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## National Culture, the Globalization of Communications and the Bounded Political Community

by  
David Held

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The globalization of culture has a long history. The formation and expansion of the great world religions are profound examples of the capacity of ideas and beliefs to cross great distances with decisive social impacts. No less important are the vast pre-modern empires such as the Roman Empire, which, in the absence of direct military and political control, held its domains together through a shared and extensive ruling class culture (Millar, et al., 1967; Mann, 1986). For most of human history, these extensive ruling cultures passed through a fragmented mosaic of local cultures and particularisms; little stood between the political center and the village. It was only with the emergence of nation-states and national cultures that a form of cultural identity coalesced between these two poles.

With the rise of nation-states and nationalist projects, the spatial organization of culture was transformed. Nation-states took control of educational practices, linguistic policies, postal systems, and so on. However, from the eighteenth century, as European empires expanded and as a series of technological innovations began to have far-reaching practical effects (regularized mechanical transport and the telegraph most notably), new forms of cultural globalization crystallized. The most important ideas and arguments to emerge from the West during this era were science, liberalism and socialism (Held and McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton, 1999, ch. 7). Each of these modes of thought—and the practices which went with them—transformed the ruling cultures of almost every society on the planet. They have certainly had a more considerable impact on national and local cultures than Nike, Coca-Cola, McDonald's and a host of pop music groups.

However, in the period since the Second World War, the extensity, intensity, speed and sheer volume of cultural communication are

unsurpassed at a global level (UNESCO, 1950, 1986, 1989; OECD, 1997). The global diffusion of radio, television, the Internet, satellite and digital technologies has made instantaneous communication possible, rendered many border checks and controls over information ineffective, and exposed an enormous constituency to diverse cultural outputs and values (Silverstone, 2001, pp. 15-17). A telling example is the viewing figures for “Baywatch”; over 2 billion people are estimated to have seen each episode! While linguistic differences continue to be a barrier to these processes, the global dominance of English (especially in business, politics, administration, science, academia and computing) provides a linguistic infrastructure that parallels the technological infrastructures of the era. In contrast to earlier periods in which states and theocracies were central to cultural globalization, the current era is one in which corporations are the central producers and distributors of cultural products. Corporations have replaced states and theocracies as the key producers and distributors of cultural products. Private international institutions are not new but their mass impact is. News agencies and publishing houses in previous eras had a much more limited reach than the consumer goods and cultural output of the global corporations today.

Though the vast majority of these cultural products come from the USA, this does not amount to a simple case of “cultural imperialism.” One of the surprising features of our global age is how robust national and local cultures have proved to be (Appadurai, 1990). National institutions remain central to public life while national audiences constantly reinterpret foreign products in novel ways (see Thompson, 1995). The central question is the future impact of communication and cultural flows on local and national cultures, and on our sense of personal identity, national identity and politics. It is to the debate about this that the next section turns.

### **National culture and its presuppositions**

The rise of the modern nation-state and nationalist movements altered the landscape of political identity. The conditions involved in the creation of the modern state often helped generate a sense of nationhood. In particular, the military and administrative requirements of the modern state “politicized” social relations and day-to-day activities (Giddens, 1985; Mann, 1986). Gradually, people became aware of their membership in a shared political community, with a common fate. Although the nature of

this emergent identity was often initially vague, it grew more definite and precise over time (Therborn, 1977; Turner, 1986; Mann, 1987).

The consolidation of the ideas and narratives of the nation and nationhood has been linked to many factors including: the attempt by ruling élites and governments to create a new identity that would legitimize the enhancement of state power and the coordination of policy (Breuilly, 1982); the creation, via a mass education system, of a common framework of understanding—ideas, meanings, practices—to enhance the process of state coordinated modernization (Gellner, 1983); the emergence of new communication systems—particularly new media (such as printing and the telegraph), independent publishers and a free market for printed material—which facilitated interclass communication and the diffusion of national histories, myths and rituals, i.e., a new imagined community (Anderson, 1983); and, building on an historic sense of homeland and deeply-rooted memories, the consolidation of ethnic communities via a common public culture, shared legal rights and duties and an economy creating mobility for its members within a bounded territory (Smith, 1986, 1995).

Even where the establishment of a national identity was an explicit political project pursued by élites, it was rarely their complete invention. That nationalist élites actively sought to generate a sense of nationality and a commitment to the nation—a “national community of fate”—is well documented. But “it does not follow,” as one observer aptly noted, that such élites “invented nations where none existed” (Smith, 1990, pp. 180-1). The “nation-to-be” was not any large, social or cultural entity; rather, it was a “community of history and culture,” occupying a particular territory, and often laying claim to a distinctive tradition of common rights and duties for its members. Accordingly, many nations were “built up on the basis of pre-modern ‘ethnic cores’ whose myths and memories, values and symbols shaped the culture and boundaries of the nation that modern élites managed to forge” (Smith, 1990, p. 180; and see Smith, 1986). The identity that nationalists strove to uphold depended, in significant part, on uncovering and exploiting a community’s “ethno-history” and on highlighting its distinctiveness in the world of competing political and cultural values (Hall, 1992).

Of course, the construction of nations, national identities and nation-states has always been harshly contested and the conditions for the successful development of each never fully overlapped with that of the others (see Held and McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton, 1999, pp. 48-9, 336-40). The

fixed borders of the modern state have generally embraced a diversity of ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups with mixed leanings and allegiances. The relationships between these groups, and between these groups and states, has been checkered and often a source of bitter conflict. In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, nationalism became a force which supported and buttressed state formation in certain places (for example, in France) and challenged or refashioned it elsewhere (for instance, in multi-ethnic states such as Spain or the United Kingdom) (see Held and McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton, 1999, pp. 337-8; Appadurai, 1990).

However, despite the diversity of nationalisms and their political aims, and the fact that most national cultures are less than two hundred years old, these “new” political forces created fundamentally novel terms of political reference in the modern world—terms of reference which appear so well rooted today that many, if not the overwhelming majority, of peoples take them as given and practically natural (see Barry, 1998). In fact, advocates of the primacy of national identity juxtapose its enduring qualities and the deep appeal of national cultures with the ephemeral and ersatz qualities of the products of the transnational media corporations (see Smith, 1990; and Brown, 1995). Since national cultures have been centrally concerned with consolidating the relationships between political identity, self-determination and the powers of the state, they are, and will remain, so the argument runs, formidably important sources of ethical and political direction.

The political significance of nationalism, along with the development and consolidation of the state, have been at the heart of modern political theory. Political theory, by and large, has taken the nation-state as a fixed point of reference and has sought to place the state at the center of interpretations of the nature and proper form of the political good (Dunn, 1990, pp. 142-60). The theory and practice of liberal democracy have added important nuances to this position. For within the framework of liberal democracy, while territorial boundaries and the nation-state demarcate the proper spatial limits of the political good, the articulation of the political good is directly linked to the national citizenry. The political good inheres in, and is to be specified by, a process of political participation in which the collective will is determined through the medium of elected representatives (Bobbio, 1989, p. 144).

The theory of the political good in the modern territorial polity rests on a number of assumptions which repay an effort of clarification (see Miller,

1995, 1999; Held, 1995 ch. 10). These are that a political community is properly constituted and bounded when:

1. its members have a common socio-cultural identity; that is, they share an understanding, explicit or implicit, of a distinctive culture, tradition, language and homeland, which binds them together as a group and forms a (if not the) basis (acknowledged or unacknowledged) of their activities.
2. there is a common framework of “prejudices,” purposes and objectives that generates a common political ethos; that is, an imagined “community of fate” which connects its envoys directly to a common political project—the notion that they form a people who should govern themselves.
3. an institutional structure exists—or is in the process of development—which protects and represents the community, acts on its behalf and promotes the collective interest.
4. “congruence” and “symmetry” prevail between a community’s “governors” and “governed,” between political decision-makers and decision-takers. That is to say, national communities “program” the actions, decisions and policies of their governments, and governments determine what is right or appropriate for their citizens.
5. members enjoy, because of the presence of conditions 1 – 4, a common structure of rights and duties, i.e., they can lay claim to, and can reasonably expect, certain kinds of equal treatment, that is, certain types of egalitarian principles of justice and political participation.

According to this account, appropriate conceptions of what is right for the political community and its citizens follow from its cultural, political and institutional roots, traditions and boundaries. These generate the resources—conceptual and organizational—for the determination of its fate and fortunes. Underpinning this understanding of the bounded community is a principle of justification which involves a significant communitarian thought: ethical discourse cannot be detached from the “form of life” of a community; the categories of political discourse are integral to a particular tradition; and the values of such a community take precedence over or trump global requirements (Walzer, 1983, Miller, 1988, 1995; MacIntyre, 1981 and 1988).

### **The globalization of communications and culture**

Globalists take issue with each of these propositions, and they mount a sustained critique of them. First, shared identity in political communities historically has been the result of intensive efforts of political construction; it has never been a given (cf. Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1983; Smith, 1983, 1995). Even within the boundaries of old-established communities, cultural and political identity is often disputed by and across social classes, gender divisions, local allegiances, ethnic groupings and the generations. The existence of a shared political identity cannot simply be read-off vociferously proclaimed symbols of national identity. The meaning of such symbols is contested and the “ethos” of a community frequently debated. The common values of a community may be subject to intense dispute. Justice, accountability and the rule of law are just a few terms around which there may appear to be a shared language and, yet, fiercely different conceptions of these may be present. In fact, if by a “political consensus” it is meant normative integration within a community, then it is all too rare (Held, 1996, pt 2; and see below). Political identity is only by exception, for instance during wars; it is a singular, unitary phenomenon. Moreover, contemporary “reflexive” political agents, subject to an extraordinary diversity of information and communication, can be influenced by images, concepts, lifestyles and ideas from well beyond their immediate communities and can come to identify with groups beyond their borders—ethnic, religious, social and political (Thompson, 1998; Held and McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton, 1999, ch. 8; Keck and Sikkink, 1998). Further, while there is no reason to suppose that they will uncritically identify with any one of these, self-chosen ideas, commitments or relations may well be more important for some people’s identity than “membership in a community of birth” (Thompson, 1998, p. 190; cf. Giddens, 1991; Tamir, 1993). Cultural and political identity today is constantly under review and reconstruction at both individual and collective levels.

Second, the argument that locates cultural value and the political good firmly within the terrain of the nation-state fails to consider or properly appreciate the diversity of political communities individuals can appreciate; and the fact that individuals can involve themselves coherently in different associations or collectivities at different levels and for different purposes (Thompson, 1998). It is perfectly possible, for example, to enjoy membership and voting rights in Scotland, the U.K. and Europe without necessarily threatening one’s identification or allegiances to any one of these three political entities (see Archibugi, Held and Köhler, 1998). It is perfectly possible, in addition, to identify closely with the aims and ambitions of a transnational social movement—whether concerned with

environmental, gender or human rights issues—without compromising other more local political commitments. Such a pluralization of political orientations and allegiances can be linked to the erosion of the state's capacity to sustain a singular political identity in the face of migration, the movement of labor and the globalization of communications. Increasingly, successful political communities have to work with, not against, a multiplicity of identities, cultures and ethnic groupings. Multiculturalism, not national culture, is increasingly the norm (Parekh, 2000).

Third, globalization is “hollowing out” states, eroding their sovereignty and autonomy. State institutions and political agents are, globalists contend, increasingly like “zombies” (Beck, 1992, 1997; Giddens, 1999b). Contemporary political strategies involve easing adaptation to world markets and transnational economic flows. Adjustment to the international economy—above all, to global financial markets—becomes a fixed point of orientation in economic and social policy. The “decision signals” of these markets, and of their leading agents and forces, become a, if not the, standard of rational decision-making. States no longer have the capacity and policy instruments they require to contest the imperatives of global economic change; instead, they must help individual citizens go where they want to go via provision of social, cultural and educational resources (Giddens, 1999a). Accordingly, the roles of the state as protector and representative of the territorial community, as a collector and (re)allocator of resources among its members, as a promoter of an independent, deliberatively tested shared good are all in decline.

Fourth, the fate of a national community is no longer in its own hands. Regional and global economic, environmental and political processes profoundly redefine the content of national decision-making. In addition, decisions made by quasi-regional or quasi-supranational organizations such as the EU, WTO, IMF or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) diminish the range of political options open to given national “majorities.” In a similar vein, decisions by particular states—not just the most economically or militarily powerful nations—can have ramifications across borders, circumscribing and reshaping the political terrain. Political communities are, thus, embedded in a substantial range of processes which connect them in complex configurations, making them all too often decision-takers, not decision-makers.

Fifth, national communities are locked into webs of regional and global governance which alter and compromise their capacity to provide a

common structure of rights, duties and welfare to their citizens. From human rights to trade regimes, political power is being rearticulated and reconfigured. Increasingly, contemporary patterns of globalization are associated with a multilayered system of governance. Locked into an array of geographically diverse forces, national governments are having to reconsider their roles and functions. Although the intensification of regional and global political relations has diminished the powers of national governments, it is recognized ever more that the nurturing and enhancement of the political good requires coordinated multilateral action, for instance, to prevent global recession and enhance sustainable growth, to protect human rights and intercede where they are grossly violated, and to act to avoid environmental catastrophes such as ozone depletion or global warming. A shift is taking place from government to multilevel global governance. Accordingly, the institutional nexus of the political good is being reconfigured.

Each of the five propositions set forth by the theorists of national culture and of the modern national state can be contrasted with positions held by the globalists. Thus, the political community and the political good need, on the globalists account, to be understood as follows:

1. individuals increasingly have complex loyalties and multilayered identities, corresponding to the globalization of economic and cultural forces and the reconfiguration of political power.
2. the continuing development of regional, international and global flows of resources and networks of interaction, along with the recognition by growing numbers of people of the increasing interconnectedness of political communities—in domains as diverse as the social, cultural, economic and environmental—generates an awareness of overlapping “collective fortunes” which require collective solutions. Political community begins to be re-imagined in regional and global terms.
3. an institutional structure exists comprising elements of local, national, regional and global governance. At different levels, individual communities (albeit often imperfectly) are protected and represented; their collective interests require both multilateral advancement and domestic (local and national) adjustment if they are to be sustained and promoted.
4. complex economic, social and environmental processes, shifting networks of regional and international agencies, and the decision outcomes of many states cut across spatially delimited national locales with determinate consequences for their agendas and policy options.

Globalization alters decisively what it is that a national community can ask of its government, what politicians can promise and deliver, and the range of people(s) affected by government outputs. Political communities are “reprogrammed.”

5. the rights, duties and welfare of individuals can only be adequately entrenched if they are underwritten by regional and global regimes, laws and institutions. The promotion of the political good and of egalitarian principles of justice and political participation are rightly pursued at regional and global levels. Their conditions of possibility are inextricably linked to the establishment of transnational organizations and institutions of governance. In a global age, transnational organizations and institutions are the basis of cooperative relations and just conduct.

Accordingly, what is right for the individual political community and its citizens, in the globalists’ account, must follow from reflection on the processes which generate an intermingling of national fortunes. The contemporary world “is not a world of closed communities with mutually impenetrable ways of thought, self-sufficient economies and ideally sovereign states” (O’Neill, 1991, p. 282). Not only is ethical discourse separable from forms of life in a national community, but it is developing today at the intersection and interstices of overlapping communities, traditions and languages. Its categories are increasingly the result of the mediation of different cultures, communication processes and modes of understanding. There are not enough good reasons for allowing, in principle, the values of individual political communities to trump or take precedence over global principles of justice and political participation. While for the traditionalists, ethical discourse is, and remains, firmly rooted in the bounded political community; for the globalists it belongs squarely to the world of “breached boundaries”—the “world community” or global order.

### Cosmopolitan alternatives

There is insufficient space here to appraise all the claims of these two positions. But by way of a conclusion, I would like to make a number of additional points, and indicate the plausibility of a third position—neither traditionalist, nor globalist, but cosmopolitan.

The leading claims of the globalists are at their strongest when focused on institutional and process change in the domains of economics, politics and

the environment, but they are at their most vulnerable when considering the movements of people, their attachments and their cultural and moral identities. The available evidence suggests that national (and local) cultures remain robust; national institutions continue in many states to have a central impact on public life; national television and radio broadcasting continue to enjoy substantial audiences; the organization of the press and news coverage retain strong national roots and imported foreign products are constantly read and reinterpreted in novel ways by national audiences, that is, they become rapidly indigenized (Miller, 1992; Liebes and Katz, 1993; Thompson, 1995). Moreover, the evidence indicates that there is no simple, common global pool of memories; no common global way of thinking; and no “universal history” in and through which people can unite. There is only a manifold set of political meanings and systems through which any new global awareness, or multicultural politics, or human rights discourse must struggle for influence (see Bozeman, 1984; Silverstone, 2001). Given the deep roots of national cultures and ethno-histories, and the many ways they are often refashioned, this can hardly be a surprise. Despite the vast flows of information, imagery and people around the world, there are only a few signs, at best, of a universal or global history in the making, and few signs of a decline in the importance of nationalism.

There has been a shift from government to multilevel governance, from the modern state to a multilayered system of power and authority, from relatively discrete national communication and economic systems to their more complex and diverse enmeshment at regional and global levels. Yet, there are few grounds for thinking that a concomitant widespread pluralization of political identities has taken place. One exception to this is to be found among the élites of the global order—the networks of experts and specialists, senior administrative personnel and transnational business executives—and those who track and contest their activities, the loose constellation of social movements, trade unionists and (a few) politicians and intellectuals. However, even the latter groups have a significant diversity of interest and purpose, a diversity clearly manifest in the “anti-globalization” protests of Seattle, Genoa and elsewhere. The globalists’ emphasis on the transformation of political identities is overstated. What one commentator wrote about the European Union can be adapted to apply, in many respects, to the rest of the world: the central paradox is that governance is becoming increasingly a multilevel, intricately institutionalized and spatially dispersed activity, while representation, loyalty and identity remain stubbornly rooted in traditional ethnic, regional and national communities (Wallace, 1999, p. 521).

One important qualification needs to be added to the above arguments, one which focuses on generational change. While those who have some commitment to the global order as a whole, and to the institutions of global governance, constitute a distinct minority; a generational divide is evident. Compared to the generations brought up in the years prior to 1939, those born after World War II are more likely to see themselves as cosmopolitans, to support the UN system and to be in favor of the free movement of migrants and trade. Examining Eurobarometer data and findings from the World Values Survey (involving over 70 countries), Norris concludes that “cohort analysis suggests that in the long term public opinion is moving in a more international direction” (2000, p. 175). Generations brought up with Yahoo!, MTV and CNN affirm this trend and are more likely to have some sense of global identification, although it remains to be seen whether this tendency crystallizes into a majority position and whether it generates a clearly focused political orientation.

Hence, the shift from government to governance is a potentially unstable shift, capable of reversal in some respects, and certainly capable of engendering a fierce reaction—a reaction drawing on nostalgia, romanticized conceptions of political community, hostility to outsiders (immigrants and refugees) and a search for a pure national state (e.g., in the politics of Haider in Austria). But this reaction itself is likely to be highly unstable, and a relatively short- or medium-term phenomenon. To understand why this is so, nationalism has to be desegregated. As “cultural nationalism” it is, and in all likelihood will remain, central to people’s identity; however, as political nationalism—the assertion of the exclusive political priority of national identity and the national interest—it cannot deliver many sought after public goods and values without seeking an accommodation with others, in and through regional and global collaboration. In this respect, only a cosmopolitan outlook can, ultimately, accommodate itself to the political challenges of a more global era, marked by overlapping communities of fate and multilayered politics. Unlike political nationalism, cosmopolitanism registers and reflects the multiplicity of issues, questions, processes and problems which affect and bind people together, irrespective of where they were born or reside.

Cosmopolitanism is concerned with disclosing the cultural, ethical and legal basis of political order in a world where political communities and states matter, but not exclusively. It dates at least to the Stoics’ description of themselves as cosmopolitans—“human beings living in a world of

human beings and only incidentally members of polities” (Barry, 1999, p. 35). The Stoic emphasis on the morally contingent nature of membership of a political community seems anachronistic after two hundred years of nationalism. But what is neither anachronistic nor misplaced is the recognition of the partiality, one-sidedness and limitedness of “reasons of political community” or “reasons of state” when judged from the perspective of a world of “overlapping communities of fate”—where the trajectories of each and every country are tightly entwined. States can be conceived as vehicles to aid the delivery of effective public regulation and equal justice and rights, but they should not be thought of as ontologically privileged. Cosmopolitanism today must take this as a starting point, and build a robust conception of the proper basis of political community and the relations among communities. The Kantian understanding of this, based on a model of human interaction anchored in co-presence, cannot be an adequate basis of this (Held, 1995, ch. 10). Cosmopolitanism needs to be reworked for another age.

What would such a cosmopolitanism amount to? In the little space available here, I cannot unpack what I take to be the multidimensional nature of cosmopolitanism (see Held, 2002). But I would like to end on a few words about cultural cosmopolitanism. Cultural cosmopolitanism is not at loggerheads with national culture; it does not deny cultural difference or the enduring significance of national tradition. It is not against cultural diversity. Few, if any, contemporary cosmopolitans hold such views (see, for example, Waldron, 1999; Barry, 2000). Rather, cultural cosmopolitanism should be understood as the capacity to mediate between national cultures, communities of fate and alternative styles of life. It encompasses the possibility of dialogue with the traditions and discourses of others with the aim of expanding the horizons of one’s own framework of meaning and prejudice (Gadamer, 1975). Political agents who can “reason from the point of view of others” are better equipped to resolve, and resolve fairly, the challenging transboundary issues that create overlapping communities of fate. The development of this kind of cultural cosmopolitanism depends on the recognition by growing numbers of peoples of the increasing interconnectedness of political communities in diverse domains, and the development of an understanding of overlapping “collective fortunes” which require collective solutions—locally, nationally, regionally and globally.

Cultural cosmopolitanism emphasizes the possible fluidity of individual identity—“people’s remarkable capacity to forge new identities using

materials from diverse cultural sources, and to flourish while so doing” (Scheffler, 1999, p. 257). It celebrates, as Rushdie put it, “hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs” (quoted in Waldron, 1992, p. 751). But it is *the ability to stand outside of a singular location (the location of one’s birth, land, upbringing, conversion), and to mediate traditions*, that lies at its core. However, there are no guarantees about the extent to which such an outlook will prevail. For it has to survive and jostle for recognition alongside deeply held national, ethnic and religious traditions (see Held and McGrew, 2000, pp. 13-18 and part 3). It is a cultural and cognitive orientation, not an inevitability of history.

The core requirements of cultural cosmopolitanism include:

- Recognition of the increasing interconnectedness of political communities in diverse domains including the social, economic and environmental;
- Development of an understanding of overlapping “collective fortunes” which require collective solutions—locally, nationally, regionally and globally;
- The celebration of difference, diversity and hybridity while learning how to “reason from the point of view of others” and mediate traditions.

Like national culture, cultural cosmopolitanism is a cultural project, but with one difference: it is better adapted and suited to our regional and global age.

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## Hegemony and the Riddle of Nationalism: The Dialectics of Nationalism and Religion in the Middle East

by  
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### What is the Riddle of Nationalism?

It has been a commonplace to view nationalism as the greatest, the most powerful single force in the modern world. It is indeed remarkable to consider how resilient nationalist movements are and how capable they have been in sustaining loyalties, eliciting sacrifice, and surviving prolonged failure. Leaving aside the question of when nationalism and nation-states arose in Europe, we may agree that beginning with the disintegration or contraction of the empires European national states created, much of human history for the last century and a half can be told in terms of five imperial disintegrations followed by five waves of nationalist or ethnic mobilizations.<sup>1</sup>

However, if nationalism—which appeals to the ethnic heritage, cultural history, and/or linguistic distinctiveness of groups—is so potent and irresistible a political force, so *natural* and intrinsic or “primordial” a factor in human affairs, then why did human history take so long to produce it, and to displace other identities (imperial, monarchical, tribal, feudal, class, religious)? Why are “religious” identities supplanting, or rivaling nationalism in many areas of the world, including, especially, the Middle East? Why are borders of states, which do not at all match nations, so stable? Why are there so few nation-states, when there are so many ethnically identifiable nations, or groups claiming to be nations and having all the right signs? How could the U.S. be so successful without anything that can seriously be considered as “American nationalism?” Why can the same group of people (Arabs in Israel, for example) experience a change in their national identity so rapidly and so many times? Why do nations, born in struggle against others, so often emulate their antagonists?

Each of these questions arises from frustration with the ability of primordialist theory to account for the flexibility, timing, rapid transformation, and chameleon-like aspect of contemporary nationalist movements. The result of this research has been to replace the old conventional wisdom with something new. The old conventional wisdom, whose *loci classici* are the famous 1963 essay by Clifford Geertz, “The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States” and several articles published in the 1970s by Walker Connor, was that ethnic and other “ascriptive” identities were mobilized in the modern era because of the incompleteness of modernization, the psychological and other strains of the transition from “tradition” to “modernity,” and the refuge available in old, bedrock, “real” communities of homogeneous peoples.<sup>2</sup> The new conventional wisdom, whose most often cited source is Benedict Anderson’s 1983 book *Imagined Communities*, is that identities are not “given”—that they were not stamped upon a discoverable set of groups in a “primordial,” pre-political period of human history. Rather, they are artifacts, changeable constructions of kindredness elicited under particular circumstances and discarded, adjusted, or traded for others under other circumstances.

