you.