It is worth taking a closer look at this new conventional wisdom. Its fundamental claim, reflected in hundreds of articles, dissertations, books, and grant proposals over the last fifteen years, is that identities of groups or of individuals do not have a status more fundamental than the choices individuals make about who they are. Cultural identities, in other words, whether politicized or not, do not exist independent of political processes which, consciously or accidentally, make them publicly relevant as norms that give some temporary order to a fluctuating array of practices, images of selfhood, and sensations of solidarity. From this constructivist perspective there is no “primordial identity”—no elemental, indestructible, authentic self which survives once all artificial and essentially false or inauthentic identities are abandoned or stripped away. Multiple identities there may be, but not organized in an ontological hierarchy which explains the emergence of putatively ancient, ascriptive, and especially kinship-oriented sentiments of attachment in response to the psychological and other strains of social mobilization.

This school of thought has been strengthened by the types of deconstructionist, post-modernist, and post-structuralist theorizing that have gripped literary and cultural studies since at least the early 1980s. These approaches challenged, indeed denied, any attempts to identify the “essential” meaning of a text by discovering its real code or the real intent of the author. Instead, the goal of scholarship is to show the variety of meanings that can be elicited from any text or work of art depending on the frame of reference constructed around it and depending on the proclivities, skills, and cultural orientation of the observer. For social scientists, first anthropologists and then sociologists, historians, and political scientists, this theoretical disposition suggested that it was incorrect to seek explanations for changes in identity, for the reappearance of faded and seemingly non-modern affinities, or for a puzzling stability in cleavage patterns despite the onslaught of modernity, by seeking the “real,” primordial, or “authentic” stratum of collective self-identification. By stressing instead the constituted character of identities, social scientists could adopt an approach to peoples similar to that adopted toward texts in literary criticism, asking questions about the path taken to arrive at beliefs in particular identities, about the strategies and practices which promoted these and not other possible identities, about the interests they served, and about the implications of change in economic, political, or international spheres, for the stability of particular identities as frames of reference for élites or publics.

Instead of viewing nationalism as the natural result of a modernization process which brings peoples into the final act of history, constructivism encourages appreciation of the never-ending-story aspect of identity formation and the likelihood that other substantive bases for political mobilization (including race, gender, religion, and class) will, under discoverable circumstances, displace the “national” as that identity for which people will sacrifice the most. These concepts and assumptions also encourage a focus on links between intra-state or intra-communal political competition and conflict between states or communities, and on political entrepreneurship, e.g., the way particular kinds of élites, positioned to benefit from virulent forms of nationalism, contribute to chauvinism and conflict.

Constructivists have a more nuanced understanding of political dangers and opportunities latent in different situations than their predecessors who

attributed national or ethnic conflict to the inexorable eruption of primordial hatreds. The constructivist or instrumentalist approach to the formation and transformation of political identity therefore led to work on the role of political élites as entrepreneurs able to invest their energies and enthusiasm in alternative identities attuned to changing circumstances and more likely, if adopted by their constituencies, to favor their own political prospects.<sup>3</sup> Such work often goes hand in hand with accounts demonstrating that a given political community, crystallized around one identity, was organized in the past and could be reorganized in the future according to a different identity, including an identity that now counted as “other.”

But these conclusions—that identities are constructed, that individuals have repertoires of identities, and that élites can produce different groups by shaping which identities within these repertoires are elicited and made effective—are themselves not entirely satisfying and in some ways raise as many questions as they answer.

For example, if identities, including national identities, are so fluid and fundamentally artifactual, then why has nationalism been so consistent a response to the break-up of empire? If there is nothing real behind national identities, no “real” anchor in social, economic, or cultural reality, and if élite interests are as changeable and élite manipulation as effective as this perspective encourages us to believe, then why have nationalist solidarities been so potent and long lasting? What accounts for the stability we observe in political identities, including national identities? Why has nationalism in particular been so powerful, and so regular in its contradiction of the expectations of social theory (e.g., Marxism, but also modernization theory)? What explains why culturally based identities, including nationalism, are sometimes stable despite shifting circumstances and efforts by ambitious élites to change them? What explains the rapidity with which identities which seem well established can disappear when the conditions said to affect those identities change so much more slowly?

These questions baffle constructivists, who generally prefer not to address them. But along with the questions listed previously, challenging the primordialist view, these are the questions we must be able to effectively address. Contemporary scholarship on collective identities, and the political

authority structures those identities support and are sustained by, is now at a point where we must either satisfy ourselves with new, and somewhat inconsistent bits of conventional wisdom—about the irrelevance or non-existence of primordialism, the infinite malleability of identity, the threat of bad “ethnonationalism” as opposed to the promise of good “civic nationalism,” the inevitability of nationalism as a political basis for modern life, and the surprising but deeply-rooted renaissance of religious appeals—or search for a new, coherent theoretical position. It is from this position that we may then proceed to salvage truths attached to the primordialist ideas many have discarded and link them to the constructivist insights that too often lead beyond the bounds of disciplined observation.

To Solve the Riddle:  
A Theory of Hegemonic Compliance

To build the necessary conceptual apparatus, let us begin with simple definitions of two basic but commonly confused terms: state and nation. A state is an *institution that enforces property rights*. Where there are no property rights, no stable expectations about what is mine and what is not, there is no state. Where there are vague or uncertain property rights, the presence of a state is vague or uncertain. Where systems of property rights conflict, there is a battle over which institution, if any, will be able to assert itself as the state in a particular area or over a particular group of people.<sup>4</sup> For my purpose here, the important thing to note about the concept of “state,” so defined, is that it is an organized apparatus, an entity which to one extent or another is bureaucratic and hierarchical.

A nation *is a large community whose members are full members simply by virtue of their mutual recognition of one another as sharing ascriptive cultural bonds more important than any other*. By “large” I mean sufficiently populous so that no one member can personally know all the other members of the nation. By “ascriptive” I mean characteristics that are impossible or extremely difficult to change, there being no *a priori* reason to exclude religion, language, territory, ethnicity, or race as *identity* features which may emerge as the markers of national membership in any particular case.

In 1961, Amitai Etzioni suggested a list of what we may think of as three mechanisms capable of producing compliance to the decisions of organizations (including states): coercive, utilitarian, and normative.<sup>5</sup>

The crudest of these mechanisms is simple coercion or the direct threat of coercion. For states this means that taxes and soldiers (the two most fundamental needs of any state) are elicited from target populations by force or the direct threat of force. A more efficient means of eliciting compliance is utilitarian—bribes, trades of services (including the enhanced protection of property rights or the grant of more property rights), for higher or more dependable flows of taxes and recruits. In Etzioni's classic formulation, the most efficient means of eliciting compliance is via normative mechanisms—beliefs among the target populations that it is right to comply, that it is one's duty to do so, regardless of whether fear of punishment for refusal to comply is present, and regardless of calculations that may be made about the balance of costs and benefits entailed in compliance. This kind of belief, a normative basis for compliance, is what is almost always meant by, but seldom specified to be, the meaning of legitimacy. In other words, what separates a legitimate from an illegitimate state is the presence of beliefs in the minds of those within the purview of that state that they should, for reasons of right and duty, comply with its orders.

In Etzioni's formulation a major source of strain in an organization (such as a state) is "incongruence" between the type of mechanism actually used (e.g., coercion) and the type formally appealed to (e.g., normative). In my formulation, however, a Guttman scale relationship exists among the different compliance mechanisms such that (1) utilitarian techniques of rule can only work efficiently if coercive control is believed to be available should utilitarian mechanisms fail; and (2) normative appeals cannot work in the long run to stabilize political rule unless those from whom compliance is elicited can reckon it to be in their interest to comply. In other words, just as latent coercion undergirds effective rule via utilitarian mechanisms, so do positive utilitarian calculations enable emphasis to be shifted to normative appeals.

It is here, however, that I must make an even more important departure from Etzioni's model. Etzioni argued that his was an exhaustive list of types of

power or types of compliance mechanisms. There are three, he claimed, and only three. I add a fourth—*ideological hegemony*. I consider presumptively true beliefs about contingent socio-economic arrangements or about the absolute truth, value, or relevance of different kinds of interventions in the public domain, as fundamentally important sources of power to some, and of disempowerment to others. When they can be constructed and when they are maintained, ideologically hegemonic beliefs provide states with an even more efficient mechanism for eliciting compliance than normative appeals to the legitimacy of state laws and decrees.

This is not a new idea. By presenting it I follow in a tradition going back to the “noble lie” in Plato’s *Republic*, but with twentieth century roots in the work of Antonio Gramsci. The basic claim is that beliefs can be held by masses of people who do not experience them as beliefs. That is to say these beliefs are not entertained as contingent on the presence or availability of supporting evidence. Nor can such beliefs they simply be discarded when evidence contradicting them is presented. *Ideologically hegemonic beliefs*, as I use the term, are beliefs which have no corollary attached to them, implicitly or explicitly, stipulating the conditions under which they could be abandoned. Such beliefs constitute a part of the framework within which, and the lens through which, events are perceived and judgments made. Hegemonic beliefs are what serve as the “givens” of a political community, even if they are not, and especially if “they” are not, understood as such. While normative appeals work to elicit compliance from individuals who judge that demands by the state are consistent with the formula of legitimacy that they accept as linking them to the state, ideological hegemony elicits compliance by burying it beneath the surface of calculated decision. Habits, culture, and treatment of dissent as evidence of insanity or criminality rather than contrary opinion—these are the stuff of hegemonic politics. Hegemonic beliefs, as Gramsci put it, appear not as claims about the world but as “common sense.” Hegemony is politics naturalized to be experienced as culture.

To recapitulate by way of two illustrations: Coercive compliance produces tax revenue by pointing bayonets at citizens who do not wish to pay. Utilitarian compliance produces tax revenue by trading services appreciated as valuable by taxpayers for the payment of their taxes. Normative compliance produces tax revenue by eliciting judgments that, despite the possibility and even attraction

of doing otherwise, paying taxes is one's duty, the right thing to do. Ideological hegemony produces tax revenue by transforming payment into a natural part of life, an habitual, routine activity which tax-payers cannot imagine avoiding and which they do not experience as the result of a choice or decision on their part. In a very different sphere one might ask, why did Germans slaughter Jewish children during the Holocaust? An explanation based on coercive compliance would contend that *Einsatzgruppen* soldiers and concentration camp guards acted out of fear of punishment if they did not. An explanation based on *utilitarian compliance* would attribute murderous behavior to acceptance of rewards and privileges for doing so that more than compensated for the effort involved. An explanation based on *normative compliance* would stress the strong commitment to Nazi ideology of those personnel recruited for performance of their duty to kill Jews. An explanation based on *ideological hegemony*, similar to that advanced by Daniel Goldhagen, would be that those involved in the mass slaughter were operating within an "eliminationist" frame of reference with respect to Jews within which it could not occur to them that Jews could be human beings or that the systematic eradication of Jewish children could be considered anything but the natural behavior of responsible members of the German *Volk*.<sup>6</sup>

One more adjustment is needed in Etzioni's compliance theory. Instead of simply observing the results of different choices by states to employ different compliance mechanisms, analysis can be based on the expectation that states or those who control states, whether out of competition with rival states or competition with rival élites within a state, will try to develop increasingly efficient compliance mechanisms. This will entail shifting the compliance mechanisms they rely on from coercive, to utilitarian, to normative, toward hegemonic. On the basis of this theoretical expectation we may proceed to consider nationalism as a formula for legitimacy. It is a particular kind of appeal designed to elicit compliance. Nationalist appeals arise and succeed under particular conditions. Ideologically hegemonic conceptions provide stabilizing distortions and rationalizations of complex realities, inconsistent desires, and arbitrary distributions of valued resources. They are presumptions which exclude outcomes, options, or questions, from public consideration. Thus they advantage those élites well positioned to profit from prevailing cleavage patterns and issue definitions. That hegemonic beliefs do not shift fluidly with changing realities and marginal interests is what makes them

important. That they require *some* correspondence to “objective” realities and interests is what limits their life and the conditions under which they can be established and maintained. By linking particular conceptions and preferences to commonsensically-established myths, symbols, and categories, hegemonic ideas camouflage particular distributions of power.

In *The Modern Prince* Gramsci discussed the patterns such struggles display, and the factors that determine the outcome of competition among hegemonic projects. The result of his effort, though limited, is suggestive of a partial theory explaining the conditions under which beliefs are more or less likely to gain, retain, or lose their status as hegemonic. The first of three elements in this theory is the effect of what he called “incurable contradictions” and what I have called “gross discrepancies” between prevailing conceptions and “stubborn realities.” Although the central tenet of Gramscian thinking is the susceptibility of people to accept contingent, or even false and counterproductive beliefs as commonsensically valid, Gramsci also emphasized the difficulty of sustaining beliefs which too explicitly, directly, and systematically are contradicted by immediate perceptions.

In this regard, Gramsci suggests that counter-hegemonic ideas (the second factor in this theory) offering a more comforting and “parsimonious” mystification of both “stubborn reality” and elements of irreducible self-interest, will be a necessary component in the overthrow of an existing hegemonic conception or an important factor in the failure of some other contender for that status. The point is that no politician, confronted with beliefs honored or advanced as hegemonic, is likely to treat them as problematic unless some other schema has been made available in terms of which the belief can be understood or articulated as *an interpretation* of reality and the imperatives of national life, rather than as the direct and unavoidable expression of immutable facts and ultimate values. It is thus reasonable to expect that change in the status of hegemonic beliefs, and the outcome of struggles to establish beliefs as hegemonic, will be linked to the availability and mobilization of new ways of thinking, and not simply to the accumulation of evidence.

The third factor in this theory of hegemonic construction and deconstruction is political and ideological entrepreneurship, seen as the transmission belt

carrying ideas with hegemonic potential forward into the political arena, challenging other rivals or established hegemonic beliefs, superseding them, replacing them, or failing to do so. This kind of politics is practiced by imaginative leaders who are not risk averse, by intellectuals, and by the organizations they build or control. Of course most people who challenge basic assumptions of their community's political life fail. Whether because of their own shortcomings, the solidity of prevailing beliefs, or the ineffectiveness of their ideas, their likely fate is to be dismissed as either cranks or criminals. Still, the inventors and promoters of hegemonic projects are people who understand the decisive importance of "reclipping political questions in cultural forms."<sup>7</sup> By shaping the cognitions and values of élites and masses these entrepreneurs seek to (re)define, for their own purposes, the allowable boundaries and the appropriate stakes of political competition.

Following on Gramsci, I suggest a preliminary and partial theory of the establishment or breakdown of hegemonic constructions based on a combination of three elements. To overthrow an established ideologically hegemonic conception or explain its breakdown requires the presence of all three of the following:

- (a) a severe contradiction between the conception advanced as hegemonic and the stubborn realities it purports to describe;
- (b) an appropriately fashioned alternative interpretation of political reality capable of reorganizing competition to the advantage of particular groups;
- (c) dedicated political-ideological entrepreneurs who can operate successfully where fundamental assumptions of political life have been thrown open to question, and who see better opportunities in competition over basic "rules of the game" than in competition for marginal advantage according to existing rules.

Obversely, to establish a belief as hegemonic, or successfully defend its status as such, requires *at least* substantial correspondence between the claims of the belief and the political realities it purports to describe; the absence of a widely

accepted basis for an alternative interpretation; *or* the absence of political entrepreneurs capable of profiting from its overthrow or breakdown.

### Nationalism and Struggles for Hegemony in the Twentieth Century Middle East

Hegemony operates in scholarly circles as it does in political systems. In the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, historians and social scientists concerned with nationalism overwhelmingly tended to frame their research as investigations of a force or sentiment that seemed to be so pervasive and natural a feature of modern life as to be interesting only as an *explanans*, not as an *explanandum*.<sup>8</sup> Born at Valmy, nationalism appears in these interlocking literatures as both the solvent that would eliminate old and inefficient “ascriptive” affinities, and the “glue” that would produce or help peoples discover a more satisfying and/or more efficient basis for political solidarity. As a feature of the Enlightenment, it is depicted, along with state expansion and industrialization, as an integral part of the overarching transformation of life from tradition to modernity. The interlocking consequences of these processes served as the master narrative for what was happening and would happen to humankind in this epoch.

Among scholars of the post-Ottoman Middle East, this disposition carried over, and lasted somewhat longer than elsewhere. Whether for good or for bad, American, European, and Middle Eastern scholars believed, and often took it for granted, that nationalism would prevail in the region. Social scientists, and especially and most explicitly political scientists, asked *not* whether nationalism would prevail as a dominant normative basis for eliciting compliance and establishing political stability in the Middle East, but rather what *form* of nationalism would prevail, when, and how.

How early did “real” nationalism emerge in the Middle East? Would national states, regardless of their geographic scope, be Islamic, liberal, or socialist in tone and coloration? Questions were asked about how and when “national independence” and then “national integration” would be accomplished and

under whose auspices, not about whether nationalism was the only available framework for advancing the Middle East toward effective government.

The Islamic Revolution in Iran, however, and the rise of powerful, impossible-to-ignore Islamist movements in almost every Middle Eastern country, helped trigger a dramatic shift in scholarly frames of reference. Nationalism in the Middle East, or at least in Middle East oriented scholarship, was transformed. From an unproblematic background assumption about the type of political formula that would legitimize political authority in the region, nationalism became a highly problematic type of appeal whose future was in doubt—a political formula of dubious strength and of decreasing interest to ambitious élites.

Using the conceptual and theoretical apparatus presented above, the currently dominant account—an account that I find more satisfying than any other—can be expressed as follows. In the centuries following the Islamic conquests the political formula of Islamic empire became hegemonic in Southwest Asia, Egypt, and the Maghreb. Islam surrounded and afforded a legitimizing resource to a series of imperial states, the last of which was the Ottoman Empire. Over a long period of decline, however, the hegemonic status of Islam as a political formula was undermined. Losing Islam as a hegemonic resource, Imperial rulers and reformers shifted to various normative (Ottomanism, Pan-Islamism, pan-Turanism), utilitarian (the Dual Kingdom formula, new patron-client ties with rural and urban notables), and coercive techniques, none of which succeeded in producing the efficient extraction of resources necessary to survive in a world of competitive powers on the scale of Britain, France, the United States, Germany, and Russia.

Though their own hegemonic theories of nationalism and modernization encouraged Western observers to believe that the collapse of the Ottoman Empire signaled the very end of Islam as a serious political force and its replacement by nationalism, these judgments were false. Beliefs about Islam as the framework of the polity had lost their hegemonic status, but they survived nonetheless, along with élites who could, under changed circumstances, present one version of Islam or another as an attractive alternative to socialist, nationalist, or liberal formulas. Nor did nationalism, however popular it became as an idiom of anti-imperialist mobilization and as an internationally

sanctioned and attractive formula for intellectuals, military men, and political leaders, become established throughout the area as hegemonic—naturalized as the basis of political community in the way that Islam had been for centuries. To be sure, within certain groups and for certain periods, nationalism can be said to have achieved ideologically hegemonic status. Within Republican and especially military circles in Turkey, among dedicated Nasserists and Baathists, within the mid- to upper echelons of the FLN and the neo-Destour, within the Jewish state created by Zionism, and even among the rank-and-file of some of the Palestinian organizations, no politically ambitious person could speak publicly as if he thought his audience had any doubts about the authentic and permanent national character of the political community.

The analytic cost of these misjudgments is well reflected in one of the most effective schemas developed for the organization and comparison of national movements in the Middle East: Clement Henry Moore's theory of nationalist consciousness, presented in his book *Politics in North Africa*.<sup>9</sup> Moore treats the dialectical relationship between European colonial control and mobilization within each colony by Middle Eastern élites opposed to that control as the primary determinant of the character of post-independence national regimes and their capacity to meet successfully the multiple challenges associated with modernization. In this "colonial dialectic" Moore identifies three stages, or "moments," of "nationalist consciousness" each typified by a particular kind of élite. The first "liberal assimilationist" moment is expressed by scions of the upper class whose access to European education leads to nationalism as an emblem of modernity and civilizational equality.

While planting the nationalist seed, these élites reject their own uneducated masses, ape European ways, and suffer isolation and disillusionment when both the masses and the Europeans reject them. Second moment élites are nationalists whose consciousness is shaped by their resentment of the colonial presence and of European culture, and their embrace of the traditional symbols and forms of authority of the masses. But their relationship to tradition (to Islam in most of the Middle East) is instrumental—exploiting old solidarities to achieve cultural and political independence from Europe, but without reorganizing power to include the masses in an egalitarian nationalist movement. The third (and final) moment of nationalist consciousness is achieved by the intellectuals, army officers, and professionals of lower middle

class origin. They reject the presence of colonial power as the second moment did but as the first moment did not. They reject the traditional symbols, identities, and prejudices of the masses as the first moment did and the second moment did not, but they also accept, as neither the first nor second moments did, modern (European) organizational forms and fundamentally egalitarian principles of nationalism to achieve a broad-based mobilization of the nation and genuine participation in politics for the masses.

In Moore's account all outcomes are considered as breakdowns on the path to, or forms of, a genuine (third moment) "nationalist" consciousness taken as the only sort of political identity open to Middle Easterners over the long run. In this sense the national aspect of the region's future was (without Moore having specified or acknowledged it as such) hegemonic for him as a researcher. The hegemonic status of his belief in nationalism as natural and inevitable, while giving his work clarity and elegance, also places a stringent limitation upon it. His model of the colonial dialectic and three moments of nationalist consciousness, presented as an explanation of the most likely historical path from European colony to national state, takes the national state form as the terminal condition of Middle Eastern political life. Such an approach rules out the possibility of a continuing dialectic involving Islamic, or otherwise non-nationalist moments of political consciousness.

It is of course true that in most of these states nationalist appeals did predominate, and that in each case appeals to national identities and values provided some measure of normative assistance to coercive and utilitarian techniques of governance. Yet in the region as a whole nationalism was not embedded in the culture and discourse of public life so deeply as to make alternative appeals seem absurd to the masses or irrelevant to potential counter-élites. In any event, regardless of the status of nationalism as the taken-for-granted formula for political legitimacy in the region after World War I, it is a separate matter to ask about the status of specific nationalist projects in specific countries or about the relative success or prospects for success of different versions of nationalism. These are, indeed, the questions about which Moore's theory has the most to say.

But if one is to use the theory to focus on the variable political success of different formulas for stabilizing states and for making their rule more

efficient, then what is needed is a category of political technique beyond the ability of élites to explicitly elicit sacrifices and compliance using national appeals. One needs, indeed, a concept and theory of hegemony. As I have noted, among certain ruling groups and wider strata in Middle Eastern states nationalist ideas did achieve hegemonic status—in Turkey, for example, under Attaturk, Tunisia under Bourguiba, arguably Egypt under Nasser, and Israel, under Ben-Gurion. In these systems discourses of nationalism were so well institutionalized that culture as well as ideology protected these regimes from the consequences of their policy failures and rising levels of dissatisfaction—maintaining the political ostracism of élites representing potential counter-hegemonic projects who might otherwise have been able, more quickly, to mount effective challenges.

Yet even in those countries, and within those circles, where nationalism was hegemonic, its status as such could not be maintained. The triple conjunction of gross disparities between what the nationalists (of all stripes) promised and what they delivered, the availability of widely understood religious notions of political identity, and the presence of ambitious and talented Islamist (and Jewish fundamentalist) élites able to use those ideas to explain nationalist failures and advance their own solutions, opened “wars of position” over the meaning of political identity in polities throughout the Middle East. Among the results were revolution in Iran, a culture war and assassination of the Prime Minister in Israel, civil war in Algeria, harsh repression in Tunisia, an Islamist Prime Minister in (Kemalist) Turkey, and assassination, violence, and an anti-Islamist slowdown in democratization in Egypt. Thus only a theory pertaining to the conditions under which a formula for political legitimacy is more or less likely to become hegemonic, or be maintained in that status, can explain some of the most interesting patterns of Middle Eastern political life in the last two decades.

It is partly because nationalism as the future was hegemonic for the theorist, partly because Moore’s theory itself lacked a concept of hegemony, and *despite* a dialectical aspect which could straight-forwardly have been extended to explain subsequent, non-nationalist moments of political consciousness, that Moore failed to anticipate Islamist and Jewish religious mobilization based on a non-nationalist or anti-nationalist consciousness and a rather sudden and rapid decline of nationalist projects throughout the region. Accordingly, the

full value of Moore's schema can be appreciated only if his terminology is recast to incorporate distinctions among:

- 1) conditions for the hegemony of a type of political formula, of which nationalist and religious fundamentalist are both examples, which can support and be supported by what Gellner called the "entropizing" aspects of social mobilization, industrialization, and mass political participation;
- 2) conditions for the hegemony of the *national* type of political consciousness within a particular epoch or under very general economic, international, and political circumstances;
- 3) conditions for the hegemony of a type of nationalist consciousness within a particular political system.

Distinguishing between questions concerning (1) and (2) is crucial for scholars such as Gellner, Anderson, Hobsbawm, and Greenfeld, in their investigations of the logic, timing, or prerequisites of nationalism from a long-term historical perspective.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, distinguishing between questions (2) and (3) is what preoccupies most contemporary analysts of Middle Eastern affairs. Their task has been to map and explain competing strains of nationalist mobilization within particular political communities and religion-based rivals to nationalist mobilization.<sup>11</sup> The usefulness, indeed the necessity, of hegemonic analysis for accomplishing this kind of task is nicely illustrated by patterns of political conflict and change within Israel.<sup>12</sup>

In 1949 the State of Israel could lay convincing claim to having achieved the central objectives of classical Zionism. Jewish independence in the Land of Israel had been attained and enjoyed wide recognition in the international community. Distinctive social, scientific, cultural, and economic achievements were a source of both pride and reassurance. Zionism had created, or revived, a new Jewish personality and, perhaps, a model society. Enough of Jerusalem lay under the state's control for the Israeli government proudly to declare the city as the capital of the country. All Jews, anywhere in the world, enjoyed rights to

citizenship upon arrival within the borders of the Jewish state. Nor did any power enforce limits on Jewish immigration.

In the first two decades of independent statehood, Israeli politics was dominated by competition among rival leaders and factions within the Labor Zionist movement—the political force that had been largely responsible for Zionist achievements. In order to share opportunities with Mapai to govern the country, the “activist,” or militantly irredentist wing of Labor Zionism abandoned its espousal of territorial maximalism. The religious parties, preferring political spoils to political messianism, became Labor’s junior partner. Herut and other “Land of Israel” oriented groups were marginalized within a “State of Israel” whose politics revolved around issues of security, economic progress, immigrant absorption, and attendant processes of social adjustment. The liberation or redemption of Biblically promised territories, or religious commitments to advance the coming of the Messiah through political action, were ideas that virtually no one discussed as politically significant.

A crucial feature of this political landscape was the hegemonic status achieved by the Armistice Lines of 1949—the “Green Line.” Not only the vast majority of Israeli citizens (both Jewish and Arab), but virtually the entire non-Arab world accepted Israel’s 1949 boundaries—bigger than the United Nations’ Partition Plan borders, but considerably smaller than any historically based description of the Land of Israel—as the Israeli state’s permanent and legitimate frontiers. Although the anthems and the official documents of Menachem Begin’s Herut Party (forerunner to the Likud) proclaimed loyalty to the Revisionist dream of a Jewish state throughout the entire Land of Israel (including both banks of the Jordan River), by 1965 the party responded to the disinterest and skepticism of Israeli voters by paying only lip service to its traditional program.

The crucial point here is that the hegemonic status of the 1949 Armistice Lines as Israel’s legitimate and permanent borders was a key structural support for the Ben-Gurionist state-centered, secularly oriented, Israeli-Jewish national project—a project epitomized by Ben-Gurion’s concept of “*mamlachtiut*” (Jewish [or Hebrew] *etatisme*). However, only by taking into account both passionate ideological attachments to the idea of the Whole Land of Israel

present within every major segment of the pre-1948 Zionist movement, as well as the military superiority enjoyed by Israel over both Jordan (in the West Bank) and Egypt (in the Gaza Strip), and the ideological transformation of Israeli politics after 1967, can one appreciate how great a political achievement was the pre-1967 exclusion of the territorial issue from the Israeli national agenda. As exaltation and amazement after the June victory replaced the fear and depression that had preceded it, the limits Ben-Gurion and his allies had placed on the state's geographic shape (and on the state's metaphysical significance) lost their hegemonic status. The dramatic expansion of Jewish control over the very heart of Biblical Israel brought the question of Israel's rightful size and shape, and its potential world historical or cosmic significance, back to the center of its political life. Mythologies of the Land of Israel and the emotions, appeals, and symbols associated with "*geulat haaretz*" ("redemption of the Land"), *Eretz Yisrael haShlema* ("the completed Land of Israel"), and "*atchalta d'geula*" ("dawn of redemption") were once again mobilizable on behalf of expansionist political programs.

These myths and beliefs (alternative interpretations of political reality) afforded unprecedented opportunities for Revisionist and Religious Zionist élites to deprive the Labor Party of its forty-year domination of Zionist and Israeli politics. Nor did it take very long for these politicians to realize how fundamentally the Six-Day-War had changed the contours of the political terrain. By emphasizing instead of suppressing irredentist sentiments they could launch a war of position over the proper conception of the State of Israel—a struggle whose outcome promised opportunities to remove the chiefs of the Labor Party from the commanding heights of the polity and replace them with Revisionist, religious, and Activist candidates for leadership.

Revisionists were extremely well-positioned to launch such a struggle. They had always celebrated a Jewish state whose territorial expanse would correspond to the world-historic destiny and regional if not global power potential they ascribed to the Jewish people. The results of the 1967 war seemed to confirm that the path to national greatness lay in territorial expansion and the elevation of those who had been most faithful to this principle (i.e., the Revisionists) to national leadership.

With the expansion of the territory controlled by the Jewish state an accomplished fact, Menachem Begin's record of espousing this expansion could no longer be used as convincing evidence that he was too reckless to be trusted with the Premiership. Using his impeccable credentials as a whole Land of Israel loyalist and his substantial oratorical talents, Begin donned a yarmulke (Orthodox Jewish head covering) and made religiously traditionalist, populist, and hardline anti-Arab appeals to Israel's emergent Oriental Jewish majority.

Leaders of the militant "young guard" faction of the National Religious Party also found in the territories issue a road to national prominence. They envisioned a geographically "completed" State of Israel acting as the instrument and sign of a culminating Messianic-Redemptive process. The results of the war were interpreted as a giant step forward in the process, a process which could be facilitated by political leaders sensitive to the cosmic implications of policies to be implemented in and toward the territories. Exploiting their intimate links to Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook and their instrumental role in establishing and supporting Gush Emunim, these men tapped a painful sense of inferiority and unfulfilled mission experienced by a generation of religious Zionist youth. They represented young Orthodox Israelis who were proud to have served in the army for the first time in substantial numbers during the 1973 war and who were anxious to prove their worthiness by winning the whole Land of Israel for the Jewish people, as the previous secular-sabra generation had won Jewish statehood.

The third group of political entrepreneurs to raise the banner of the whole Land of Israel were hundreds of second echelon personalities within the Labor Zionist apparatus—"Activists" who had been forced to lay aside their territorial maximalism in order to participate in governing the country and who had, even so, never achieved positions of supreme leadership in the military or civilian branches of the State. They saw in the post-1967 resumption of settlement and pioneering activities in the West Bank and Gaza an opportunity to revive the slumbering national genius of the Jewish people and trigger new waves of immigration, making Zionist ideology and "pioneering" commitment again respectable, instead of a favorite subject for satire. They explained the powerful emotional response of Israeli Jews visiting East Jerusalem and other portions of the territories as an expression of the normalness of the Jewish people's existential attachment to its patrimony and

as a mystical but organic bond that would build and redeem the Jewish people while the people itself built and redeemed the land.<sup>13</sup> This group was the animating force behind the “Movement for the Whole Land of Israel” (established in August 1967). After its demise, the ascendancy of the Likud, and the latter’s alliance with the National Religious Party, they either joined Gush Emunim as non-religious fellow travelers, supported Moshe Dayan in his alliance with the Likud, or formed small ultranationalist parties such as Tehiya (1979), Tzomet (1983), and Moledet (1988). These latter parties have seen themselves as candidates for national leadership and hoped to achieve it by an uncompromising commitment to the whole Land of Israel, a sharpening conflict with the Arab world (including the “transfer” of large numbers of Palestinians out of the country), and the need, eventually, to establish a “*pur et dur*” regime capable of protecting Israel’s sovereignty and security within its enlarged borders.

The Six Day War thus set the stage for a war of position over the shape of the state, the fundamental meaning to be attached to the state’s existence, and the normative basis for the Israeli-Jewish political community. From 1967 to 1977 ideological and political entrepreneurs from each of the various streams of Zionist political life refashioned available ideational resources to develop hegemonic projects centered on the substantial expansion of the boundaries of the state. Then, following the May 1977 elections, an annexationist alliance among these groups, led by the Likud, took power and embarked upon a wide-ranging effort hegemonically to institutionalize beliefs that the size and shape of the State of Israel corresponded to a conception of the whole Land of Israel that included as its irreducible core all the territory of Palestine between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

Begin’s objective was nothing less than the hegemonic establishment of a new Zionist paradigm, supported by a new history of the independence struggle, a new relationship between religion and politics, and a new emphasis on the Land, people, and Bible of Israel, rather than on the boundaries, citizens, and laws of the State of Israel. If in the first decade following the 1967 war a set of hegemonic conceptions which had protected the power of the Labor establishment for two decades was displaced, after 1977, those whose ideas had been trivialized by formerly hegemonic notions sought to do the same to their anti-annexationist opponents. The heroes and honored myths of one Zionist

subculture represented the villains, falsehoods, jealousies, and bombast of the other.<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless Likud leaders were aware that the hegemonic project of their main ally—the religious/Messianists grouped within Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful)—was enormously more ambitious than their own. Gush's ambition was to eliminate nationalist, secular Zionism (including Revisionism) as a candidate for hegemonic status in Israel and to replace it with their own militantly religious conception of Zionism's nature and purpose. In the meantime Gush Emunim shared with Revisionist Zionism, and with the Activist school of Labor Zionism, a primary commitment to the expansion of the geographical contours of the state. For Gush Emunim territorial expansion was crucial as the decisive stage in a world-historic and divinely ordained "process of Redemption" (*taalich hageula*). But although the Likud understood the divergence between its integral nationalist vision and the religious fundamentalism of Gush Emunim, it needed the latter to implement its annexationist policies, the cornerstone of which was the massive settlement of Jews in the occupied territories.

From 1977 to the end of the second Likud government in 1984, and during the third Likud government (1990-1992), the beginning and end of government policy was to create conditions that would incapacitate any future government's effort to disengage from these territories. Abandoning the relatively small scale policies of settlement implemented by previous Labor-led governments, Begin's governments undertook a wide-ranging, multi-faceted campaign to encourage Jews to settle in all parts of the territories, encourage Arabs to emigrate from them, and strip as many legal, administrative, and psychological meanings as possible from the pre-1967 Green Line. Although economic and military rationales were commonly invoked for settlement construction, its ultimate purpose was to set in motion more fundamental demographic, ideological, cultural, and psychological processes.

Accordingly, drastic increases in expenditures on settlements were accompanied by policies in the educational, broadcasting, judicial, and administrative spheres designed to accelerate the disappearance of the Green Line from the practical life and ordinary language of all Israelis.<sup>15</sup> After coming to power the Likud changed the government's terminology for settlement in the occupied

territories, substituting the term “*hitnachalut*” (evoking Biblical injunctions and promises to “inherit” the land through settlement) for “*hityashvut*,” an emotionally neutral term.<sup>16</sup> The terms “occupied territory” or “West Bank” were forbidden in news reports. Television and radio journalists were banned from initiating interviews with Arabs who recognized the PLO as their representative.<sup>17</sup> Early in 1983 the Television Board ruled that settling the West Bank and Gaza strip no longer constituted a “subject of public controversy,” thereby permitting advertisements for settlements to be broadcast as “public service announcements.” It also began enforcing a ban on generic terms (such as “personalities”—*ishim*) to refer to PLO members unless the terms employed clearly labeled them as terrorists.<sup>18</sup> In 1980 and 1986 laws were passed outlawing any non-scholarly meetings between Israelis and PLO affiliated Palestinians, whether in Israel or abroad, forbidding expressions of support for the PLO, including representations of the Palestinian flag, and declaring as ineligible for participation in parliamentary elections any political party not recognizing Israel’s character as “the state of the Jewish people.”

This effort to establish its own ideological position as bounding what would be considered legitimate was reflected in the rhetoric of Likud politicians and in the party’s tactics in the 1984 election campaign. During the 1984 and subsequent campaigns the Likud and its allies began promoting themselves as comprising “*hamachane haleumi*” (the national camp). By so doing they reversed Ben-Gurion’s campaign of hegemonic ostracism against the right by suggesting that those who questioned the principle of *Eretz Yisrael hashlema*, including the Labor Party, were no longer fit to be considered members of the national community.

The long run purpose of these policies was to transform Israeli beliefs, allegiances, and interests—to re-shape the cognitive map of Israelis to conform with an image of the country which included the territories as no different from other regions of the state. If this were accomplished all future governments would be prevented from publicly entertaining “land for peace” options with respect to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

As I have shown elsewhere, and as is readily apparent from the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish fundamentalist, the state expansion project advanced by the Likud-religious-Labor Activist alliance did

institutionalize Israeli rule of those areas so deeply that Israeli democracy is put at risk by government policies to achieve territorial compromise. But the annexationist project, and the radical version of Jewish nationalism associated with it, did *not* succeed in establishing themselves as hegemonic within Israel itself. *Presumptions* about the greater significance of the “Land of Israel” as opposed to the “State of Israel,” about the future of the territories as integral parts of the State of Israel, and about the divinely or historically chosen destiny of the Jewish people to stand against the world in its struggle for the whole Land of Israel, did not replace *arguments* about these topics within the discourse of leading politicians or most ordinary Israeli Jews.

This failure of hegemonic construction was due in part to the vigorous struggle of anti-annexationist Israelis against the political and cultural policies sponsored by successive right-wing governments, due in part to international forces which, if they did not impose a territorial compromise on recalcitrant Israeli governments, did force them to explicitly defend and justify every move they made, and of course due to the fierce and prolonged struggle of Palestinians to destroy—via the *intifada*—the notion that Israelis could feel as comfortable in the West Bank and Gaza as within Israel proper.

The *Kulturkampf* continues in Israel. It will continue until either an anti-annexationist coalition risks democratic breakdown by permanently disengaging Israel from the West Bank, and thereby from the Revisionist/fundamentalist hegemonic project within Zionism, or until time, the settlers’ untiring efforts, and, probably, the “transfer” of most Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza, remove political compromise with the Palestinians as a “discussible” option within Israeli politics. In these respects Israel strongly resembles many of its Muslim-Arab neighbors. In Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and elsewhere, Islamist projects, representing an array of pietistic, fundamentalist, and chiliastic appeals, have helped unseat nationalisms as potent hegemonic formulas, have made it extremely risky for non-Islamist governments to remove them from the scene, but have not succeeded in supplanting national and secular definitions of the political community as the natural and unchangeable order of things. Instead, no political formulas reign, in Israel and in most of the Middle East, on a hegemonic basis, forcing governments to employ less efficient techniques for eliciting compliance (including widespread coercion and crippling economic policies) and affording

significant opportunities to radical political and cultural entrepreneurs who may reasonably seek to turn their dreams and fantasies into political realities.

### Solving the Riddle

The conundrum identified at the beginning of this essay juxtaposed two seemingly contradictory claims about nationalism. One claim, or belief, is that national identities are real, perhaps primordially so, that nationalism is so pervasive, so regularly a feature of our world, and so liable to take precedence over class identities that when it fades we should expect it to return and when it returns we should normally expect it to prevail. The second, opposing claim, is that national identities, as other identities, are artifacts of political choices made by individuals or groups. Interests are real, at least perceived interests, and choices made among these interests produce identities which may or may not be national and, if national, will have a substantive content reflecting the parochial interests of those who foster particular versions of the nationalist message rather than the “authentic” nature of the nation as history or God produced it.

In the 19th and 20th century Middle East we have seen that Islam and nationalism, in their various guises, are not themselves “real,” in the sense that any one of them is the authentic identity of a discernible group. We have seen how, as the constructivists would have it, identities come and go in response to political circumstances, the efforts of élites to survive and exploit those changing circumstances, and the empathic capacities of masses of Middle Easterners to respond to their alternative visions. In many countries, including Israel, we see ongoing political (and often violent) struggles over just which identity, which vision, within the community’s repertoire is to be honored.

But all is not fluid. Amid the melange of appeals and discursive maneuvers real identities do exist—two kinds of real identities. One is a certain overlap in the repertoire of available tropes that makes certain kinds of appeals possible. Arabic speakers, for example, living in the Middle East, can see themselves as members of an Arab national community, of individual homeland national communities, or as members of an Islam-based community. Buddhist, Puerto Rican, or Russian identities, on the other hand, are not available. In another

sense, some identities have, among certain groups and for some periods of time, been established as hegemonic and thus experienced as “real” by substantial numbers of Middle Easterners. The reality that hegemony can create, the sense of something as given and permanent and immanently real (even though it is not), is the political fruit of the practice of hegemonic politics. Explaining how some identities and the institutions associated with them last much longer than the power structures that fostered them, understanding why identities can seem to lose their potency so suddenly, and clarifying the particular dynamics of struggles over community boundaries and community identity—these are the analytic payoffs of a theory of ideological hegemony.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The first of these waves was the struggle of Latin American nationalist movements against the Spanish and Portuguese Empires. After World War I a second wave of Eastern European, Balkan, and Middle Eastern movements crystallized in response to the collapse of the German, Austro-Hungarian, Tsarist, and Ottoman Empires. With the *relatively* rapid, though often tumultuous, move toward decolonization by Britain, France, and the Netherlands after World War II, an even larger number of Asian, African, and Middle Eastern nations arose to fill the independent state frameworks left behind by the colonial powers. A fourth wave of national mobilization began in various Western European and other OECD countries in the 1970s as ethnic minorities in regions such as the Basque country, Catalonia, Brittany, Wales, Scotland, Quebec, and Corsica, whose political significance as such had long since been presumed to have disappeared, expressed dissatisfaction with the terms of their political incorporation into larger state frameworks. A fifth wave of new and renewed nationalist movements has appeared on the scene in response to the attenuation and the collapse of the Soviet empire—in Central Asia, the Baltic states, Eastern and Central Europe, and in many regions of Russia itself.

<sup>2</sup> Clifford Geertz, “The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States,” in *Old Societies and New States*, Clifford Geertz, ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1963). Walker Connor “Self-Determination: The New Phase,” *World Politics* (1967) Vol. 20, no. 1; “National-Building or Nation-Destroying?” *World Politics* (1972) Vol. 24, no. 3; and “The Politics of Ethno-Nationalism,” *Journal of International Affairs*, (1973), vol. 27, no. 1.

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- <sup>3</sup> Arthur N. Waldron, "Theories of Nationalism and Historical Explanation," *World Politics*, Vol. 37, no. 3 (April 1985).
- <sup>4</sup> For more on this definition see Ian S. Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank/Gaza* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).
- <sup>5</sup> Amitai Etzioni, *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations: On Power, Involvement, and Their Correlates* (New York: The Free press, 1961) pp. 4-22.
- <sup>6</sup> Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996)
- <sup>7</sup> Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, p. 147 and 183.
- <sup>8</sup> Gale Stokes, "The Undeveloped Theory of Nationalism," *World Politics* vol. 31, no. 1 (October 1978) pp. 150-60.
- <sup>9</sup> Clement Henry Moore, *Politics in North Africa* (Boston: Little Brown, 1970).
- <sup>10</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).
- <sup>11</sup> In the European and general comparative context, a good recent example of this kind of analysis, focusing on liberalism and nationalism, is Ernst B. Haas, *Nationalism, Liberalism, and Progress: The Rise and Decline of Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).
- <sup>12</sup> The following section is distilled from my presentation of the Israeli case in *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) pp. 352-395.
- <sup>13</sup> "Livnot ulehivanot," "to build and to be built by," was a pre-state Labor Zionist slogan.
- <sup>14</sup> In a 1963 letter to the Israeli author Haim Guri David Ben-Gurion called Begin "a thoroughly Hitlerite type" who, if raised to power, would "put his thugs into the army and police headquarters and will rule just like Hitler ruled Germany . . ." See the Hebrew version of Michael Bar-Zohar's biography *Ben-Gurion* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1975-77) Volume 3, p. 1547. See also Myron J. Aronoff, "Establishing Authority: The Memorialization of Jabotinsky and the Burial of the Bar-Kochba Bones in Israel under the Likud," in *The Frailty*

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*of Authority, Political Anthropology*, Vol. 5, Myron J. Aronoff, ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1986) pp. 105-130.

- <sup>15</sup> Concerning the energetic efforts of Likud governments to promote the larger “map image” of the state in Israeli schools and atlases, see “David Levy’s geography lesson,” *The Jerusalem Post* editorial, August 20, 1986; David Arnow, “Maps Matter,” *The Forum*, Vol. 3, no. 1 (Autumn 1990) pp. 17-18; *Davar*, May 31, 1988. For the concept of “map image” and its role in the construction of a hegemonic image of the shape of a state see John Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster Question 1917-1973* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) pp. 11-25.”
- <sup>16</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *Zionism and Territory: The Socio-Territorial Dimensions of Zionist Politics* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1983) Research Series no. 51. p. 174.
- <sup>17</sup> “Witch Hunt,” editorial, *Jerusalem Post*, April 5, 1982 and *Jerusalem Post*, April 20, 1982. Report by Agence France Presse, Oct. 27 1981, JPRS, 79364, November 3, 1981, p. 37.
- <sup>18</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, January 18, 1983 and March 7, 1983.

## Dharma and the Bomb: Postmodern Critiques of Science and the Rise of Reactionary Modernism in India<sup>1</sup>

by  
Meera Nanda

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### Of Fireflies and War

**A**midst the headlines about nuclear-war worries in South Asia last month, a little noticed news item appeared on the BBC World News.<sup>2</sup> The BBC reported on May 14, 2002, that in the middle of the dangerous military build-up along the border with Pakistan, with careless talk of nuclear war in the air, the Indian government had started funding scientists in the nation's premier defense research institutes to develop techniques of biological and chemical warfare based upon Artha-shastra, a 2,300 years old Sanskrit treatise on statecraft and warfare. The venerable Sanskrit book is supposed to include recipes for "a single meal that will keep a soldier fighting for a month, methods for inducing madness in the enemy as well as advice on chemical and biological warfare," according to Shaikh Azizur Rahman, the BBC reporter from Mumbai. Space scientists and biologists are trying to replicate the ancient formulas for feeding the soldiers a ration of a special herbs, milk and *ghee* (clarified butter) that will keep them going for a month without food. Other projects include "shoes made of camel skin smeared with a serum from owls and vultures than can help soldiers walk hundreds of miles without feeling tired. . . . A powder made from fireflies and the eyes of wild boars that can endow night vision. . . . A lethal smoke by burning snakes, insects and plant seeds . . ." Rahman reported that scientists next plan to turn their attention to other ancient manuscripts which "claim to provide secrets of manufacturing planes which can not be destroyed by any external force and remain invisible to the enemy planes." The scientists are reported to be "excited about the possibilities and do not for a moment think that the idea is crazy."

What is one to make of it? Comic relief? Even a nostalgia trip for those aghast at the prospect of nuclear annihilation (if only all our weapons came out of

fireflies and boars and insects and plants . . .)? Looked at in isolation, this is just a funny little story, a side show. After all, what does this minor project matter when India continues to spend millions of rupees (close to 18 percent of the national budget each year) for developing or acquiring modern methods of mass destruction?

But this is no sideshow. This project is not about defense. It is about Hindu supremacy. This project is not aimed at an external enemy, but at extending the reach of Hindu nationalism in India's schools and other institutions in the public sphere. This project is about the rising tide of reactionary modernism in India. To place this incidence in a larger context, let us go back to May 1998 when India test fired nuclear devices in the desert of Pokharan.

### The Bomb: India Goes Nuclear

Four years ago, the media around the world carried a picture that should have sent a chill down our collective spines. It showed crowds of ordinary, everyday men and women dancing in the streets of New Delhi to celebrate India's successful nuclear tests. (Think about it: *celebrating* the making of a nuclear bomb.) For these mobs, the technological hardware of the bomb was a symbol of their national greatness, their strength and even their virility; it was a Hindu bomb against the Islamic bomb of Pakistan. It is not a coincidence that many among the jubilant mobs cheering India's technological prowess also serve as foot-soldiers in the Hindu nationalist crusade against all those who refuse to accept the equation of India with Hindu Dharma. Such persecuted minorities include not just Muslims and Christians, but also secular artists, writers, filmmakers and political activists accused of disrespecting Hinduism. An India that celebrates its bombs is an increasingly intolerant and illiberal India.

Anti-nuclear activists and progressive intellectuals in and from India, struggling valiantly to retain some degree of hope for a return to sanity, have argued that these pictures pander to Orientalist expectations of India—ignorant, nationalist third-world know-nothings. The Western media's emphasis on mobs celebrating the nuclear tests, the critics claim, misrepresent the actual sentiments of the majority of Indian people, who by-and-large, are opposed to nuclear weapons, or are at least indifferent to them. The overwhelming public approval for the prospect of India building the

bomb captured by public opinion polls, the argument goes, was a statistical aberration stemming from the bias of the poll-takers for urban folk with telephone connections.

For the sake of peace in the subcontinent, one can only hope that this optimistic reading of Indian public opinion turns out to be true. Yet, the fact remains that while the Hindu nationalist supporters came out in the streets, with the full backing and blessings of the ruling Hindu nationalist party, the silent majority remained, well, silent. The scattered, albeit impassioned, protests by Communists, feminists and other left peace and disarmament movements failed to bring out the presumably disapproving majority—if it is really disapproving—into the streets.

While it may be difficult to accurately gauge the width and the depth of nationalist sentiment in the Indian public, the jubilant mobs cannot be easily dismissed as a statistical aberration or as an Orientalist stereotype created by the Western media. These mobs are only the visible signs of a large ideological counter-revolution that has been going on behind the scenes in schools, universities, research institutions, temples and yes, even in supposedly “progressive” new social movements organizing to protect the environment or defend the cultural rights of traditional communities against the presumed onslaught of Western cultural imperialism.

### Dharma: Hindu Packaging of the Bomb

I will have a lot more to say in the rest of the paper about the anti-modernist tendencies of the Gandhian, postmodernist and old economic nationalist, anti-imperialist left alliance. But for now, I want to focus on how the bomb and the science behind it are being packaged in a Hindu idiom and propagated in schools, temples and the entertainment media as an unfolding of a holistic, unified, ultra-modern science already contained in ancient texts of the Hindus.

The ideologues of Hindu nationalism and indeed, many Indian scientists and ordinary people on the streets claimed that the bomb was foretold in their sacred book, the *Bhagavad Gita*, in which god declares himself to be “the radiance of a thousand suns, the splendor of the Mighty One. . . . I have become Death, the destroyer of the worlds.” If Robert Oppenheimer used the Hindu imagery after the first nuclear test in 1945 to express fear and awe at

what science had wrought, the Hindu partisans see in this imagery a cultural and religious justification for their nuclear weapons. Indeed, some observers have gone so far as to claim that the detonation of the nuclear bomb was a *religious* phenomenon in which Indians saw “the triumph of divine power . . . the workings of providence, grace, revelation and a history guided by an inexorable faith.”<sup>3</sup>

There is plenty of evidence for a distinctively Hindu packaging of the bomb. Even though the Hindu nationalist BJP government responsible for the blasts eschewed religious rhetoric in its official pronouncements, it gave its parent organization, the RSS (Rashtriya Svyamsevak Sangh) and its cultural arm, the VHP (Vishva Hindu Parishad) a free rein to claim the bomb for the glory of Hindu civilization and Vedic sciences. Shortly after the explosion, VHP ideologues inside and outside the government vowed to build a temple dedicated to Shakti (the goddess of energy) and Vigyan (science) at the site of the explosion. The temple was to celebrate the Vigyan of the Vedas which, supposedly, contain all the science of nuclear fission and all the know-how for making bombs and much much more. (It is this ancient science that the defense ministry wants to tap into, as the BBC story reveals). Plans were made to take the “consecrated soil” from the explosion site around the country for mass prayers and celebrations.

Mercifully, the fear of spreading radioactivity scuttled these plans. But the Hinduization of the bomb has continued in many ways: there are reports that in festivals around the country, the idols of Ganesh were made with the atomic orbits in place of a halo around his elephant-head. These “atomic Ganeshas” apparently brought in good business. Other gods were cast as gun-totting soldiers. At an official level, the weapons and the missiles under construction are given distinctly mythological names from Agni (the fire god) to Trishul (trident, the symbol of god Shiva). The religious imagery was sufficiently pronounced to have alarmed a group of religious-studies scholars in America. They issued a letter of concern to “protest the use of religious imagery to glorify and to legitimate nuclear exercises.”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, invocation of gods in the context of nuclear weapons has become a constant feature of public discourse. During the current standoff between India and Pakistan, India’s most popular newsmagazine, *India Today*, prefaced its tasteless warmongering with references to Mahabharata and the “thousand suns.” The net result of these references is to turn these ugly developments into something like the *Mahabharata*, in which god sided with the virtuous.

The invocation of goddesses of Shakti and Vigyan is not fortuitous at all. Hindu nationalists have claimed that the bombs and the missiles are symbols of India's advanced science and technology, the roots of which lie in its ancient religious traditions. The idea of constructing a temple to the goddess of learning at the site of the explosion was meant to propagate the age-old popular myth that Vedas presage all-important discoveries of science, especially quantum and nuclear physics. A popular version of this myth was reported by reported by Jonathan Parry in 1985:

In Benaras, I have often been told—and I have heard variants of the same story elsewhere—that Max Muller stole chunks of the Sama-Veda from India, and it was by studying these that German scientists were able to develop the atom bomb. The ancient rishis (sages) not only knew about nuclear fission, but they also had supersonic airplanes and guided missiles.”<sup>5</sup>

The sacralization of war has meant a simultaneous scientization of sacred Hindu texts. Technological modernization, even in its most ugly form, is being encompassed into the traditional, religiously sanctioned understanding of the natural world.

### Of Satellites and Horoscopes

Exactly the same pattern unfolded in another episode, this time involving satellites and horoscopes. In April 2001, the Indian Space Research Organization made history by successfully putting a satellite into the geostationary orbit, 36,000 km. above the earth. In July 2001, the University Grants Commission, the central body overseeing funding of higher education, announced its plans to offer courses in Vedic astrology as science courses in India's universities and colleges. Astrology has been declared to be at par with other natural sciences and will be offered as a part of natural science curricula. This is in addition to other new courses including training in *karmakanda* (priest craft), Vedic mathematics and other “spiritual sciences.” Other courses in “mind sciences,” including meditation, telepathy, rebirth, mind control are being planned. The same space power that takes justified pride in its ability to touch the stars, will soon start educating its youth in how to read our fortunes and misfortunes in the stars and how to propitiate the heavens through appropriate *karmakanda*. For all we know, the

satellites launched by India's own launch vehicles might some day carry Internet signals that will make horoscopes easier to match!

To the outsiders, the ruling Hindu nationalist government likes to present a face of enlightened, forward-looking democracy. Since the September 11 attacks, India has presented itself to the West as an ally in its fight against Islamic fundamentalism. This image hides another reality. Under the cover of democracy, the terms of political discourse in India are changing. Nominally secular institutions in the public sphere—from education and research to the media and government agencies—are increasingly adopting an aggressively Hindu identity.

The Hindu justifications for nuclear weapons, the attempt to read modern science into Vedic texts and the teaching of Vedic astrology as a science—all of these have to be understood in the larger context of Hindu nationalism. When you put these symbolic gestures in the larger context of the BJP sponsored research into Vedic sciences, the Hindu nationalist project of rewriting the history of Indus valley civilization as the cradle of the “Aryan” civilization, the alteration of school text books to Hinduize the curricula and to actively seek religious legitimation for economic and social policies, the Dharma and the bomb connection does not seem as “Orientalist” as some may think.

### A Symptom of Reactionary Modernism

I submit to you that this Hinduization of the bomb is a sign of a phenomenon best described as reactionary modernism in which a society embraces modern science and technology, while rejecting the ethos and the ethics of the Enlightenment, or to put it another way, where technological modernization occurs without the benefit of secularization and liberalism. This phenomenon was first named and described by Jeffrey Herf (1984) in his well-known book, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*.

What makes Herf's study of German Fascism relevant for contemporary India is his thesis that the Nazi support for cutting-edge technology and sciences was *not* merely a strategic bow to modernity to further an essentially irrational and anti-modern agenda. Rather, Herf argues—as I will in the case of India—reactionary modernism in Germany was underpinned by a

distinctive, philosophically sophisticated worldview which, to quote Herf: “incorporated modern science and technology into the cultural system of German nationalism, without diminishing the latter’s romantic and anti-rational aspects.” Rather than allow modern science and technology to challenge the romanticism and holism of the volkish ideology, German reactionary intellectuals, including Ernest Junger, Carl Schmitt, Oswald Spengler and Martin Heidegger succeeded in selectively assimilating science into the language of community, nation, *Kultur* and finally blood and race. Modern science was disarmed of its critical potential by turning it into an expression of the “Aryan soul” and rejecting whatever could not be so distorted to fit.

### Three Theses

I am now in a position to state three theses on which I will expand. One, under the jargon of cultural authenticity, Hindu nationalists are in the process of absorbing science into myth, making science simply a belated, Westernized and distorted affirmation of the truths already known to Vedantic metaphysics of non-dualism and holism.

Two, the political legitimacy of, and the philosophical arguments for this reconciliation of science and myth have been prepared *not* by the Hindu right but by self-described “progressive” intellectuals and activists who broadly share the postmodern suspicion of modern science as a metanarrative of binary dualism, reductionism and consequently, domination of nature, women and Third World people. In India, for at least two decades now, it is the populist anti-capitalist left that has identified the Enlightenment and science as the biggest obstacle to creating a good society. The demand for an indigenous, “patriotic” science has been the loudest among the intellectuals and activists who identify themselves as progressive in politics but indigenist in their cultural beliefs. The left-postmodernists hoped that once non-Western peoples, especially women and other oppressed groups among them, are allowed to bring their own cultural values and life-experiences into knowledge production, they will heal modern sciences’ divide between facts and values, reason and emotions, nature and culture. *The Hindu reactionary modernists have claimed these same holist, non-logocentric ways of knowing not as a standpoint of the oppressed, but for the glory of the Hindu nation itself.* The Hindu right, in other words, enthusiastically accepts the left’s diagnosis that objectivity and value-freedom of modern science is the source of alienation

and domination, but then it offers the high-Brahmanical view of the world—the same world-view that has, incidentally, legitimized the caste system and a stifling form of patriarchy—as the ultimate source of a non-alienating, non-dualist science. What’s more, the Hindu right is able to certify elite Brahmanical ways of knowing as scientific by denying, in a postmodern style, that modern science is any more objective, any closer to truth, than any other way of knowing. Whereas the postmodernists were concerned to expose the presence of myth and metaphysics in objective science of nature, the religious right has turned the argument around, and declared myths to be science.

This brings me to my last and more positive thesis: traditional cultures contain in them rudiments of materialist, pragmatic thinking which, far from being incommensurable and different, is perfectly compatible with the worldview of and methodological demands of modern science. In India, these proto-sciences have existed not in the mystical idealism of the Vedas and the Upanishads, but in the heterodox non-Brahmanical traditions of Lokayata and Carvaka. *These* aspects of traditional cultures, when updated through rigorous scientific education, can serve as seedbeds of a secular and liberal culture in non-Western societies. Thus contrary to the prevailing wisdom among feminists and multiculturalists, who look to idealized “local knowledges,” as alternatives to modern science, I insist that *modern science* is the standpoint of the oppressed in the Third World.

In the rest of this paper, I am going to expand on these three points. But as you well know, this whole issue of nature of science and other ways of knowing has been at the heart of the so-called science wars. I know I am entering a minefield here. So I want to take a minute to clarify the terms of the debate.

### The Terms of the Debate

First, I want to make it clear that I do *not* see all the good and honorable people who seek solutions to the dilemmas of modern life in traditional societies, religions or in some other kind of non-instrumental community life as reactionary revivalists or backward-looking romantics. I most emphatically do *not* condemn any and all attempts to retrieve a usable past from non-Western heritage as reactionary. (I myself look back into India’s intellectual history in order to retrieve cultural roots of the Indian enlightenment from the heterodox anti-Vedic philosophies). What concerns me about the

particular retrieval that has gone on under the postmodernist-Gandhian-ecofeminist alliance is that the Brahmanical past they are retrieving is usable only for a new authoritarian Hindu nationalism.

I grant that the indigenist-left critics of modernity have the best of intentions. If they have quarreled with the Enlightenment, it is because they seek to extend its promise of tolerance and autonomy to other cultures so that they are not forced to conform to one universal story. If they quarrel with science, it is because they think it has become a new source of mystification and domination. I also do not deny that, apart from some notable crossovers, the anti-Enlightenment left in India has taken a firm stand against Hindu nationalism. Indeed, far from being knowing allies of the right, the indigenist-left intellectuals and activists are facing persecution from the current regime. While I acknowledge their courage and good intentions, I do question the soundness of their diagnosis of the ills of the modern age and the efficacy of their prescriptions for “non-Western modernities.” What worries me is that after all the years of denigrating any rational critique of indigenous cosmology and traditions as elitist, or Western or both, the left’s present stand for secularism may be too little, too late and too rife with self contradictions.

Second, my critique does not apply to all of postmodernist tradition but only to the so-called science question. Postmodernism at its best aspires to be an equal opportunity naysayer: If it denies the possibility of truth beyond the local contingencies of language and power, it denies it as much for the holy truths of Hinduism, or Christianity or Islam as it does for the grand narrative of modern science. While some Third World adapters of postmodernism try valiantly to remain even-handed and take a skeptical, deconstructive look at the grand narratives of their own traditions, in most cases, they end up as essentialists when it comes to their own heritage, and deconstructivists when it comes to the West. But *all* non-Western postmodernists, religious or lay, left or right, *without exception*, resolutely decry one particular grand narrative—namely, modern science. The very rationality and aspiration of modern science and the Enlightenment project more broadly—namely, the ability to put the inherited givens of a culture, paradigm or a mode or life, to a systematic, collective test of reason and experience in order to arrive at knowledge that transcends the confines of the gives—is considered theoretically impossible, and politically flawed. It is seen as a peculiarly Western propensity and a source of its colonialism and other pathologies.

When I criticize postmodernist influences in postcolonial thought, it is this view of science that I am concerned with.

Third, following the lead of neo-Gandhian anti-modernists like Ashis Nandy, Vandana Shiva and others, many have become convinced that the very logic of science must be questioned, because modern science-based development has led to an absolute and growing immiserization and cultural displacement of women, native peoples and traditional family farmers. They also claim that development has given the state a *carte blanche* to coerce people, to tinker with traditional community practices and such. Science, as the phrase goes, has become the reason of the state.

I will cite only two counters to this thesis. One, contrary to the critics' claims, the fact is that nearly all indices of human development have more than doubled in the last two and half decades in India. And I am talking here of the Amartya Sen-inspired Human Development indices of such things as life expectancy, literacy and gender equality compiled by the United Nations Development Program, and not some econometric data from the World Bank or IMF. Yes, the rate of improvement is uneven with women and lower castes lagging behind. Yes, India could have done much better had it paid attention to the basic needs of those on the bottom, without sacrificing economic growth. But this is a far cry from saying that things have gotten worse or that people are getting poorer in absolute terms. Secondly, in one of the rare qualitative studies of this kind, the well-respected agronomist N.S. Jodha found some interesting results which challenge the conventional wisdom of modernization as a source of hardship and anomie. Jodha found that over a period of two decades, even those villagers in Western India who had not seen an increase in real incomes reported a significant increase in well being. The villagers felt their lives were getting better because they did not have to depend upon the patronage of their caste superiors, they no longer felt compelled to follow inherited occupations for they had more choices and greater access to modern amenities. Freedom from patronage, opportunities for individual choices, a belief in progress: all these are modern liberal aspirations which these villagers had discovered for themselves. Many of these improvements, incidentally, were made possible thanks to the state intervention, the same state that is treated by postmodernist critics as authoritarian and colonial in its mindset.

What I am trying to get to is this: the despair over the violence of modernity is totally disproportionate to the actual facts on the ground. While much

remains to be done, the situation does not call for a total condemnation of modernization.

### Hinduization of Science

Qualifications and clarifications out of the way, let me now return to the three theses I laid out. Let us start with Hinduization of science. I mentioned how the bomb is being packaged in the idiom of dharma, complete with atomic gods. The Hinduization goes much deeper and wider. *All* of modern science is in the process of being knitted into a new Indo-centric, Aryan science. If I may borrow a term from Louis Dumont, what we are witnessing is a process through which high Brahmanic Hinduism is encompassing modern science into itself. That is to say, Hinduism is presenting itself as already containing the worldview, the methods and even the findings of modern science, especially of quantum physics, ecology and medicine. Science simply becomes a somewhat inferior, materialistic aspect of Vedic wisdom. (Encompassment is the traditional Hindu way of dealing with heterodox ideas. It leaves room for different views to be accepted at their own terms, but always tends to include them in a hierarchic relation subordinated to the ultimate truth of dharma. The other is not recognized in its otherness against which one's own beliefs can be tested, but claimed as an aspect of, approach to, or aberration from the truth contained in its own doctrine.)

I mentioned the work of Jonathan Parry earlier. In his ethnography of Benaras, Parry describes meeting orthodox Brahmans in this ancient city who sincerely believe that Max Muller, the 19<sup>th</sup> century German Orientalist, stole chunks of *Sama Veda* from India, and it was by studying these texts the German scientists were able to develop their atomic bomb program. This is not just a quaint story. It is a part of a very widespread, and deep-seated belief, at least among the upper-caste Hindus, that the Vedas and the Upanishads are highly developed sciences, at par with "Western" science.

This notion of Hinduism-as-science is a part of the nationalist myth which recurs repeatedly in the writings of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century reformers including Ram Mohan Roy, Vivekananda, Dayanand, Gandhi and to some extent, even Nehru. These reformers hoped to revitalize and modernize Indian culture not by a reformation and an Enlightenment-style critique of traditional ways of thinking, but by a *restoration* of the supposedly scientific spirit of the ancients.

With the Hindu nationalists in ascendance, this idea of Hindu dharma as science has moved, once again, to center-stage. The government is funding research projects to modernize astrology, Vastu Shastra, Vedic mathematics, Vedic physics and traditional medicine. New books have appeared, some of them co-authored by U.S.-based scientists in important universities and sold aggressively around the world through Amazon.com. These books claim to have found such modern discoveries as electricity and microscopes, the solar spectrum and cosmic radiation, photosynthesis and plastic surgery, binary numbers and advanced computing techniques in the Vedas. Specifically, these scientists claim that the number of syllables in Vedic verses, which supposedly corresponds to the number of bricks in fire altars and the number of beads on the rosary, actually encodes the exact distance between the moon and the sun, the speed of light, the Big Bang, etc. With the Hindu nationalists at the helm, these discoveries are quickly finding their way into school textbooks.

This is not all. Claims for Hinduism-as-science are part of the larger argument that equates ancient Hindus with the original Aryan-speaking people. In the emerging Indo-centrism, the landmass of India is claimed to be the original home of the Aryans who presumably took the Vedic myths and concepts to ancient Egypt and Greece. Thus, the Indo-centrists claim, Egyptian and Greek sciences, and by lineage, modern science, are Hinduism's "daughter sciences," or at least "sister sciences." Hindu India becomes the cradle of all civilization.

This self-aggrandizing Indo-centrism would be laughable if it were not so dangerous. It is laughable because it makes preposterous claims based on shoddy logic and even shoddier evidence. It is dangerous because these claims are made with an earnest nationalistic fervor, backed by the state which is committed to making India Hindu. I am concerned with Hinduism-as-science not so much because the harm it can do to the growth of modern science and technology, but because of the harm it can do to the development of a secular and egalitarian public culture in India. Hindu ideologues are not going to close down the labs: they are hitching their prospects for entry into the club of elite nations on nuclear, computer and genetic technologies. Hinduism-as-science is a part of the cultural project of modernizing without allowing the rationalism and secularism of the Enlightenment to challenge the traditional cultural values. By declaring—by definition—Hinduism as the mother of all science, gives the gloss and

prestige of modernity to rituals and institutions which are based on a magical understanding of the natural world and a hierarchical understanding of the social world.

Such a glossing is not without serious political consequences. It is true that ideas do not drive history. But the choice between invoking the authority of ancient texts and transcendent myths or seeking publicly testable evidence makes a huge difference to the quality of debate and the terms of sociability in the public sphere. This need for creating new democratic norms of sociability is nowhere greater than in India which has one of the most liberal constitutions, superimposed on a society that lives by the idea of natural inequality. The danger of Hindu science is that it will further entrench the holistic, organismic worldview as our national ethos, and a source of public morality. Moreover, absorbing science into myth and rituals—the hallmark of reactionary modernism—makes the defense of religion appear like a defense of reason and modernity, and brings out the mobs in the streets who want to become modern without losing their traditional identities.

### Postmodernism as an Ideology of Reactionary Modernism

So far so good. But recall that I am making a bigger and, to some, more controversial claim, i.e., that the postmodern and postcolonial denigration of modern science has provided the philosophical grounds for Hindu science. On the face of it, my thesis sounds highly implausible. Whereas the Hindu right is busy claiming the products of modern science and technology as a part of its own heritage, the postmodernist and postcolonial intellectuals have sought to *insulate* non-Western cultures from modern science, which they see as alien and oppressive. When the postmodern critics turn to local cultures and “ethno-sciences,” they are not seeking to establish these as the mother of modern science. On the contrary, the whole point of ethnoscience has been to establish that non-Western cultures can produce *wholly different sciences* informed by pacific, cooperative, womanly values of nurturance and sustainability which would never lead to such things as nuclear bombs. How can I ignore all these differences and impute the postmodernists of aiding and abetting the project of Hindu science?

As I said at the outset, it is not the intentions but the *logic* of postmodernist critics of science that has opened the door to the religious right. A logic which denies distinctions between myth and science, ideology and

knowledge, might and right runs the risk that myth, ideology and might will be clothed as scientific truth. And that has what has indeed come to pass in India today. But more specifically, there are at least three postmodernist arguments against science which one finds repeated, almost verbatim, in the arguments for Hinduism-as-science. These are: one, arguments against dualism as a source of domination of the other; two, arguments for critical traditionalism and standpoint epistemology; and three, arguments for epistemic charity. In order to understand why these arguments would have a resonance for Hindu nationalists, it is important to understand how they argue their case.

The case for Hinduism as science hinges on Hinduism's purported holism or non-dualism which does not differentiate between the domains of the material world and the spiritual and social world: all aspects of the entire cosmos are supposed to be products of pure consciousness and eventually merge back into it. Conveniently forgetting that this unity is a purely metaphysical and mystical unity, not accessible to the ordinary human sensory experience or reason, the Hindu nationalists elevate it to the level of a science—the Hindu equivalent of the unified field theory!—that grasps the interconnections of the world. They correspondingly elevate yoga and other traditional methods of divining associations between heavens and earth as legitimate Hindu methods of science which are supposed to be as rational within the unified cosmopolis of Hinduism as the experimental method is within the Judeo-Christian dualism between a transcendent law-giving God and his creation.

This holism would have remained a fantastical romance but for the tremendous philosophical support it has found from the postcolonial, feminists and ecofeminist critics of science. Critiques of dualism and binary thinking lie at the heart of these critiques of science as a source of domination. Let me explain.

Gayatri Spivak, a self-described “deconstructivist, feminist Marxist,” defined her role as a postcolonial critic as someone who can say an “impossible no” to Western conceptual categories which she as an intellectual inhabits most intimately. Why did she and many other bright, erudite diasporic scholars from India feel compelled to renounce western concepts, which as Spivak admitted, are an intimate part of their intellectual heritage? They, like the rest of the “new humanities” in North American universities, have taken a linguistic turn: they have come to see Western knowledge itself as a source of

colonial power, for it was by objectifying, quantifying and classifying the colonized, that the Western powers had been able to control it. Colonialism ceased to be political-economic domination, but came to be seen as an epistemological domination, a *colonization of the mind* by alien conceptions of what is real, what is right and what is desirable. While it was possible for earlier critics of imperialism to oppose the economic and political domination of the West but still accept the universality and legitimacy of Western science, postcolonial and other influential anti-Enlightenment intellectuals demanded that critique of imperialism must mean decolonization of the mind and culture. The only true progressives were those segments of Indian population—the peasants, the traditional masses—who lived their lives in community and harmony, as fish in the water, unself-conscious of the basis of these traditions and unsullied by the rationalism and materialism of modern science and Enlightenment. This position was first developed by neo-Gandhian intellectuals led by Ashis Nandy and others at the Center for Study of Developing Societies and the scholars-activists associated with the Patriotic and People's Science and Technology group, who drew upon Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend and the '60s critics of instrumental reason. They were later joined by feminist and postcolonial critics who are influenced by feminist standpoint epistemologies and Foucaultian equation of knowledge and power.

I submit that this demand for decolonization of mind is nothing but a demand for a holist or re-enchanted science which leads straight to Hinduism-as-science. The heart of postmodern, feminist and postcolonial critique has been that modern science is dualist, that it differentiates and separates the domains of culture from nature, knower from the known, matter from spirit, reason from myths and emotions, public from private, etc. But the postmodernist claim, reason is preferred over emotions, objectivity over an open embrace cultural values, not because they bring us closer to truth, but because they further patriarchal and imperialist goals. This dualism is the source of “epistemic violence” because it forces the “other” to conform to the categories that serve the ends of power. It has become axiomatic in feminist and science studies that women and non-Western people appreciate interconnections, they don't think in binaries but in wholes. This was the whole point of critical traditionalism of neo-Gandhians like Ashis Nandy, ecofeminists like Vandana Shiva. This position had strong sympathies with feminist standpoint epistemologies, which also saw women as less prone to dualist thinking. Any doubts regarding the validity of feminist or non-Western knowledge are put aside by using sociology of science arguments—

which I call epistemic charity—which claim to have shown that all claims to truth are equally socially constructed and none can claim to bring us closer to truth.

India was a fertile ground for these ideas, *not* because India is suffering from a real bad case of mental and economic colonialism—as the critics of modernity claim—but because of the populist, anti-modernist orientation of Indian intellectuals, a legacy of Gandhi’s conservative revolution. Indeed, neo-Gandhians including such influential figures as Ashis Nandy, Vandana Shiva, Clause Alvares, Ziauddin Sardar were the major conduits between science studies, postcolonial studies in the West and the popular movements at home. These are important public intellectuals, with a substantial following in new social movements. In my forthcoming book, *Prophets Facing Backward: Postmodern Critiques of Science and the Making of Hindu Nationalism in India* (Rutgers University Press and Permanent Black), I document how these ideas spread through the ecofeminist and people’s science movements in India. In practical terms these ideas have meant a defense of the moral economy of the peasant including the gender and caste relations of traditional family farmers and their caste-based local courts, an opposition to urban industrial intervention in rural affairs, an organized opposition to development projects, sometimes overriding what the local people themselves wanted, a staunch anti-Americanism which translates into ridiculing liberalism and human rights, but above all, an overwhelming desire to learn from, respect and cherish “the people.” Any critique of the people’s self-destructive customs and objectively false knowledge is frowned upon as elitist and rationalist. Indeed, “rationalist” has become one of the worst insults that can be hurled at an intellectual. Interestingly, these exercises in postmodernism-inspired populism fed back into science studies and feminism as evidence of the standpoint epistemologies and alternative sciences.

If these good populists ever take the time to read the right-wing critiques of modernity, they will have to, if they are honest, admit a shock of recognition. The populist defense of moral economy of traditional India is nothing other than the philosophy of “Integral Humanism” that is the official doctrine of the ruling Hindu nationalist party. As I mentioned above, the epistemological harmony and non-dualism between nature and culture, between individual and collective, between facts and values that ecofeminists and feminist standpoint epistemologists celebrate is precisely what Hindu science celebrates as Vedic epistemology. The cooperation, nurturance and

harmony the Gandhian and postmodernist proponents of marginal knowledges celebrate is precisely what the integral humanists celebrate as the Hindu idea of a good society in which different castes are bound to each other as limbs to a body. The critical traditionalism of Ashis Nandy and the postcolonial insistence upon recovering the indigenous conceptual framework is precisely what the nationalists demand when they insist that Hindu Dharma should guide what we take from the West.

These resonances are not lost on reactionary modernists and they have actively sought to co-opt the left's initiatives in order to win respectability. Indeed, a leading ecofeminist—Vandana Shiva—has become a leading light of Hindu ecology and makes regular appearances in neo-Hindu ashrams in North America. Her work is most respectfully cited in *The Organiser*, the official journal of RSS, the cultural arm of Hindu nationalist parties. India's leading feminist, who long ago took the culturalist turn and formally joined Ashis Nandy's group, is routinely interviewed and cited in neo-Hindu publications. The work of ethno-science scholars Dharampal and Claude Alvares, is cited with great admiration in Hindu science texts. What's more, the populist left opposition to the Green Revolution, genetically modified crops and other science intensive initiatives, is routinely co-opted by the ultra-nationalist, autarkic elements of the Hindu right, as are their more constructive programs for reviving traditional technologies.

The tragedy is that in the rush to denounce dualism of modern science, the critics have completely overlooked one essential fact: the lack of separation between nature and culture, matter and spirit of the much ballyhooed holism of Indian ways of knowing has traditionally provided the cosmological justification for India's peculiar institution, namely caste. The natural inequalities of human beings and their separation into hierarchical though intimately interconnected castes is not an aberration of Hinduism but justified by the central dogmas of dharma and karma. These dogmas depend upon a unified understanding of nature and culture: the distinctions between human beings are justified by distinctions in the very order of nature. Indeed, the real victims of oppression—namely, the untouchables and other lower castes—understood the hoax of dualism very well. It was for this reason that they have been the staunchest supporters of the Enlightenment in India. The interests of the oppressed are served by breaking the cosmopolis and demanding, unlike the Hindu science, that our knowledge be equally accessible to all through sensory experience and reason.

In conclusion, what I have described is a wedding in progress: a wedding of science with myth, superstition and nationalism. Such a wedding was not ordained by circumstances, but was arranged by well-meaning but ultimately dangerous philosophers. This is one marriage I am afraid is going to last until a whole lot of violence and hatred and misery finally do the two apart. For the sake of all that is decent, I hope against hope that this union ends in a speedy divorce.

### Notes

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1 This is the text of a paper I read at the annual convention of the American Sociological Association, July 2000, held in Washington D.C. A version of this paper will also appear in my forthcoming book, *Breaking the Spell of Dharma: A Case for Indian Enlightenment*. New Delhi: Three Essays Press.

2 "Indian defense looks to ancient text" by Sheikh Jazzier Raman, BBC News, May 14, 2002 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

3 William Harman, "Speaking about Hinduism and Speaking Against it," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. Vol. 68, No. 4: 733-740.

4 The text of the letter can be found on the website <http://www.acusd.edu/theo/risa-l/archive/msg00782.html>.

5 Jonathan Parry, "The Brahmanical tradition and the technology of the intellect," in Joanna Overing (ed.) *Reason and Morality*, London: Tavistock Publications, p. 206.

## Marx, Weber and the Critique of Capitalism\*

by  
Michael Löwy

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Despite their undeniable differences, Marx and Weber have much in common in their appraisals of modern capitalism: they share a vision of the capitalist economic system as a universe where “individuals are directed by abstractions,” (Marx), where impersonal relations and objects [*Versachlicht*] replace personal relations of dependence, and where the accumulation of capital becomes an end in itself and, by and large, irrational.

Their analysis of capitalism is inseparable from a critical posture—explicit in Marx, more ambivalent in Weber. But the content and inspiration of the critique are very different. And, whereas Marx banks on the possibility of overthrowing capitalism by workers of socialist persuasion, Weber is a fatalistic and resigned observer to the mode of production and administration that seem to him to be inevitable.

### I

The anti-capitalist critique is one of the main strong points extending throughout Marx’s work, and gives it its coherence. This does not prevent one from seeing a certain evolution in his thought: whereas the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) is insistent on the historically progressive role of the bourgeoisie, *Capital* (1867) is more prone to denouncing the ignobility of the system. Nothing could be more false than to oppose, as is so often done, a young “ethical” Marx to a mature, “scientific” Marx.

Marx’s anti-capitalism is grounded in certain implicit values or criteria, the most frequent among them being:

(a) Universal ethical values: liberty, equality, justice, autonomy, self-accomplishment. The articulation between different human values constitutes a coherent whole; that one can design a *revolutionary humanism* that constitutes a principle benchmark for the ethical rejection of the

capitalist system. The moral indignation against the infamies of capitalism burst from every page of *Capital*; it is an essential dimension of that which makes the impressionable force of the work in its dual political and scientific dimension. As Lucien Goldmann has written, Marx did not “mix” the distinction between fact and value, but developed a dialectical analysis in which explication, understanding and valorization are rigorously inseparable.<sup>1</sup>

(b) The point of view of the proletariat, a victim of the system and its fossilizing potential. This class-based perspective inspires—as Marx clearly recognizes in the preface to *Capital*—his critique of bourgeois political economy. It is from this point of view that values like “justice” are reinterpreted: their concrete meanings differ according to the situation and interests of different classes.

(c) The possibility of an emancipated future, of a post-capitalist society, of a communist utopia. It is by the light of the hypothesis—or wager—of a free association of producers that the negative traits of capitalism appear in all their vastness.

(d) The existence, in the past, of more human social or cultural forms destroyed by capitalist “progress.” This reference, of romantic origin, is especially present in the texts where Marx and Engels analyze primitive communism, a form of communal life without a market or state, and without private property and without the patriarchal oppression of women.

The existence of these values does not mean that Marx takes on a Kantian perspective, opposing a necessary transcendence to existing reality: his critique is *immanent*, to the extent that it is made with reference to a real social force which is opposed to capitalism—the working class—as well as to the contradiction between the possibilities created by the impulse of the productive forces and the limitations imposed by bourgeois relations of production.

The anti-capitalist critique of Marx is organized around five fundamental themes: the injustice of exploitation; the loss of liberty from alienation; venal quantification; irrationality; and modern barbarity. Let’s examine each of these points, emphasizing their lesser known aspects.

1) *Injustice and exploitation.* The capitalist system is grounded, independently of this or that political economy, on the unpaid surplus labor of workers,

giving rise to, through “surplus value,” all forms of rent and profit. The extreme manifestations of this social injustice are the exploitation of children, miserable wages, inhuman working hours, and the sordid conditions of working class life. But these conditions of the laborer are a matter of a specific historical moment; the system itself is intrinsically unjust because of the parasitic exploitation of the labor force by direct producers. This theme occupies a decisive place in *Capital* and was essential in making the Marxist workers movement.

2) *The loss of liberty from alienation, reification, and commodity fetishism.* In the capitalist mode of production, individuals—laborers in particular—are dominated by their own products which take the form of autonomous fetishes and escape their control. It is a long and developed problematic in the writings of his youth, but it also emerges in the celebrated chapter on the fetishism of commodities in *Capital*.<sup>2</sup>

At the heart of Marx’s analysis of alienation is the idea that capitalism is a type of disenchanting “religion,” where objects in the market replace divinity: “The more the worker is externalized in his labor, the more the outside, objective world, which he himself creates, becomes powerful, the more he is self-impooverished and the more his internal world becomes poor, the less he possesses that is his own. It is the same with religion. The more man invests in God, the less he is able to retain his own self.”<sup>3</sup> The concept of fetishism reinvents the history of religions in the form of primitive idolatry which itself already contains the same principle of all religious phenomena.

It is not an accident that in their writings the theologians of liberation—Hugo Assmann, Franz Hinkelammert, Enrique Dussel—draw largely on Marx against capitalist alienation and fetishism in their denunciation of “the idolatry of the market.”<sup>4</sup>

3) *The venal quantification of social life.* Capitalism, which is regulated by exchange value and the calculation of profits and the accumulation of capital, tends to dissolve and destroy all *qualitative* value: use value, ethical value, human relations and sentiments. *Having* replaces *Being*, and consists of mere cash payments—the “cash nexus,” according to Carlyle that Marx appropriated for his own use—and the “glassy waters of egoistic calculation.”

Now, the battle against quantification and *Mammonism* (again a term from Carlyle) is one of the principle leitmotifs of romanticism.<sup>5</sup> Like the romantic

critiques of modern bourgeois civilization, Marx thinks that capitalism introduces, in this sense, a profound degradation of social relations and a moral regression to pre-capitalist social relations: “there came a time at last when what all that these men had looked upon as inalienable became an object of exchange, of trade, from which they would be estranged. It is the time when the same things which until then were communicated, exchanged, bartered; supplied but never sold; acquired but never bought—virtue, love, opinion, science, conscience, etc.—where everything will at last pass into commerce. It is the time of general corruption, of universal venality, or, speaking in political economic terms, the time when everything, moral or physical, having become market value, is carried to the market to be appreciated for its fair value.”<sup>6</sup>

The power of money is one of the most brutal manifestations of capitalist quantification: through the mode of production it denatures all “natural human qualities” in submitting to the money standard. “The *quantity* of money becomes more and more the unique and *powerful* property of man; at the same time that it reduces all being to its abstraction, it is reduced by its own logic to quantitative being.”

4) *Irrationality*. The periodic crises of overproduction that jolt the capitalist system unveil its irrationality—“absurdity” is the term used in the *Manifesto*: there are “too many means of subsistence,” even though the majority of the population lacks necessary means of subsistence. This global irrationality is not contradictory, of course, with a partial and local rationality, at the level of production management in each factory.

5) *Modern barbarism*. In a certain sense, capitalism is the harbinger of historical progress, exemplified by the exponential development of productive forces, thereby creating the material conditions for a new society with solidarity and freedom. But, at the same time, it is also a force of *social regression* in the sense that it “makes from each economic progression a public calamity.”<sup>7</sup> Considering certain of its manifestations—the most sinister among them being the poverty laws or the workhouses, the “Bastilles of the workers”—Marx writes in 1847 this powerful and prophetic passage which seems to presage the Frankfurt School: “barbarism reappears, but this time it is engendered in the very core of civilization and becomes an integral part of it. It is the leprous barbarism, barbarism which is the leper of civilization.”<sup>8</sup>

All these critiques are intimately related: they are mutually exchanged, they reciprocally presuppose themselves, and they are articulated in an *organized anti-capitalist vision*, which is one of the distinctive traits of the reflection of Marx as a remade communist thinker.

On two other questions—which today are of the greatest relevance—the anti-capitalist critique of Marx is more ambiguous or insufficient:

6) The colonial expansion and/or imperialism of capitalism, the violent and cruel domination of colonized peoples, their submission by the preemptory force of the imperatives of capitalist production and the accumulation of capital. One observes here a certain evolution in Marx's thought: if in the *Manifesto* he seems to celebrate in progress the subjugation of "barbaric (*sic*), peasant nations" to bourgeois civilization, in his writings on British colonialization in India the somber aspect of western domination is evoked, but as a necessary evil.

It is only in *Capital*, notably in the chapter on the primitive accumulation of capital, that one finds a truly radical critique of the horrors of colonial expansion: the enslavement or extermination of indigenous peoples, wars of conquest, and the trading of blacks. These "cruel acts and abominable atrocities,"—which, according to Marx (approvingly citing M. W. Howitt), "do not have a parallel in any other era of world history, in any other savage race, as gross, pitiless, and as shameless as it was"—are not simply converted into profits and the loss of historical progress, but are properly denounced as an "infamy."<sup>9</sup>

The *Manifesto* rejoices in the domination over nature made possible by the expansion of capitalist civilization. It is only later, specifically in *Capital*, that the aggression of the bourgeois mode of production against the natural environment is evoked. In one famous passage, Marx suggests a parallel between the exhaustion of labor power and that of the sun by the destructive logic of capitalism: "Each progression of capitalist agriculture is a progression not only of the art of exploiting the laborer, but also the art of depleting the earth's soil; each progression in the art of augmenting its fertility for a time is also a progression in the ruination of its durable sources of fertility. . . . Capitalist production therefore develops the technique and the combination of the process of social production that exhausts at the same time the two sources from which are obtained all wealth: *the earth and the laborer*."<sup>10</sup> Here one sees the sketch of a vision of an immanent dialectic of progress—the

ironic way the term is used is simply an expression—which signals the ecological problematic, but which was unfortunately not developed by Marx.

## II

Everything else is the problematic of Max Weber. His position on capitalism is much more ambivalent and contradictory. One may say that he is torn between his *bourgeois* condition which is identified with the destiny of German capitalism and its imperial power, and his *intellectual* identity, sensitive to the arguments of the romantic, anti-capitalist *Zivilisationkritik* so influential on German university mandarins at the turn of the century. From this point of view he is comparable to another bourgeois intellectual of that era in Germany who was also torn—if not schizophrenically—between bourgeois and intellectual persuasions: Walter Rathenau, a Prussian and a Jew, entrepreneur capitalist and critic of mechanistic civilization.

Rejecting all socialist ideas, Weber did not hesitate occasionally to employ apologetic arguments in favor of private capital. More often he seems to be inclined toward a resigned acceptance of the inevitability of bourgeois civilization. Yet, in certain key texts, which have been among the truly great imports in the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century thought, he gives free reign to a lucid critique, pessimistic and profoundly radical, of the paradoxes of capitalist rationality. According to the sociologist Derek Sayer, “to a certain extent his critique of capitalism, like a negative life-force, is more incisive than that of Marx.”<sup>11</sup> This judgment is somewhat excessive, but it is true that the Weberian argument touches on the very foundations of modern industrial/capitalist civilization.

It goes without saying that the themes of this critique are quite distinct from those of Marx. Weber ignores exploitation, he is not interested in crisis, has little sympathy for the struggles of the proletariat and does not call colonial expansion into question. And yet, similar to the Nietzschean or romantic *Kulturpessimismus*, he is aware of a profound contradiction between the unreasonableness of modern, formal rationality—of which the bureaucracy and private enterprises are the most typical incarnation—and that of the autonomy of the active subject. Taking a distance from his relation to the rationalist tradition of the Enlightenment, he is perceptive of the contradictions and limitations of modern rationality as it manifests itself in the capitalist economy and in bureaucratic administration: its formal and

instrumental character, and its tendency to produce effects that lead to the overturning of the emancipatory aspirations of modernity. Research into the calculability and efficiency of all goals leads to the bureaucratization and reification of human activities. It is this diagnosis of the crisis of modernity that will slowly return through its appropriation by the Frankfurt School (e.g., Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse).<sup>12</sup>

What informs Weber's pessimistic and resigned diagnosis of modernity is the refusal of the illusion of progress so powerful in European consciousness from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As he wrote in one of his final public interventions in 1919: "it is not the blossoming of summer for which we wait, but all at once a night which is polar, glacial, somber and harsh."<sup>13</sup> This pessimism is inseparable from a critical vision of the nature of capitalism and of its dynamic of rationalization and modernization.

One can distinguish two aspects, narrowly linked to one another, in Weber's critique of the substance of the capitalist system:

1) *The inversion of means and ends.* For the spirit of capitalism—of which Benjamin Franklin is a chemically pure ideal-typical example—to accrue money, always more money (or to accumulate capital, as Marx said), is the most supreme and ultimate objective in life: "money has been considered up to this point as something in and of itself which appears entirely transcendent and absolutely irrational under the relation of 'benefit' of the individual or the 'advantage' that one may get to try and possess. Gain has become the end man proposes for himself; it no longer governs him as a means to satisfy his material needs. This reversal of what we may call the natural state of things, so absurd from a naive point of view, is clearly one of the characteristic *leitmotives* of capitalism and it remains entirely foreign to all people who have not taken its breath."<sup>14</sup>

A supreme expression of modern rationality in view of an end—*Zweckrationalität* or, according to the Frankfurt School, instrumental rationality—the capitalist economy reveals itself, from the point of view of the material needs of human individuals, or simply from their benefit, as "absolutely irrational." Weber often returns to this theme in the *Protestant Ethic*, insisting constantly upon the *irrationality* (his emphasis) of the logic of capitalist accumulation: "considering the point of view of personal welfare, it expresses how irrational is this direction where man exists for the purpose of his enterprise and not the reverse."<sup>15</sup>

Just as the treatment of the “naive” point of view that cannot perceive the absurdity of the system—without accounting for its formidable economic rationality—his remarks put the spirit of capitalism profoundly into question. From all the evidence, two types of rationality are in conflict here: that which is purely formal and instrumental (*Zweckrationalität*), which has as its sole objective production for the sake of production, accumulation for accumulation’s sake, money for money’s sake, and that, more substantial, which corresponds to the “natural state of things,” and related to *values* (*Wertrationalität*): that which deals with human welfare and the satisfaction of their material needs.

This definition of the irrationality of capitalism is not without certain similarities with the ideas of Marx. The subordination of an end, the human being, to a means—enterprise, money, the market—is a theme that is endlessly discussed in the Marxian problematic of alienation. Weber was conscious of this, one can observe, in his conference in 1918 on socialism: “all of this (the impersonal functioning of capital) is therefore that which socialism defines as ‘the domination of things by human beings,’ that is to say: of the means over the objective (the satisfaction of needs).”<sup>16</sup> It is no accident that Lukács’s theory of reification in *History and Class Consciousness* is supported as much by Weber as by Marx.

2) *The submission to an all-powerful mechanism and imprisonment by that system that we have created ourselves.* This theme is intimately tied to the previous one, but it places emphasis on the loss of liberty, the decline of individual autonomy. The *locus classicus* of this critique is in the final paragraphs of *The Protestant Ethic*, without doubt the most celebrated passage and the most influential in Weber’s oeuvre—and one of the rare moments where he dares to assign the meaning of “value and time judgments.”

All at once Weber proves, with a resigned nostalgia, that with the triumph of the spirit of modern capitalism we are obliged to give up the “Faustian universality of man.” Awareness of the bourgeois era’s arrival, according to Goethe, brings “a sense of departure; of a renouncement of an age of opulence, and human good.”

In another sense, capitalist rationality creates a context that is increasingly *restrictive*: “the puritan wanted to be a person of needs—we are *forced* to be.” The modern economic order, tied to the technical conditions of mechanistic

production “determines, with an irresistible force, the lifestyle of the ensemble of individuals born in this mechanism—and not only those things that directly concern economic acquisition.” Weber compares this constraint to a kind of prison where the system of rational production of goods imprisons individuals: “according to the view of Baxter, the appearance of material wealth should wear like a light coat on the shoulders of saints which at any moment can be shrugged off. But fate has transformed this coat into a steel cage.”

The image has made good. It is striking for its tragic resignation, but also for its critical dimension. Many interpretations and translations of the expression “iron cage” (*stahlhartes Gehäuse*) exist: For some, it has been likened to a “prison cell,” whereas for others it has been more like a shell (*carapace*) weighing one down as if he were a snail. Yet it is more probable that Weber borrowed the image from the “iron cage of despair” from the English Puritan poet Bunyan.<sup>17</sup> In any case, the *Protestant Ethic* seems to describe the reified structures of the capitalist economy as a shell or prison, cold and implacable as steel.

Weber’s pessimism makes him fear the end of all vision and all idealism, and the succession, under the aegis of modern capitalism, of a “mechanical petrification, adorned by a kind of convulsive vanity.”<sup>18</sup> It is a question of the progress of reification which extends itself, out of the economic sphere to the various other domains of social activity: the state, rights and culture.<sup>19</sup>

Well before the Frankfurt School, Karl Löwith was aware, as in his brilliant essay of 1932 on Weber and Marx, that the “dialectic of reason” was evidence for the Weberian critique of capitalism and its affinity with the Marxian problematic:

Weber himself declared that here lies the real problem of culture—rationalization toward the irrational—and that he and Marx agreed in the definition of his problem but differed in his evaluation. . . . This paradoxical inversion . . . becomes most clearly evident when it occurs in exactly the type of activity whose innermost intention is that it be specifically rational, namely, in *economically* rational activity. And precisely here it becomes plainly apparent that, and how, behavior which is purely purposive-rational in intention turns

inexorably into its own opposite in the process of its rationalization.<sup>20</sup>

### III

In conclusion, what Weber, in contrast to Marx, did not know was the domination of exchange value over human activity. The mechanisms of valorization and automation inscribed in market exchanges leads to the monetarization of social relations and a “depoeticization” of the world—that is to say, as the market becomes a prosaic aspect of life there is a withering of experience and of “*poiesis*.”<sup>21</sup> The Heidelberg school of sociology may not have conceived the possibility of replacing the autocratic logic that was self-valorizing with a democratic form of production.<sup>22</sup>

More that Marx and Weber part on the idea of the substantial *irrationality* of capitalism—that it is not contradictory with respect to its formal or partial rationality. Both make reference to religion in order to attempt to come to terms with this irrationality.

For Weber, it is the origin of this *irrationalism*, of this “reversal of that which we call the natural state of things” that we need to explain, and he proposes to make reference to “a series of intimate sentiments tied to certain religious representations”: the Protestant ethic.<sup>23</sup>

For Marx the origin of capitalism does not return us to a religious ethic of thrift, but rather to the brutal process of expropriation and pillage that he designates by the term *primitive accumulation of capital*. The reference to religion nevertheless plays an important role for understanding the logic of capitalism as “inversion.” But, we saw above, for him it is a matter less of a *causal determinant* as in Weber that of a *structural affinity*: irrationality is an intrinsic characteristic, immanent and essential of the capitalism mode of production as an *alienated* process similar in its structure to religious alienation. In both cases humans are dominated by their own products—money under capitalism, God under religion.

It is in exploring the *elective affinities* between the Weberian and Marxian critiques of capitalism, and in the amalgamation in an original step that Lukács produced the theory of reification and Adorno and Horkheimer the

critique of instrumental rationality—both among the most important and radical theoretical innovations of 20<sup>th</sup> century Marxian thought.<sup>24</sup>

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> L. Goldmann, “Le marxisme est-il une sociologie?” in *Recherches Dialectiques*, Paris: Gallimard, 1955.

<sup>2</sup> It is true that one may observe, as has been remarked by Ernest Mandel, an evolution between the *1844 Manuscripts* and the economic writings of his maturity: the passage of an anthropological conception to a historical conception of alienation. Cf. E. Mandel, *The Formation of Karl Marx's Economic Thought*, 1967.

<sup>3</sup> K. Marx, *1844 Manuscripts*.

<sup>4</sup> H. Assmann, F. Hinkelammert, *A idolatria do mercado: Ensaio sobre Economia e teologia*, S. Paulo, Ed. Vozes, 1989. Also see on this subject the fascinating text of the young Walter Benjamin—largely inspired by Weber—“Kapitalismus als Religion,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991, volume VI, pp. 100-103.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. M. Löwy and R. Sayre, *Revolte et Melancolie. Le romantisme a contre-courant de la modernité*, Paris, Payot, 1992.

<sup>6</sup> *Poverty of Philosophy*, p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> K. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 pg. 350 New York: Vintage.

<sup>8</sup> K. Marx, “Arbeitslohn,” 1847, *Kleine Ökonomische Schriften*, Berlin, Dietz Verlag, 1955, pg. 245.

<sup>9</sup> K. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 557-558, 563.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* pg. 363.

<sup>11</sup> D. Sayer, *Capitalism and Modernity: An Excursion on Marx and Weber*, pg. 4, London: Routledge, 1991.

<sup>12</sup> See the important book on this subject by Philippe Raynaud, *Weber et les dilemmes de la raison moderne*, Paris, PUF, 1987 also the article “Figures du marxisme wébérien,” *Actuel Marx*, 1992.

<sup>13</sup> M. Weber, *Le savant et le politique* (1919), Paris, C. Bourgeois, 1990, p. 184.

<sup>14</sup> M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, ???.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 73. Cf. also pg. 80.

<sup>16</sup> M. Weber, “Der Sozialismus,” in *Schriften zur Sozialgeschichte und Politik*, Stuttgart, Reclam, 1997, pg. 246.

<sup>17</sup> Derek Sayer, *Capitalism and Modernity*, pg. 144 speaks of a “shell,” whereas the Bunyan hypothesis has been argued by E. Tiryakian, “The Sociological Import of a Metaphor: Tracking the Source of Max Weber’s ‘Iron Cage’,” in P. Hamilton (ed.), *Max Weber: Critical Assessments*, London, Routledge, 1991, vol. I, 2, pp. 109-120.

<sup>18</sup> All above citations *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pp. 222-225.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Pierre Bouretz, *Les promesses du monde*, pg. 367.

<sup>20</sup> K. Lowith, Max Weber and Karl Marx, p. 48.

<sup>21</sup> The term, *ποιήσις* in Greek means “to make” as well as “to do” and has cultural and aesthetic overtones. (Translator’s note)

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<sup>22</sup> I refer here in my use of terms such as “depoeticization of the world” to those advanced by Jean-Marie Vincent in his recent work, *Max Weber ou la démocratie inachévéée*, Paris: Editions du Felin, 1998, pp. 141, 160-161.

<sup>23</sup> *Protestant Ethic*, pg. 50. Cf. also pp. 73, 80.

<sup>24</sup> M. Löwy, “Figures du marxisme wébérien,” *Actuel Marx*, no. 11, 1992.

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\* *Translated from the French by Michael J. Thompson.*

*Geoffrey Kurtz*

## Anthony Giddens's Third Way: A Critique

by  
Geoffrey Kurtz

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The story goes that Michael Harrington and Paul Jacobs, the socialists in an early War on Poverty task force, liked to end their policy memos by noting: “Of course, there is no real solution to the problem of poverty until we abolish the capitalist system” (Isserman 2000: 212). Harrington and Jacobs’s complaint, tongue in cheek as it was, suggests something vital about left politics at its best: a relentless vigilance toward the limits and trade-offs implicit in available political options, matched by a willingness to slog it out in the trenches of pragmatic reformism.

Anthony Giddens’s recent trio of slim manifestos shows plenty of eagerness for practical politics. As an advisor to Tony Blair and Bill Clinton, Giddens is the central intellectual exponent of one side—the winning side, so far—in an ongoing debate within parties of the left around the world. Giddens champions a “renewal of social democracy” through a new appreciation of market economics and a revised understanding of core left values such as equality. Convinced that globalization and other aspects of modernization bring a new complexity to the political spectrum and a heightened salience for the politics of individual life choices, Giddens calls for a redefinition of social democrats’ political aspirations.

However, Giddens exhibits a stark lack of concern for what might get lost in the transition to a “modernized” left. With Giddens, there are no grumbles about the limitations of feasible reforms. Giddens has been accused by people to his left of surrendering to the neoliberalism of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. But this estimation misses the point: Giddens doesn’t believe that he’s calling for a compromise, much less a surrender. Business-friendly reforms, in Giddens’s eyes, deserve enthusiasm from social democrats.

There's no room for regrets, no counting of costs and benefits. Giddens's Third Way is a celebration.

### **Globalization, Risk, and the Third Way**

Published the year after the Labour Party's first electoral victory in nearly two decades, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (1998) offers intellectual underpinnings for the political project championed by leaders like Blair and Clinton. *The Third Way* introduces themes that run through all three books: the political and cultural impact of globalization, the notion of risk, the rise of a "life politics" of individual self-definition, the new irrelevance of a strict left-right political divide, the need to relegitimate political institutions, and the potential for a new version of social democracy that can meet all these challenges. Giddens followed with *The Third Way and its Critics* (2000), summarizing his opponents' key arguments and elaborating his ideas about the role of the state, the principle of equality in social democratic thought, and global governance—although never responding systematically to the criticisms he cites. In *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives* (2001), originally a set of lectures for the BBC, Giddens offers a series of conversational riffs on how globalization and the rise of new forms of risk are reshaping traditions and the family, and how politics can and must respond to these changes. These three books provide complementary, overlapping accounts of a unified argument—an argument with adherents, or at least friendly listeners, now governing countries from Europe to South America.

Third Way policy positions are well known by now. Politicians influenced by Third Way ideas have shown enthusiasm for lowering labor costs and decreasing workers' job security, suspicion toward unions and traditional social welfare programs, support for "supply side" tax and economic policies, and caution in public spending, apart from a willingness to "invest" in education and worker training. Giddens's purpose in these three books is not to offer detailed policy arguments or to review the accomplishments of Third Way governments but to put "[t]heoretical flesh . . . on the skeleton of their policy-making" (1998: 2).

At the heart of Giddens's call for a Third Way is the notion that economic globalization has brought with it a displacement of nation-state politics in favor of both more local and more global arenas, as well as deep changes in

everyday life (1998: 28-33). This “new individualism” means the “retreat of tradition and custom” and a “moral transition” that allows individuals to “live in an open and reflexive manner” (1998: 34-37). Giddens concedes that globalization—or, more precisely, liberalized international trade—can bring with it increased inequalities. But this is a mere side effect. What matters, Giddens maintains, is the “global cosmopolitan society” that is on the horizon, heralding a process of detraditionalization and an “active, open approach to life” for individuals (2001: 35-37; 2000: 65).

The sea change of globalization is, for Giddens, closely bound up with the rise of new kinds of risk. For Giddens, the notion of risk helps make sense of an array of relatively new problems, and of new ways that old problems confront us. Environmental problems are the paradigmatic example of these new risks. The personal strain resulting from the erosion of traditional marriage and family customs is another (2001: 45-46). Giddens’s extensive discussions of criminal justice policy also points to the risks that accompany social dislocation.

Modern, future-oriented societies have sought ways to calculate and control risk, Giddens writes. However, the more we intervene in the world to shape the future, the more we face “manufactured risks” that “rebound upon us.” With the increasing rapidity of social and technological change wrought by globalization, there is “a new riskiness to risk,” since we can not reliably estimate the new risk we create. Claims about what is and isn’t risky become intensely political. New risks affect the whole world, and demand global responses (2001: 44-50; 2000: 132-139).

While Giddens gives nod to the potential usefulness of the “precautionary principle”—according to which changes with uncertain results should be avoided—and to social democracy’s historic commitment to providing security, his tone in discussing questions of risk is resoundingly upbeat. Yes, risks mean real problems. Still, risk is “the energizing principle of a society that has broken away from tradition,” and “active risk-taking is a core element of a dynamic economy and an innovative society.” Boldness and daring, not caution, are called for (2001: 50-53; 1998: 62-62).

Risk, like other Third Way themes, has been a prominent category in Giddens’s work for some time. His discussions of risk elsewhere strike similar notes, but with more conceptual resonance. In *Beyond Left and Right* (1994), Giddens emphasizes the ways that manufactured risk—that is, risk arising

from human actions—troubles the Enlightenment’s presumed link between knowledge and control. Enlightenment thinkers believed that knowledge about the world allows human beings to better control their fates. Giddens suggests that with modern risk situations knowledge reveals the limits of human control, or provides the basis for actions, the results of which end up outside human control. Risk, then, marks the limits of modernity. Much of the socialist project in particular has been predicated on the assumption that knowledge of social forces and relations allows for human control of society. The rise of manufactured risk means that the left can no longer see its work as simply an attempt to solve the problems that humanity has set for itself. New conceptions of politics, of welfare, and of what it means to be radical are thus necessary.

### **The Politics of Life Choices**

Because globalization and risk have brought new freedoms and uncertainties to individuals’ lives, Giddens argues that a new “life politics” is disrupting the old political spectrum. Issues of life politics, Giddens insists,

nearly all raise value or ethical questions, but not only to do with social justice. Ageing is a good case in point. We have to consider problems such as what the proper role of older people should be in a society where ageing is changing its meaning (2000: 40).

Life politics, in Giddens’s *Beyond Left and Right* formulation, is about “*life style* . . . about how (as individuals and as collective humanity) we should live in a world where what used to be fixed either by nature or tradition is now subject to human distinctions” (1994: 14-15).

A commitment to a radical life politics means welcoming the breakdown of traditional limits on individual life choices. Here Giddens is enthusiastic in following through the logic of his analysis. It is worth noting that this is the area in which Giddens’s policy recommendations diverge most sharply from those of some of his best-known advisees. Tony Blair, for instance, has stressed an ethic of “social moralism” emphasizing traditional family forms and has willingly cut public assistance benefits for single mothers (Driver and Martell 2000). Giddens, in contrast, declares that “the persistence of the traditional family,” at least in its inegalitarian and coercive aspects, “is more

worrisome than its decline.” The decline of traditional family forms, for Giddens, has made possible a “democracy of the emotions” which is “on the front line in the struggle between cosmopolitanism and fundamentalism” (2001: 83).

Giddens links his embrace of cosmopolitan values, gender equality, and individual freedom to the notion of “detraditionalization” most clearly articulated in *Runaway World*. Under globalization, Giddens writes, traditions in both public institutions and everyday life remain. However, their hold on people is broken, and they can no longer be defended through their own internal claims to truth but must be justified externally. While traditions of some sort might be useful, in the way that disciplinary traditions structure academic research, detraditionalization is fundamentally a positive change. By introducing “a large dollop of rationality” into all remaining traditions, the process of detraditionalization makes possible a “cosmopolitan morality” in which various traditions can coexist. Giddens is also enthusiastic about the new individual freedoms that accompany detraditionalization. “Self identity,” he writes, is now “created and recreated on a more active basis than before,” opening up new worlds of life-choice possibilities (2001: 60-68).

### Revising Left Values

For Giddens, the politics of life choices are distinct from the left’s traditional concern with “emancipation.” Giddens admits that emancipatory politics—the politics of equality and “life chances”—have not become obsolete (1998: 44). What is crucial is the way Giddens relates life politics and emancipatory politics. The relationship is described most clearly in *Beyond Left and Right*, and lies only between the lines of his recent books. Giddens stipulates that we should

regard *life-political questions* as central to emancipatory politics, rather than simply working the other way around . . . To speak of ‘lifestyle’ with regard to the poor and hungry of the world initially sounds odd; but a response to poverty today can no longer be regarded as purely economic (1994: 160).

Life politics, thus, is not simply an additional category. Rather, life-political issues redefine the older issues of emancipatory politics. Life politics, for

Giddens, set the framework in which other issues are understood. This is a profound shift from the left's traditional stance, in which questions of emancipation are primary and define other concerns. Giddens plays out the implications of this shift by offering a new understanding of the left's core principle of equality and calling for an end to the left's "obsession with inequality" (1998: 100).

The goal of equal outcomes leaves too little room for "pluralism and lifestyle diversity," Giddens writes. Equality of opportunity is a better model for the modern left, even though it may be untenable in its extreme meritocratic forms. Giddens's preferred reformulation of the principle of equality is "equality as *inclusion* and inequality as *exclusion*." Equality as inclusion is, fundamentally, Giddens's response to the fading of class as an experienced reality and the corresponding rise of life politics and concern for "self-realization" (1998: 101-14; 2000: 85-89). Inclusion, for Giddens,

refers in its broadest sense to citizenship, to the civil and political rights and obligations that all members of a society should have . . . as a reality of their lives. It also refers to opportunities and to involvement in public space. In a society where work remains central to self-esteem and standard of living, access to work is one main context of opportunity. Education is another (1998: 102-103).

Exclusion, then, can mean either the involuntary exclusion of those at the bottom—the unemployed and uneducated, most notably—or the voluntary self-exclusion of elites (1998: 103). Giddens's policy proposals follow this logic relentlessly: if inclusion in the labor market is the kind of equality that matters, then the existence of pensions and fixed retirement ages must be questioned, since they exclude the elderly from the labor market (1998: 121; 2000: 40). Income inequality is a secondary concern at best, and social welfare programs must be conceived as investments in human capital—in other words, as aids to life choices rather than to life chances (1998: 106-112; 2000: 104). The enthusiasm of Third Way politicians for education and worker training programs clearly fits with this line of thinking (1998: 109).

If the old left-right political spectrum can no longer make sense of key political issues, Giddens argues, the political center need not mean a position that offers only compromise between left and right. Rather, the notions of an "active middle" or "radical center" can indicate resolute efforts to "take [new

issues] by the roots” (1994: 1; 1998: 44-45). The term center-left, for Giddens, thus does not mean a moderate left: it means a genuinely new response to unprecedented political conditions:

A renewed social democracy has to be left of centre, because social justice and emancipatory politics remain at its core. But the ‘centre’ shouldn’t be regarded as empty of substance. Rather, we are talking of the alliances that social democrats can weave from the threads of lifestyle diversity. Traditional as well as novel political problems need to be thought about in this way . . . The equation between being on the left and being radical no longer stands up, if in fact it ever did (1998: 45-46).

### **Democracy without Activism**

The rise of life politics, Giddens contends, is behind the widespread discontent with existing forms of democratic government that many social observers have noted in recent decades. New demands for “individual autonomy and the emergence of a more reflexive citizenry” require a corresponding “democratization of democracy.” Giddens proposes an eclectic set of reforms that, he insists, will “reassert” the legitimacy and power of government. New levels of transparency and business-inspired efficiency along with experiments such as electronic referenda will inspire confidence in government. Both devolution and the development of transnational forms of governance—Giddens offers the European Union as a model—will allow government to respond to new needs more effectively than nation-state institutions can. Likewise, a new conceptualization of government as a “risk manager” must lead to reform of welfare and other state functions, bringing them into line with people’s new needs and new self-understandings. Giddens also places great value on a renewal of civil society. Here, Giddens means primarily new relationships between government and non-profit organizations. Local initiatives, volunteerism, and face-to-face groupings of all kinds, he suggests, can also help foster a “civic culture” that, while outside the state, will help relegitimate public life as a whole (1998: 70-78; 2000: 60-62; 2001: 93-100).

Social movements, strikingly, play a negligible role in Giddens’s conception of democratic renewal. Unions, for instance, are explicitly discussed only

once in the three books, in a passage advocating closer labor-management cooperation—although a brief oblique reference to “special-interest groups” in *The Third Way* seems to be a jab at the labor movement (2000: 150; 1998: 53). Likewise, decades of feminist activism seem to have played no part in the equalization of gender relations that Giddens lauds, and lesbian and gay movements have nothing to do with increased freedoms regarding gender and sexual identity: such changes, in Giddens’s description, seem to result purely from impersonal social forces.

At best, Giddens suggests, social movements can raise new issues and pose symbolic challenges to hidebound practices. In general, however, Giddens sees social movements more as symptoms of the crisis of depoliticization than as helpful responses to that crisis. Movements distract from the mainstream parties and state institutions that, in the final analysis, matter most of all. Giddens dismisses the ideas of theorists such as German sociologist Ulrich Beck, who sees a “sub-politics” of social movement activism as a vital though limited new form of democratic politics (Giddens 1998: 51-53).

### **Ulrich Beck on Inequality, Danger and Risk**

Giddens’s criticism of Beck is important in part because the two thinkers share many points of agreement. Arriving independently at themes of risk, detraditionalization, and what Giddens calls “the politics of life choices,” the two thinkers have collaborated increasingly in recent years (Beck 1992: 7-8). In many respects, their ideas run parallel, but the place of social movements in modern politics is only one of several significant areas where the two diverge. The contrasts between Giddens and Beck highlight an underlying, deeply problematic, pattern in Giddens’s work.

Like Giddens, Beck is concerned with the way modern societies experience and produce risk. Beck relates the emergence of “risk society” to processes of “individualization,” a close parallel to Giddens’s notions of detraditionalization and life politics. However, Beck’s understanding of risk, unlike that of Giddens, emphasizes the continuity of old inequalities, the creation of new inequalities, and the dangers inherent in risk. Beck describes risk as a “*systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself*,” in particular by the modern process of wealth creation. Modern risks, for Beck, are defined by the immense threat of destruction they pose, and by the fact that they are invisible or latent until

described and defined—unlike older forms of risk that tended to be personal, limited in scope, and obvious (1992: 21-23). For Giddens, on the other hand, what makes modern risks new is primarily that their causes are new: we don't have enough experience dealing with them to reliably calculate the likelihood of particular effects (1998: 59-60).

Unlike Giddens, Beck stresses that existing societies have only partly completed a transition from a society focused on wealth distribution toward a society focused on risk distribution (1992: 20). This means, first of all, that conflicts over wealth are far from over. All the conflicts and inequalities of capitalist societies remain. Old inequalities even shape new conflicts, Beck argues. Movement toward gender equality, for instance, is constrained by inequalitarian economic institutions, and new ecological risks hit hardest among the poor. Accordingly, Beck advocates policies that reduce material inequalities—not just inequalities of opportunity—and that aim at “*limiting and cushioning market relationships*” (1992: 123-124, 41, 91). The contrast with Giddens's vision of equality *as* inclusion in market relationships could hardly be more striking.

For Beck, the fact that inequality has “lost significance as an issue” in public life does not mean that material inequalities affect people's lives any less. Rather, the change in the social prominence of issues of inequality heralds “a new chapter in the history of classes,” one apparently fraught by “illusory and ideological . . . claims” that individual fates now transcend class categories (1992: 92, 99). Where Giddens sees the reduced salience of class politics as a change to be taken at face value, Beck sees it as a complex problem to be understood and, perhaps, addressed.

Beck also traces the development of new inequalities based on “risk position,” an analogous to the class positions of groups in societies existing up to this point. Although he agrees with Giddens that the inclusive and global nature of modern risks is part of what makes them distinctive, Beck also argues that “[s]ome people are more affected than others by the distribution and growth of risks,” and underlines the inequalities between “those *afflicted* by risks and those who *profit* from them,” as well as inequalities in how well-prepared people of different groups are to deal with the risks and changes they face (1992: 23, 46, 98).

Where Giddens calls for boldness in the face of risk, Beck's understanding of risk emphasizes danger. Modern risk is not, for Beck, a matter of uncertainty

per se, but is fundamentally about “the threat of self-destruction of all life on Earth.” Safety and risk prevention are, for Beck, paramount issues (1992: 21, 49, 57).

These differences are revealed in the two authors’ discussions not only of policy issues, but also of the ways people respond to distinctly modern changes in their individual lives. In particular, Giddens and Beck offer tellingly different interpretations of the widespread appeal of psychotherapy in modern societies. For Giddens, Freudian psychoanalysis is “in effect . . . a method for the renewal of self-identity” that makes it easier for individuals to create and recreate their own identities “on a more active basis than before” (2001: 65). Beck, in contrast, argues that the move toward a risk society is accompanied by incredible “fear and anxiety.” The process of individualization means that “[s]ocial crises appear as individual crises,” despite their social nature, leading to an intense “pressure to work out insecurity by oneself.” This pattern, in turn, leads to “new demands on social institutions [including] therapy” and a “revival of interest in psychology” (1992: 76, 100).

These positions may not be strictly incompatible, but their radically different emphases matter. Giddens’s understanding of risk and related social changes points him away from recognizing and addressing dangers and conflicts. Wherever possible, he describes changes in contemporary societies in positive terms. While Beck does not have easy solutions to offer, he does not succumb to Giddens’s blithe optimism. Instead, Beck focuses on the ways that dangers are inextricably tied to modernization.

Beck’s interest in what he calls the “sub-politics” of social movement activism parallels his other key differences from Giddens. For Beck, the nation-state’s capacity to effect change has been severely reduced. In part, this is a result of the success of liberal democracy and the welfare state in creating a reflexive citizenry. These changes, however, have happened along with others: the economy has become the engine of change, and state-centered politics has reached a “stand-off.” The real site of democratic political action, for Beck, is now the new social movements (1992: 183-187).

Contrasting his own position with Beck’s, Giddens argues that “the idea that [social movement] groups can take over where government is failing, or can stand in place of political parties, is fantasy. . . . [M]ovements . . . cannot govern” (1998: 53). But this is not what Beck has said. Beck claims, more

modestly, that sub-politics are a kind of politics that are on the rise for a variety of reasons. Beck does suggest that the participatory and immediate qualities of social movement politics make sub-politics a crucial part of the relegitimation of political life in modern societies. However, he does not argue that sub-politics can fill the gap left by the stagnation of state-centered politics with regard to the basic functions of governance and policy-making. For Beck, the fading capacity and legitimacy of state-centered politics is an unavoidable effect of modernization. Giddens insists that a solution to the state's problems must exist, but Beck avoids making such claims, and the possibilities he sees in sub-politics are, he suggests, not a replacement for conventional politics. When Giddens argues that a renewed social democracy can relegitimate conventional politics, Beck might accuse him of wearing blinders and of missing the stark limitations on state-centered politics under current conditions.

### **Giddens and the Politics of Rose-Colored Glasses**

Giddens consistently refuses to acknowledge downsides to the policies he advocates. It would be a mistake to see the Third Way argument—at least Giddens's version—as a compromise between social democracy and neoliberalism. “Compromise” suggests regret, a conscious falling-short of goals or aspirations. Giddens, however, sees his policy framework as normatively defensible on its own terms, not as a mere expedient.

This is most evident in Giddens's attitude toward markets. Responding to critics, Giddens admits that markets can “breed a commercialism that threatens other life values” and that “ethical standards . . . have to be brought from the outside” into market interactions (2000: 36). However, this sense of caution toward markets is never integrated into his analysis and seems quickly forgotten. In redefining equality as inclusion, for instance, Giddens writes primarily about inclusion in labor markets. Here, he breaks sharply with the insights of the social democratic tradition in ways he does not adequately acknowledge.

Karl Marx, notably, argued that the sale of one's labor power, i.e., participation in the labor market, is a matter of exploitation, not of freedom. For Marx, freedom exists only outside the labor market:

And the worker, who for twelve hours weaves, spins, drills, turns, builds, shovels, breaks stones, carries loads, etc.—does he consider this twelve hours' weaving, spinning, drilling, turning, building, shoveling, stone breaking as a manifestation of his life, as life? On the contrary, life begins for him where this activity ceases, at table, in the public house, in bed (Marx and Engels 1978: 205).

Marx argued that the struggle to reduce the length of time that workers must participate in the labor market in order to survive is in effect a struggle to assert the “political economy of the working class” against the interests of capital (1978: 517).

Giddens, however, rejects the notion that the chance to sell one's labor power entails any kind of unfreedom. When Giddens proposes an end to the fixed retirement age, for instance, he does not argue that this is an unfortunate but politically unavoidable concession to what Marx would call “the political economy of the bourgeoisie.” Rather, he insists that inclusion in the labor market is valuable for workers under any conditions. Nowhere in these three books does Giddens engage questions of working time, wages, workplace safety, or rights on the job—all issues that labor movements and social democratic parties have seen as crucial elements of the political economy of the working class. It is one thing to argue that modern economies require a “flexibility” that necessitates compromises in such conditions. However, this is not Giddens's point. What is important in Giddens's argument about labor market inclusion is that, in his analysis, the embrace of market forces appears as a cost-free choice. It is not that exploitation is unavoidable; it simply does not exist.

Likewise, Giddens's proposals for the regulation of corporations are curiously weak, despite his bluster about “confronting corporate interests where it is necessary to do so.” Giddens calls on governments to encourage competition and discourage monopoly, to monitor corporate behavior, to reward “responsible” corporate policies, and to recognize that not all areas of public life should be commercialized. In the workplace, Giddens lauds employee stock ownership plans and labor-management cooperation. In the global economy, the primary need for regulation stems from the unpredictable and “erratic” effects of capital mobility (2000: 142-153; 1998: 148). Giddens is not simply a neoliberal. Nevertheless, his regulatory proposals suggest that markets need assistance only in running more smoothly and including more

people, with the occasional tug toward niceness and with minimal barriers to keep them from engulfing all of society. This is a vision of business regulation that poses few threats to corporate power and offers many rewards to corporations and those who own them.

This profit-friendly form of business regulation is one of the points at which Giddens's abandonment of the notion of class undermines the usefulness of his analysis. Giddens is right that class plays a smaller role in most individuals' understandings of their relationships to other people and to the economy than it did several decades ago. However, class as a category of analysis remains crucial. The concept of class entails a recognition that those who own something for a living gain more economic and political power than those who must sell their labor power, and that without resolute political efforts toward equality of outcome, these class divisions tend to grow wider over time. Deep class divisions, in turn, undermine the political equality on which democratic institutions depend. With an analysis that ignores class divisions, as does Giddens's, the snowballing inequalities that result from profit accumulation become invisible.

Giddens's Third Way therefore represents a real departure from the social democratic tradition. Social democrats have long accepted that they work within capitalist economies and will do so for the foreseeable future; a social democratic accommodation with market forces and the presence of an owning class is nothing new. However, this accommodation has generally been an uncomfortable one. Social democrats have sought to use democratic politics to constrain markets and advance working class interests, even though their capacity to do so has been limited. Giddens parts with this history. Rather than seeking to contend with market forces, Giddens embraces them. Rejecting the idea that capitalist markets are necessarily characterized by exploitation, Giddens sees "dynamism" as the primary quality of "market societies" (1998: 15). Likewise, by setting aside any analysis of class, Giddens is able to offer an account of profit making that lauds economic growth without recognizing why some benefit from growth much more than others. Where Marx and social democrats after him have seen exploitation and class divisions as quintessential components of capitalism, Giddens sees only dynamic markets that must be made more inclusive.

### New Ideas for Social Democracy

Since Eduard Bernstein launched his famous revision of Marxism by calling for a reformist theory to match the socialist movement's reformist practice, social democracy has been a critical and self-transforming tradition. There is no reason why the present era should be any different, and every reason why today's social democrats need to develop new ideas. Social conditions have changed profoundly in the past few decades, and a political movement that does not seek to understand the conditions it faces is likely to run up against barriers it does not anticipate and cannot understand. "[I]n the years to come," Giddens asserts, "Third Way politics will be the point of view which others will have to engage" (2000: vii). He is right, and not only because of the enormous influence Third Way ideas have achieved among politicians. Even where his theoretical framework is wanting, Giddens points to vital questions. Five of Giddens's themes demand particular attention: globalization, risk, "life politics," gender, and the crisis of politics. While taking Giddens's arguments seriously, however, readers must pay as much attention to the questions he doesn't ask, to the questions that he does.

1. Giddens is correct in pointing to the central importance of globalization. The economic integration of the world's economy has immense effects on daily life and on public affairs in every country. The cultural changes accompanying globalization—both the possibility of cosmopolitanism and the real threat of fundamentalism—are urgent concerns as well. What Giddens does not do is focus on the ways in which globalization may constrain egalitarian policymaking, and what transnational solutions to those constraints might be.
2. The related concept of risk is a valuable way to conceptualize the new problems that are inherent in modernization, both in terms of large-scale risks like that of global warming, or the risks that accrue in the scale of individual lives. Perhaps the most useful aspects of the notion of risk, however, are those developed more clearly by Beck than by Giddens. Beck uses the concept of risk to uncover new inequalities, and to trace the dangers produced by modern economic and technological development—the very elements of risk that Giddens downplays.
3. Giddens's idea of a politics of life choices aims to illuminate a real and profound change in how people in modern developed societies understand politics as well as themselves. A sense that individuals can,

should, and must define their own identities and chart the course of their own lives, and a corresponding interest in personal freedoms and a pluralism of lifestyles, have gained new prominence in recent decades. These questions are of particular importance for the social democratic tradition, rooted as it is in notions of class solidarity that now seem out of tune with the self-understandings of many people in developed societies—whatever the analytical value of class analysis may still be. There is clearly something new at work here; the question is how to describe it. As useful as his attention to the politics of individual self-definition may be, Giddens's use of his own concepts creates too sharp a distinction between life politics and emancipatory politics. Arguably, an emancipatory politics of life chances must form the foundation for any meaningful politics of life choices. If it is true that life choices are predicated on life chances, then anyone seeking to build a solid political analysis of these new developments needs a different formulation—or at least a deep revision of Giddens's concepts.

4. By placing a high priority on gender equality and by relating changes in family life and personal identity to macrosocial changes, Giddens helps to correct the historical gender-blindness of the socialist tradition. Giddens is right that equality between women and men and the shakeup of old gender roles must be fundamental components of a left agenda, and that gender matters are closely tied to other political questions. However, Giddens's failure to discuss the role of activism in challenging old gender norms is both analytically wrong and politically problematic. Changes in relations between husbands and wives, new forms of families such as same-sex partnerships, increased labor market opportunities for women, and a new degree of freedom regarding sexual and gender identity all seem to have happened by themselves, or as automatic byproducts of a broad detraditionalizing trend. One would not know from Giddens's account about the political struggles of feminists and lesbian and gay activists to achieve greater gender equality and the weakening of traditional male and female roles that Giddens lauds. But without recognizing the role of social movements in bringing change, Giddens can offer no suggestion for how to extend the new "democracy of the emotions," except to call for an embrace of the detraditionalizing effects of globalization. As at other points, Giddens's dismissal of the importance of social movements makes his argument less useful.

5. At the heart of Giddens's Third Way project is the hope of rehabilitating politics and political activity from the doldrums of public disinterest and mistrust. Giddens is again correct in pointing to these issues; the crisis of the democratic state is one of the underlying difficulties of social democratic parties everywhere—indeed, of all non-extremist parties. Participation in and passion about public life is fading and, where it remains strong, shifting away from the state. Giddens is right in pointing out that no other institutions can match the state and the political parties that seriously vie for a share of state power in their capacity to govern or to draw together majorities of citizens around common concerns. Ultimately, Giddens's work must be judged by the capacity of the politics he proposes to achieve the ends he sets: that “political idealism [be] revived” and, in the process, social democracy renewed (1998: 2). However, it is not clear that Giddens has shown how these goals can be realized.

### **Beyond the Third Way**

Giddens's Third Way is far from the spirit of Harrington and Jacobs's War on Poverty memos. Past the careful equivocations—and these seem to come by the bushel—Giddens's three Third Way manifestos are characterized above all by a refusal to recognize tragedies and trade-offs. For Giddens, accepting market dynamism is not a compromise that cannot be refused, or a historically unavoidable choice that will sustain or create as many problems as it solves. It is simply a good thing. Giddens's failure to engage seriously with the critics he cites (2000) seems in keeping with his blithe dismissal of any negative implications of the policies he advocates.

Any attempt to outline a social democratic alternative to the Third Way must grapple seriously with the questions Giddens raises. What it does not need to do, however, is accept Giddens's proposition that the immediately available political options are anything other than tragic. Globalization, the weakness of the state, the breakdown of class solidarity and non-individualistic understandings of individual life, and the marginality of social movements all make the achievement of social democratic goals difficult at best. Victories for the left, in the foreseeable future, are likely to be few and partial. What the left does achieve is likely to be undermined by factors—such as class divisions and the power of market forces—that remain uncontrolled.

Gloominess is not known to be a winning basis for election campaigns. The hope of making left parties electable runs subtly but consistently through Giddens work. The Third Way project, after all, has its roots in frustration with the electoral failures of the Labour party in the U.K. and, in the United States, the Democratic. Disasters at the polls led to internal restructuring and debate within Labour, which seemed to pay off enormously in the 1997 landslide victory (Leys 1997). Similarly, crushing defeats in the 1984 and 1988 U.S. presidential elections were followed by intense organizing—and fundraising—on the part of “New Democrats,” who saw Bill Clinton’s 1992 election as a vindication of their policies (Kahlenberg and Teixeira 2001). Given the commitment of Third Way proponents to left electability, Giddens might argue that the cheery tone and optimistic analysis he offers are just what social democrats need.

This is where Giddens’s hopes of revitalizing political idealism collide with the structure of his argument. A political framework that promises roses everywhere might help telegenic politicians win votes. However, in the long run political trust and involvement are not likely to be relegitimated by an approach that denies the significance of real troubles in people’s lives. Giddens’s policies, at bottom, are likely to exacerbate the inequalities and frustrations inherent in a market-dominated society. Sooner or later, people notice that problems such as unemployment, overwork, financial strains, or yawning cultural divides aren’t going away. A political framework that cannot effectively confront or even talk about such issues will not be successful at reviving political participation and trust.

Any left beyond the Third Way, however, cannot promise to make policy just as it pleases. Rather, it must make compromises with open eyes, always attentive to the limits of the reforms it can offer even as it fights hard for those reforms. If no change short of abolishing capitalism will do more than create marginal improvements in a particular situation, and if no one has any notion of how capitalism might be abolished, then perhaps the left needs to say so—while making sure those marginal improvements are still achieved. Giddens, for all his calls for new thinking, helps very little in the construction of a left that can be viable under such terms precisely because he offers optimism and cheer where irony and discomfort make more sense.

Oddly, it may be that an awareness of the tragic dimension to available political options may be better, not worse, for left morale. Here, it matters greatly that Giddens is constructing a political theory for politicians and not

for movements. Giddens ignores social movements in his analysis in part because he has nothing to offer them. Candidates running on optimism can survive from election to election, at least for a while. Movements, on the other hand, need to win hearts for the long haul, and thus need ideals. It may not be a bad thing if those ideals are demanding enough to grate against reality. When Giddens gives up the radical core of socialist analysis he also surrenders the dreams that give activists a reason to keep fighting in hard times, along with the honesty that can help relegitimate the very political idealism Giddens seeks.

Giddens puts some crucial questions on the table. His answers are flawed in large part by the absence of the questions he does not ask. Moving beyond the Third Way means starting with the questions around which Giddens builds his theory, and filling in the gaps—with more questions.

Even when honest social democrats today cannot promise policy achievements radically different from what the Third Way offers, they can still talk about the persistence of exploitation, the endurance of class divisions, and the encumbrances that capitalism places on democratic politics. These are the traditional concerns of social democracy, and the absence of a systemic alternative to capitalism does not mean that these structural problems have gone away. Where Giddens would drop the analytic categories—such as exploitation and class—that point to what may be insoluble problems, social democrats seeking an alternative to the Third Way must retain and use those troubling concepts. Critiques need not be matched with solutions, especially in a politics concerned as much with orienting movements and sparking idealism as with catching the momentary attention of voters.

This is not to say that any political movement can eschew short-term questions of electoral victory. Rather, it is to propose that such questions are not the only ones that matter. Any viable politics to the left of the Third Way will define itself by asking how it can rebel against the structural limits to reform even while acting intelligently within those limits, how it can relate individual life choice concerns to issues of collective emancipation, how it can manage the sometimes conflicting requirements of conventional politics and social movement activism, and how it can confront globalized capitalism in the absence of global democratic institutions.

Asking only questions for which he has answers, Giddens offers a theoretical framework that blinds us to the very concerns that define social democratic

aspirations. Today's left may not be able to talk about the abolition of capitalism—even half-jokingly—as did Harrington and Jacobs. Still, the willingness of the two War-on-Poverty-socialists to keep in mind the incompleteness of achievable reforms must be part of any social democracy beyond the Third Way. It is jarring to question the fundamental inhumanities of capitalism when there are no apparent means of replacing capitalism with something wholly different. Yet maintaining the tension of unanswered questions will be part of the work of whatever left is next.

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## From System to Form: An Interview with Niklas Luhmann\*

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Although the work of Niklas Luhmann is relatively unknown in the English speaking world, his writings have begun to gain attention four years after his death in 1998. His style is abstruse and his ideas complex, but his contributions to social theory, sociology, aesthetics and ethics are only now beginning to be discovered in the United States. At the core of Luhmann's sociological theory are the dual concepts of "system" and "environment." A "social system" is a logic that defines a certain segment of society and the way that we "code" the world around us. Thus, there is a political system, an ethical system, a system of law, art and so on. These systems provide us with a semantic and logical universe within which we are formed and through which we comprehend our world, our "environment." We act within our environment in a way defined by these various systems. In this interview, Luhmann discusses his social theory and applies it to art and the problem of form and content adding to the long tradition of German social philosophy and aesthetic theory.

This interview was held in Bielefeld, Germany and was conducted by Hans-Dieter Huber. It initially appeared in the German journal of art and culture, *Texte Zur Kunst*, vol. 1 (Fall 1991) No. 4.

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**Q:** For a while now, you have been working with a new distinction. Instead of differentiating between "system" and "environment," you have been differentiating between "form" and "medium." What are the specifics of this conceptual framework concerning form?

**Niklas Luhmann:** First I would say that this concept does not replace the system-environment theory. Rather, it provides an alternative formulation, so that "system-environment" and "form-medium" can alternately be grounded in each other. That's the first thing. The conceptual framework itself is

actually derived from the form calculation in George Spencer Brown's "Laws of Form," according to which all observation rests on a distinction and form is the unity of this distinction. Thus, form is not a beautiful figure or a special thing, but rather the difference of the thing from its surroundings. In the past, this was explained using "figure-background," or some similar distinction.

**Q:** Characteristically psychological explanations.

**Luhmann:** Yes, things like that. Now, the constitutive difference is simply cast in a more discerning light. It is not about an object, but rather it is difference itself which is form.

**Q:** To me, this seems quite useful for the analysis of art. One gains a very flexible and continually useful conceptual framework concerning form. However, now your decisive thesis posits form in such a way that, although it makes something visible—this is Paul Klee's old idea that art makes something visible—it also simultaneously makes something invisible. I am interested in this creation of invisibility through form, through art. What, in your opinion, does form hide in art?

**Luhmann:** If one stays with the realm of activity, I would say the unity of the distinction. One then only sees what is differentiated. If one sees that a certain stroke, a certain color, or a certain splotch makes a difference—that is, it manifests itself and so renders something else dead or meaningless or highlights it—and all that matters is the difference, then one goes back and forth between the two sides. One thinks either of this new addition, line, splotch, or color effect, or of that which one has to do in order to incorporate it into the whole picture, but not of both simultaneously. The unity of form disappears in its use or in the activity of observation.

**Q:** But is it not also possible to see both at the same time? I am thinking of Rubin's face/vase illusion, in which one can see the vase, but alternatively also the two profiles to the right and left. I believe that, if one jumps back and forth a little, one can, at some point, come to see both simultaneously—the face and the vase. Then, one would actually be able to see the unity of the difference.

**Luhmann:** Then the unity would stem from the speed of alternating between the two possibilities.

**Q:** Between the perceptual foci . . .

**Luhmann:** But in principle it is just as with paradoxes as such. One says something is true because it is false, and so it is false, it is true, it is false, and it is true again. Of course, one can speed up this process to the point that one comes to see the paradox itself, so to speak, but one cannot do anything with it. If I want to do something with it, I have to choose either one or the other side of the distinction. I have to allow logical operations, quantity theory or what have you to do to eliminate the paradox and say that true is true and that is that. And then I can work with it. Exactly in the same manner, an artist at work or an observer who is analyzing the work must say, “I now see the meaning of this side of the picture, because the other side requires it.” I believe that one cannot really conflate this with a static sense of unity. Of course, eventually one has, so to speak, completed or completely analyzed the work and obtains this unity from the sequence of focal points or emphases within the process of work or observation. But out of this sequence one does not return back to a unity.

**Q:** Common experiences teach us that the distinctions and descriptions created in the act of observation fixate and determine the observational outcome. The conceptual fixations, however, represent one of the central obstacles to an adequate understanding of art. If you now say that one has to choose either one or the other side of the distinction, I have to ask myself whether, by choosing one thing, one does not miss or overlook the other?

**Luhmann:** I would say that on the level of immediate observation one has stay with one side. Otherwise the distinction itself is denied. One can, of course, make the distinction as such the object of a further distinction again. I can say, for example, that there are effects here, which are based on color contrasts, and I now want to either neutralize or amplify exactly these effects through “big-small”—through a different distinction. Thus, one can again make the distinction one side of a different distinction. But then one employs this tool for observing, distinguishing, and describing things twice and escapes from the misery of only really being able to distinguish one side.

**Q:** How then does the world become impossible to observe?

**Luhmann:** If I want to make a distinction, I cannot simultaneously try to see the unity of the distinction, the indistinguishability of the distinction. That is

why I think that the universal concept of the world being unobservable is a corollary of the operational paradox of the observer: he cannot observe himself as observer or see the distinction as unity, unless he makes use of another different distinction.

**Q:** We are now talking about art, that is, we are now already communicating about art on a second-order level of observation. You yourself have described art as a social system. Could you briefly elaborate what you mean by that?

**Luhmann:** By social system I mean a general system whose operational purpose is communication. Thus, it constantly replaces communication with communication, has to continue one form of communication through another form of communication. Here I am not only thinking of linguistic communication, but also of gestures and such. But, in any case, I am thinking of processes which link systems of consciousness. Hence, when I describe art as a social system it means that its operational purpose is communication. Of course, this does not preclude psychological analysis. It also does not preclude the possibility of analyzing a work of art as form, that is, as a difference in relation to its surroundings in which it can be seen, or in relation to other works of art, processes, styles, etc.

**Q:** So when someone like Duchamp paints the Mona Lisa with a beard . . .

**Luhmann:** Yes, one can do that. Or one can locate the Mona Lisa as such in time. One can ask oneself why a woman displays boyish features. Thus, there are a plethora of distinctions, which one can draw in the analysis of a work. The contribution of sociology is to ask whether in the end all of this does not owe its reality and social existence to a form of communication. What that would mean, for example, is that in creating a work the artist places the distinctions in such a way that he can observe what a different observer will observe when he sees the artwork, and vice versa. In more recent aesthetic theory it is said, after all, that an observer can only understand a piece of art if he recognizes the means, or—to use my language—if he recognizes the method of observation with which an artist has produced the artwork. Hence, art in this sense, like language, mediates between observations.

**Q:** So you don't see communication as just verbal communication between human beings who are conversing about art, writing art critiques, or fighting over whether something is art or not, but rather already define it from the level of the works themselves.

**Luhmann:** Yes, that is crucial. It would otherwise be really banal to speak of art critics writing articles and people talking about how a theater performance was after seeing it. As a sociologist, you do not need any special theories to do that. In fact, the decisive factor is that the artist wants, one can almost say, to speak to other observers. He wants to ensure that his work is observed in an adequate manner, precisely through the peculiarity that one does not have the freedom to see just anything. When one looks at a work, one sees the decisions or observations which produced it. And one understands some of what the artist wanted to do. That is what I also call communication.

**Q:** Is it possible to do art outside of the artistic system?

**Luhmann:** No, I would say there isn't. Every system—economics, science—rests on the continuity of its operations, on the ability to recognize what belongs to it. When something is not recognized as belonging to art, then it isn't art.

**Q:** But it could be the case that someone crosses the boundaries of the artistic system. As artist first works in an area outside of it and so, as you say, remains unrecognized as such for five or ten years. But then the work suddenly is recognized as art, it's just that back then no one looked at it that way. Here I am thinking of conscious artistic efforts of transgression like, for example, Duchamp's "Urinoir," which the artist simply placed in an exhibit as a fountain. This too is a conscious transgression of the system's borders which then in turn acts back on the system itself.

**Luhmann:** But it is not conceived in that direction from the beginning, otherwise it would not be of any interest.

**Q:** You mean, not conceived in the direction of the artistic system?

**Luhmann:** Oh yes it is! The plan was to make it visible for the observer, namely in the form of a surprise: That can be art too. Otherwise, it could be just anything.

**Q:** So you would say then that one can leave the artistic system and work outside of it under certain circumstances, but it has to be done with the intention of re-integrating the work back into the system at some point.

**Luhmann:** No, from the very start I would say that it is rooted in the artistic system as art, as communication. The surprise only consists in the fact that it is also art, namely intended of course as a reflection of the art concept. Really, the entire avant-garde always only reflected the art concept. It went to the limits of that which can still be shown to be part of that concept. Only now with postmodernism has that changed. But, back then, real attempts were made to do something that was virtually outside of the system, yet still recognizable as art. Art is universal so to speak. Everything can be art if it is defined that way and if it can be incorporated in the context of art as communication.

**Q:** Can one say then that, by going to the limits of the system, the avant-garde or certain artists can expand the limits of this system bit by bit?

**Luhmann:** Yes, in a certain way the system establishes itself independent of any objects, that is, universally. Everything can be art in the same way that everything can be bought in an economy or everything can be researched in science. Or, every human action is either just or unjust. These functional systems in modern times tend towards universality, that is, toward independence from given snapshots of the world. Art also realizes this for itself. However, it is a general and typical model of modernity.

**Q:** There is also the opposite phenomenon. One could imagine that the further differentiation of the social system that is art will create further autonomous subsystems, which then, at some point, will no longer fit and fall outside of the system, like Industrial Design, for instance, which just a hundred years ago was still the domain of artists. So could it also be the case that the social system eventually dissolves and falls apart because of its further differentiation?

**Luhmann:** No, I do not think that it will cause the system to break apart. Industrial Design, for example, is after all also continually stimulated by new developments in art. Pop Art or whatever can then suddenly offer the designer new possibilities. Rather, I would say that there have always been productive areas natural to art which have had meaning for other systems, like economics, for instance, or politics, the glorification of the leader, the meaning of the parliaments and buildings, or whatever. Every system always has a productive sector which is derived from other functional systems. And this may be lost insofar as one simply leaves the design of automobiles, for instance, to wind tunnels and then retouches it with a bunch of lines. That

may be so self-sufficient that art no longer has anything to do with it. That is, art no longer connects to design.

**Q:** But would wind tunnel design still be in the artistic system, or would you say that it is already external to it?

**Luhmann:** It is external if it is simply done to be economical, if one simply thinks that the car has to be different from others. A Honda is not a Mitsubishi or something along those lines—I have to have semblance within a particular brand . . .

**Q:** Corporate identity . . .

**Luhmann:** Then it is completely external. But if I bring artistic experience, that is, a trained eye for optical effects, which is only possible because there is art, into it, then to that extent it is, at the same time, recursively coupled with artistic operations. Only, it is no longer artistically useful. With respect to the past, it is at the same time dependent on art. But it does not create any continuity with respect to the creation of new works of art.

**Q:** In your essay “The Artistic Medium” you argued that, in modern times, art uses society as its medium. Simultaneously, you perceived the danger that this could cause the artistic system to collapse in on itself, so to speak, and turn into a medium like everything else.<sup>1</sup> In fact, among current developments in contemporary art, there actually are artists like Jenny Holzer and Jeff Koons—or if you think of the 7000-Oak-Trees project of Joseph Beuys in Kassel—who use society as their medium. To that extent your thesis is also empirically accurate. What does it mean to say that art uses society as its medium, and to what extent could the artistic system collapse in on itself in the process?

**Luhmann:** To answer the first part of your question, I think that it has always been the purpose of art to offer descriptions of or forms for the world, which do not agree with what is already there anyway. From this standpoint, society as a topic is a snapshot, so to speak. But if one realizes that society itself is creating frameworks with which to see the world and that it is unimaginable to have a sensible world without appealing to social forms of communication, then society suddenly becomes a necessary channel for every description of the world. That is what I meant when it is said that society is not defined by the industry, smokestacks, highways, supermarkets, political

party centers, etc., that are present in it. Instead, it is a medium for ways of ordering, which can look very different from these things. Here, I probably was thinking more of literature than of art. Art then is a different form within the social medium. Then the question becomes: How can it claim it as its own when it provides its contribution to describing society? Is that a danger? I am relatively open about whether this presents a problem for art itself or whether it will cause art to fuse with mass media, sociology, and all other possible forms of social description.

**Q:** In your argument it was not clear either if it can present a danger or a chance for further development.

**Luhmann:** If art is only social description, if it only offers a more beautiful, more humane, safer society without environmental problems, catastrophes, or what have you, then it suddenly contains the whole set of alternative movements, politics, and everything else. Then art is suddenly a means of doing politics, presenting social movements, or motivating protests or alternative projects. Then I assume that the appropriation of art for political purposes, for example, comes very naturally. After all, that in some way was Marcuse's problem back when he suddenly saw that the Beautiful should be a means for revolutionizing things and then still said that people should take it seriously as reality. This detachment from the appropriation of his ideas about art by an alternatively oriented, protesting politics was suddenly too much for him. At this point, I believe art—when it projects society, that is, when it depicts other modes of ordering in the fictional realm—still has to retain some measure of control by asking, “Is that actually still art?”

**Q:** That is exactly what is also exciting about several efforts in contemporary art. Disappointed with a mentality focused on recreational entertainment, which is dominating art, they are deliberately leaving artistic institutions like museums, galleries, and exhibits and are really working outside in the social, public sphere. There, those who use or come across a piece no longer have to know that it is art at all. It does not make any difference. Along those lines, Jenny Holzer last year placed four white marble benches and four black granite benches, on which paradoxical texts were engraved, in a New York plaza.<sup>2</sup> The people just sit on a bench, because they are taking a break in the city. But whether they see it as art or not is completely unimportant for the bench itself. Thus, I would say that the active sphere of influence has been shifted. Or does it just seem like a shift?

**Luhmann:** That brings us back to a topic that we have already discussed: Is there art outside of art? And here I would again say, taking this example, that the artist is trying to produce a surprise encounter through art. Precisely that which is normal—the sitting-down—doesn't actually interest him. Instead, it is the fact that someone who sits down or is sitting suddenly starts to read and so is at the same time jolted—"Why?"—into a different medium. This "Why" effect and the amazement—the *tou mazein* in Greek—are, after all, what art begins with. It is the shocking encounter with a different reality, which at the same time promises a kind of order. I think that these things are important, not the fact that one gives pedestrians places to sit and, let's say, hides the art to such an extent that no one recognizes it.

**Q:** I would say that it is both. Scott Burton works in the public sphere by carving marble benches, which are simultaneously works of art reminiscent of simplified Brancusi-objects. But maybe both are important. There is its usefulness—the fact that one can sit on it without necessarily having to know that it is a piece of art. But if one pays a little closer attention, then one realizes that something about it is different when comparing it to the rest of the seats one finds in the public sphere.

**Luhmann:** It cannot just be a case of secretive, malicious joy—I've created a piece of art and no one realizes it. That then is the limit. Then one can say that artworks are a form of reflective self-gratification. But no large system can be built purely on self-gratification.

**Q:** In art there is currently a strong transformation of styles or accentuations, of predilections, preferences, and aversions underway. What interests me is how one can describe historical transformations within your theoretical model.

**Luhmann:** I think one has to differentiate between the two things. There is the transition to the functional differentiation and autonomy of important social spheres, like economics, politics, justice, healthcare, art, religion, etc. That is, there has emerged an autonomy that can no longer be socially directed and that practically produces today's society. One then has to differentiate this from the related internal dynamics of the functional systems themselves. There is the pace with which justice changes, the pace with which new theories are created, as well as the pace with which art has to react to past art from one year to the next, through its own variations and attempts of surpassing what has been. Thus, this last change moves at a much faster pace

than the life of the individual artist, who—if he does not watch out or possess Picasso-like skill—immediately becomes antiquated. These phenomena, which carry with them their own unique fatalism, can be traced back to the differentiation of the social spheres. Of course, one can ask oneself what constants are produced if things are continually changing.

**Q:** What shape would the further differentiation of such social functional systems take in the future? Do they differentiate ever further, do they become ever more autonomous, or how does one think about this?

**Luhmann:** No, I think autonomy has been reached. I see autonomy in relation to this operational conclusion, that is, not as something which exists to a greater or lesser degree, but as something which either is or is not. When one recognizes art as art in view of other art, that is, recognizes works as art because they are different from other works, are having a historical dialogue with existing styles and with different styles, or are supposed to be, have to be, or want to be innovative, then the autonomy of art is given. Then the only question is: Do we stay with this social category of creating autonomy, an internal dynamic, a closure, which more or less leaves all reciprocal effects—as massive as they are—to chance and confronts every system with the fact that no one takes note of it or is interested in it anymore? Or are the demands on seeing/ability raised so high that hardly anyone can meet them, except maybe the experts? Even the critics are criticized for not painting themselves. These are problems which are different in every functional system. In art, they are temporarily reflected in a unique manner in the transition from the avant-garde to postmodernism. With this I mean that one currently is faced with the question whether the end of the reflection of the art concept in artworks has been reached. One goes to the limit, one surpasses, one does it differently from others—for how long and how radically? If one now switches to postmodernism—that one chooses something from the treasure chest and how one does that is left to fancy—then the question becomes how far it should go and to what extent a further historical step from it is possible.

**Q:** Against this fancy and free selection?

**Luhmann:** Yes, and whether it isn't possible for a sense of quality that promises stability to assert itself again somewhere; that is, a judgment that can be applied to other works of art.

**Q:** That would have to occur from a position of authority, namely through the dictates of an authoritative leader who says, “This is quality, and the rest isn’t.”

**Luhmann:** In the field of science—in sociology—we also have this problem: a multitude of theories, pluralism, discourses, everyone has his own theory, etc. I don’t know if one shouldn’t demand something like a new sternness, if one shouldn’t, for example, pay attention to accuracy in scientific matters: “What exactly do you mean?” And that could suddenly open up new possibilities to be accurate. I could imagine that a new sternness could also exist in art. A Hungarian art historian once spoke of *Nouvelle Severite*—that is, of a new seriousness and sternness. One could think about what fits with what and what combinations seem new, so that, in reflection, one simply pays attention again to the means. But these, of course, are the reflections of a sociologist who must actually wait to see what happens, before he can say what the case was.

**Q:** But we do all want to know what comes next.

**Luhmann:** But there I am always very cautious, despite the fact that I actually see possibilities. Especially when one argues from a scientific standpoint, one does not want to dictate what art should actually be doing. It is the same with politics. There, one depends, in a certain way, on the fact that something is actually done and can be done before other things in the realm of possibilities.

**Q:** You mean that within the diversity of possibilities, sternness and accuracy can raise the quality of art and introduce a new decisiveness?

**Luhmann:** Yes, and what science can offer toward that is actually only the uncertainty, whether that is occurring or whether that is possible. When science runs into other fields like politics—also philosophy of science by the way—and economics, it always heightens the uncertainty. I also have this problem with theologians. When I tinker with the concept of God, so to speak, I am putting them in a position of uncertainty.

**Q:** It is like that not only with the theologians. With your theories, you also create uncertainty for artists. But that can also be productive sometimes.

**Luhmann:** Yes, but that simply means: Do it yourself.

**Q:** Currently, your theories are gaining strong recognition in the world of art. There clearly is a direct influence on art. I would just say that sometimes the abstract conceptual terminology creates an almost insurmountable barrier for artists.

**Luhmann:** Within the theory of operationally closed systems this means of course: science speaks to science, and when someone else gets something from it, then that is coincidence. Only, one can conflate the coincidences. Coincidences are not rarities of this occurrence. I think that sociology, if it wants to formulate a social theory, has to treat, according to high standards, all great intellectual performances, all artistic or other specialized semantics, as social facts. It cannot just say, that is a different science, that is done at art schools and not universities, those are theological faculties, those are economists, and so on. Rather, one actually has to see that these things occur within society. A social theory cannot simply ignore that, just because there is a division of labor in academics. From this results—at least for me—a strong interest in extravagances, artificialities, or raised, specialized demands. I am trying to develop a language within sociology appropriate for this. That brings me close to pedagogues, theologians, those who study art, or even artists. On the other hand, I have no hidden intentions of regulating art.

**Q:** The breadth and versatility of your themes is amazing. There is hardly anything about which you have not written. Are there certain substantive areas, which do not interest you?

**Luhmann:** I do not want to apodictically say “no interest” once and for all, but I, for example, always have difficulties with spatial coherences. As much as I like being in Brazil and am interested in the political relationships there, I am not interested in Brazil as an entity. Or take the city Bielefeld—that is not a system. So all spatial, regionalized entities do not interest me so much. How one can think about space in relation to communication—that, for example is such an area. Or also: I reject any invitation to speak about man as such—human images, how dreadful. Man as such does not interest me, if I may put it so harshly.

## Notes

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1. Niklas Luhmann: "The Artistic Medium," in *Delfin*, 4(1986), pp. 6-15. Reprinted in Frederick D. Bunsen (Editor): *New Orientations in Art* (Würzburg: Echter, 1988), pp. 61-71: "If it applied, then the use of society as a medium would be the logical conclusion of such a development. Since art itself is—as a form of communication—the expression of society, it could then use itself as a medium and collapse in a kind of logical short-circuit" (p. 67).
  2. "Selections from Truisms and Under a Rock," reproduced in Diane Waldman, *Jenny Holzer* (New York: Harry Abrams Inc., 1989), pp. 48-49.

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\* *Translated from the German by Brian Graf, Rutgers University.*

*Stephen Eric Bronner*

*Fiction*  
**Sancho's Way**

by  
Stephen Eric Bronner

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Spain was quiet on that day. There were no battles, no court intrigues, and hardly a murmur of discontent from the poor. The sun was shining and two travelers savored the stillness as two weathered horses bearing a few satchels sauntered behind them. Accompanied by a brisk breeze, they walked along through an austere landscape that was barren except for a few scattered rock clusters. The two were on the road to Toledo. Both wore the faded gray tunics and roughly hewn brown capes popular among the wandering monks who traversed the countryside. They had been traveling since daybreak along the road frequented from time immemorial by pilgrims, gypsies, merchants, swordsmen, nobles, Moors, Jews, and the poor.

“Shall we rest, Brother Manuel?” the young man asked.

“Not yet,” the monk responded. “We still have a while to go; we can rest at the next fork in the road.”

“As you wish,” he replied respectfully.

Continuing along, Manuel's gaze fixed on the sky. Wearily, he ran his hand over his bald head to wipe away the sweat. His hard brown eyes were more tired than usual, and the creases checkering his leathery face had grown deeper. His hand slid down the sallow cheeks and fell on his neck where the skin bunched and sagged.

He had tried to hide the worry. The Archbishop of Toledo had called him. It could mean only one thing: a trial. Manuel pushed the thought from his mind and turned to Francisco. How he loved the boy, with his large nose, dark features, and gaunt face. He stooped slightly, but his eyes were bright and his teeth hardly yellow.

“If only he would remain with me,” Manuel cried inwardly.

But Francisco had made his decision. After Toledo, he would return to the town of his birth as he had left: alone and a wanted man.

“A wanted man,” Manuel muttered to himself. “Seventeen years old . . . A child! That's what he is. “Wanted . . . And for what?”

Outside Francisco's village, no one knew. Manuel had found him half-wandering and half-hiding in the bushes along the side of a road. He could not have been more than thirteen, and he had not eaten in days. The bones poked through his skin and there were blisters on his lips. His eyes were wide with fear like those of a beaten puppy. His clothes were rags and his only possession was the bronze Jewish star which hung from his neck.

Manuel had seen such children before. Victims of the Inquisition, orphans of the plague, fugitives from their masters, bastards, strangers, raped and abused. Manuel saw them everywhere. Sometimes he thought that Spain had become a nation of homeless children. His work had made him callous. But the old man was drawn to the boy. He fed him, cared for him, shielded him from danger, and turned him into his novice. The boy's given name was Isaac; Manuel changed it to Francisco. He dressed him in a habit and put a cross where the star used to hang. No one asked questions: there was nothing unusual about a monk choosing some young boy for a disciple. Manuel tried to teach him about the Savior, but to no effect. Then, thinking that a pagan belief was better than none at all, he told Francisco about what was hidden and what was his. He spoke with sympathy of the Old Testament as well as the New. Still nothing. God died in the young boy's heart.

To the rest of the world, however, Francisco had become a *Marrano*. The converted Jew, now a novice, could walk with a hint of freedom. He knew how to read and, with the help of Manuel, he now began to think. Manuel had little respect for the Index, the books banned by the Church, perhaps because he knew the censors. So it was, in spite of the risks, that Francisco came to study the great pagan philosophers Avicenna and Averroes. In fact, with a wink from the old monk, even literature passed through Francisco's hands.

Once they were nearly discovered when a priest overheard their disputation over the relative merits of Maimonides, the Aristotelian, and Solomon ibn Gabriol who remains known as "the Jewish Plato." But the priest knew of Manuel's connection with the Archbishop, and the incident was forgotten. Of course, that same Archbishop probably would not lift a finger were Francisco to be caught in the town of his birth. The risk would be too great, even for him. Nothing could excuse the assault on an inquisitor, even by a child, even if the priest in white had commanded the soldiers to drag his parents away. Nothing to be done! Once those in the white robes have spoken, God himself cannot take back the words.

And the words were those of damnation. A miracle that Francisco had escaped at all! Long before their present journey had begun, Manuel had

pleaded with him to remain where he was, safe, within the walls of the monastery. But the boy was adamant. Just a short while earlier, they had encountered a tanner from his village. Francisco knew that his father had perished on the rack, and his sister in the flames; he now learned that his mother had been set free sometime thereafter: crazed, mutilated, and a beggar. She had lingered on for all those years, and now she too was dying.

"I want to see her again before she dies," Francisco said gravely when he heard the news. "I will see her and then say our prayer of the dead over her grave."

"She will be a stranger to you," Manuel thought to himself.

And now, as they walked, Manuel grasped Francisco's arm. He pressed it close to his chest, and Francisco smiled.

"Perhaps the devil's German servant was right," Manuel said to himself. "Maybe the Church really is a whore. But not Spain! Not Toledo. Manuel had always wanted Francisco to see the city. Now, he thought, it might yet make the boy change his mind. Manuel had pondered the plan often enough. First they would pass together over the ancient Bridge of Alcantara. Then he would let the boy go where he pleased, leave Francisco to make his way to the magnificent Cathedral, the building that Ferdinand III believed would free Christianity once and for all from the pagan influence of the Moor. What precious stones would sparkle from the shrines! How they would dazzle this youth accustomed only to the little villages with their illiterate priests, corrupt officials, and filthy peasants. And then finally, surely, he would gasp before the overpowering beauty of the High Altar.

Afterwards, Francisco would meander through the small winding streets that converge on the town square. There he would undoubtedly see the merchants bustling and haggling over silks from the Arab lands, spices from the Americas, and tapestries from the Low Countries. Standing before the *Alcazar*, he would gaze at the military citadel which had once functioned as a court until Phillip II decided to inhabit his new, morbid city of Madrid. What marvels he would behold! What discussions he would hear! Every glance would uncover something new and wonderful! Faces flung together from the four corners of the world would hold his gaze. Women would dance. The food would melt on his tongue and the wine would make his insides glow. Francisco would even have the chance to see the synagogue in the intricate Moorish style with golden walls, built by a crafty Jewish advisor to the King, which had been appropriated by the Benedictine order and renamed *El Transito*.

And Manuel would save the best for last. Only after all this would he show Francisco the paintings of the Greek. Nowhere in the world were there

*Stephen Eric Bronner*

paintings to compare with his. The Italians with their timidity and classical values! But *El Greco*, the Greek, he prefigures tomorrow . . . The best of tomorrow. Not the distorted figures or the twisted hopes. But the color! Dark and rich like the heart of Spain itself. A color thrusting beyond squalor and fear, beyond loneliness and hate! That was what Manuel wanted his young friend to experience. He had experienced it himself, long ago. There in Toledo. City of kings!

The old man coughed. Francisco took the goatskin from his satchel and offered it to Manuel. The monk drank deeply as some wine dribbled over his chin. Then he lowered the flask, and Francisco met his eyes.

“He will die alone,” Francisco said to himself.

The thought struck him like a blow. He turned away, shook his head, and blinked. He saw before him only the flat boredom of a landscape no different than those others they had crossed so many times before. The sky had turned milky white, and the sun now shimmered dimly. Francisco wondered about the real reason for their journey, though he had his suspicions, and he chattered a bit about the upcoming meeting between Manuel and the Archbishop. But his thoughts were elsewhere.

Francisco knew that the other priests mocked Manuel behind his back: the inquisitor who did not steal, did not sell indulgences, had no mistresses, and seemingly lacked ambition. But he also knew that they feared him. Legends surrounded Manuel. He supposedly knew everyone including the pope. Some whispered that he had studied alchemy and that he practiced magic. Others claimed that he was as rich as Midas, and still others that he was the chosen one of God—or the Devil. But he had not studied alchemy or practiced magic. He had merely studied medicine and, when he was not called upon by the Church to perform his inquisitorial duties, he always resided in a modest and somber monastery near Burgos. Nothing should have made one think him the favorite of God—or the Devil. But legends have their own lives to live.

Not even Francisco really knew much about him except that he was born some sixty or seventy years ago in the mysterious city of Salamanca, where he was known to enter the library of the famous university by night. In those little rooms, Manuel taught himself to read with thoughts of the lash cutting into his back were he to be caught. Some claimed that, as a youth, he had slept with witches and howled at the moon. Others found him kind and helpful. All agreed, however, that one day he had simply disappeared and that he was no longer a youth when he returned to Spain.

For years nothing was heard of him though there were rumors of his travels to Italy, the Holy Land, and the New World. It was even hinted that

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he had been to Ireland, the land of the savages, where not even an angel would journey. Still, no one was really sure. All anyone knew for certain was that, as suddenly as he had vanished, so did he reappear in a small monastery near Segovia. It was from that time that his fame began to grow: he entered a town and, seemingly within days, the sick were healed. Those in the white robes circled about him like vultures. But they left him alone.

“You look preoccupied,” said Manuel breaking the silence.

“Well, perhaps just a little bit,” Francisco replied with a smile. “The thought of . . .”

“Come, let me ask you a riddle.”

“All right,” Francisco responded.

“It is said that the Devil only comes out at night. Do you know why?”

“No, why?” answered Francisco after a few seconds.

“Because at night it is easier to tempt people with the stars.”

They both laughed.

“The Devil knows about hope.”

“You know why I must go back,” Francisco said softly. “It’s not at the Devil’s prompting.”

“I know,” Manuel replied. “And, besides, others say that God watches over the stars.”

Then they stopped walking. They looked at one another tenderly, silently, and embraced. Suddenly, however, they heard a high-pitched wail. It came from the fork in the road where a man and a donkey appeared intertwined in some strange contortion. Fearing the worst, bristling at the thought of manifest impiety, they heard another wail and hurried to the scene. As they approached, however, their fears left them. They saw a short, fat, dirty peasant sprawled on his stomach. Upon his posterior, with its legs pinning his shoulders, sat a long-eared scraggly donkey that seemed entirely at peace with the world. Following their appearance, the wailing stopped. But immediately a thin, whiny voice cried out:

“Spare me! Oh, please! Spare me! I have nothing! I am the poorest soul in all of Spain! I have nothing I say! Nothing at all! Here I lie! I can’t help it! I’m pinned like Christ on the cross! Oh, please . . .”

Astonished by their reception, Manuel attempted to comfort the stranger. “Silence, my son. I am Brother Manuel and this is my novice Francisco. We are monks on a journey to Toledo, Look closely. We are not brigands, but servants of the Lord.”

“All right! All right! I believe you!” the peasant cried. “Now could you *please* get me out from under this ungrateful beast! There . . . Look there,

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Dapple! I see Rocinante,—and a friend for you,” the peasant exclaimed while pointing to the horses. Dapple remained where she was, however, with traces of a smile on his face.

While the peasant babbled and gesticulated, and Manuel kept gaping in astonishment, Francisco drew a carrot from his sack and waved it in front of the donkey’s nose. It rose, took the bribe, and ambled a few paces away to savor its prize. Clamoring to his feet, brushing off the dust with one hand while rubbing his injured posterior with the other, the peasant cried, “Praise be to God!”

Then, with an apologetic look, he turned to Manuel and Francisco.

“Forgive me. At first I thought you were priests. But one can never be too careful! After all, thieves have their disguises which my master always knew and . . .”

“What!” exclaimed Manuel as Francisco exploded with laughter.

“My blessed wife, Teresa Gutierrez often warned me against . . .”

“Are you mad ?!” Manuel cried.

“Only at Dapple,” the stranger replied while eyeing the contented donkey with a look of hatred. “Ah! Why are only the wicked ever rewarded? You as *theologisticans* . . .”

“That’s *theologians*, my friend,” Francisco interjected with a smile.

“Well, whatever. You should be interested in . . .”

By this point, Manuel was complaining of exhaustion stemming from the incessant stream of verbiage of their new friend. Then the peasant excused himself, crept up behind the donkey and gave him a whack. He turned to the monks, smiled, and fell to the ground after the animal’s tail slapped him in the face. Francisco helped him to his feet and made the mistake of asking his name and where he was bound.

“Sancho Panza is my name, Brother! Squire to the most illustrious and deceased knight ever to walk the earth! Formerly known as Alonso Quixano the Good, dubbed Knight of the Sad Countenance and then Knight of the Lions, but best known as Don Quixote de la Mancha! And I . . . I am off to Toledo to buy a mule after having sold some wool from my village in the great city of Seville.”

Manuel and Francisco looked at one another in amazement. Manuel made the sign of the cross and, finally, Francisco exclaimed, “You! Sancho Panza !?!”

“So, you’ve heard of me then?” the peasant asked proudly.

“Heard of you! I’ve read you, or about you, or . . .”

“Impossible,” Manuel interrupted. “Sancho Panza never existed.”

“Perhaps. But here I stand—fuller than life!”

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And, before either could utter another word, he hastened to add, “Ah! Thomas, too, was a doubter. But I take no offense! In fact, to show my good will, I even consent to travel together with you. After all, we are heading in the same direction and I’ve always said that there is nothing like a priest to ward off a thief. So, let’s be off. There is an inn down the road that we can reach before nightfall. A pleasant little inn. There we can rest in comfort and talk in peace.”

Before he knew it, Manuel was sitting on Dapple and each of the three found themselves munching a chunk of cheese that Sancho had procured from his provisions. Along the way, Sancho lectured them about the danger of highwaymen and of assorted other perils that attended a long journey. They became aware that he was no longer a young man. A number of his teeth had fallen out, his eyelids had grown thick, and his face was wrinkled. Unshaven, bits of cheese were lodged in his drooping mustache and tattered beard. Once it must all have been shiny black. Now it was silver gray and matched the tufts of thick hair that stuck out from under his tattered sombrero. His body resembled a pear and the two monks smiled at the way he waddled like a duck. Nevertheless, when the monologue finally came to an end, Manuel posed a question.

“Even if you are Sancho Panza—a fact of which I am by no means convinced—what kind of fool would buy a mule in Toledo and sell his wool in Seville? Such a journey is endless and, besides, everyone knows that the muleteers of Malaga sell their beasts in Seville. Finer animals cannot be imagined! What’s more, the best wool outside England is in Toledo.”

“And what do you need another mule for anyway?” Francisco added.

“Brothers! Brothers! What personal questions you ask!” replied Sancho pointedly. “But I, Sancho Panza, have learned from my travels with the renowned Don Quixote de la Mancha that one must be respectful of the weak, the old, the stupid, and the saintly.” Then, in a merry vein, he continued: “In my village they say that a walk is a potion for the soul. And just such a potion was what I needed. For though my wife, the blessed and pure Teresa Gutierrez, is all that one could wish from a woman, sometimes even blessedness and purity can become . . . How should I say . . .”

“Sancho!” Manuel cried. “The family is . . .”

“Right you are, Brother. Sacred it is. Like a man’s word! But I know that my holy family will carry on without me for a little while longer. And, even though a few minor disagreements still take place from time to time, Teresa Gutierrez has by now become used to my travels. Some even say that she looks forward to them! She knows that in spite of her weight, which rivals my own, her mustache and her temper, my heart belongs only to her—

especially at my age. It's just that in this troubled world, a poor man needs some rest for his soul now and then."

Then, after a pause, he added, "And won't she be pleased when I bring her back a new mule?"

And they all laughed. A short while later, pointing his stubby finger into the distance, Sancho cried, "Look! There's the inn!"

So they quickened their pace, only to arrive at one of the most wretched taverns in all of Spain. Spain had ever produced. The gate outside stood awry and the wood was rotting from the walls. No flowers graced the yard, and the animals that walked around unhindered were sick and underfed. Two women appeared at the large gaping hole that served as a window. The older one was frail and sat quietly while the younger—a woman resembling a bear—began to unbutton her blouse. For a moment, Manuel and Francisco hesitated. But Sancho gave a knock and entered. It had grown cool as dusk began to fall, and there was not a star in the sky. Blackness loomed and they realized that they could travel no further and entered as well, though with some trepidation.

The older woman was the owner's wife and she greeted the visitors politely. Immediately upon seeing the whore with her wares still on display, however, Manuel was shocked and Francisco began to blush. It was then that Sancho rose to the occasion. After introducing himself and his companions, while making arrangements for the night, he slyly made his way over to the prostitute. With an air of dignity, he deftly took her enormous breast in his hand and replaced it beneath her blouse. He then turned to his companions for their approval. While hearing a roar of laughter from the owner's wife, however, Sancho suddenly found himself flying into the arms of his new friends from a healthy kick to his backside.

"He who doesn't pay, doesn't feel," the prostitute cried with a smirk. "And, as for men of the cloth, I too have my limits, which I have learned well from bitter experience!"

But her humor returned quickly. Though her horse's face showed traces of an early bout with the pox, and her huge body stank fearfully, Sancho did not shrink away when she approached, playfully tugged at his beard, and gave him a hard slap on the arm while calling them to dinner. Rubbing his rump and then his arm in turn, Sancho replied that he had no objections, if his friends had none, and that it might do a group of sinners good to see that men of the cloth are no different from others who know how to pay for a meal.

Francisco and Manuel surrendered to what had become a cheerful mood and sat down at the table. The owner and his wife brought out the

food and took their places. The chicken was thin, but the wine had a powerful effect. They talked about cows and wheat, sheep and goats, marriages and dowries, and finally perversions and prices. It was only when a stranger staggered through the door that an awkward moment occurred. He was a brute of a man, slovenly and loud, with a grizzly face, scraggly hair, and a huge bulbous nose. His clothes were grimy and he smelled of cheap wine. He jingled some coins in his hand, tossed a few on a small rickety table, looked around contemptuously, demanded food and lodging, and then motioned for the prostitute to join him. Manuel and Francisco said nothing. Then their eyes focused on Sancho as the whore excused herself and the owners retreated to a room in the back that served as a both a kitchen and a place of rest.

“When the sickness first overtook my blessed master and he began his great quest,” Sancho said, “he came upon an inn similar to this one. He saw two whores, imagined them the fairest of damsels and, from what I have been told, treated them as such.”

As Manuel remained attentive, Francisco interjected. “But they weren’t the fairest of damsels. Or were they, Sancho?”

“Of course not,” Sancho answered curtly and then he reflected for a moment before continuing. “They teased him. They taunted him. They repaid his courtesy with curses. And when I first heard the tale, I laughed like everyone else in my village. But now I laugh a little less.

“You see,” Sancho said, “those whores could never see themselves as my master saw them. That is why they were whores and that is why the world remembers him and has forgotten them.”

The inn began to grow dark as the wicks of the candles burned down. From upstairs, they could hear a few muffled groans and feel the beams of the house shaking lightly. As red bags appeared under his eyes, Sancho looked momentarily at the ceiling.

“Many are the paths to heaven. Some take the straight path and others the crooked! And I learned that, from far away, it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference. Oh,” Sancho exclaimed, “how often we were tricked! How often I tried to warn him! But my master listened to a different voice which told him that many are the ways to bring out the best in a man. And because he listened to that voice, the world still listens to him.”

“Pardon me,” Manuel interrupted while shrewdly eyeing the peasant. “These are neither the words nor the thoughts which the great characters of the great Cervantes were wont to speak. How is it . . .?”

“I know what you mean, brother. You think that I am different than I was then? And it’s true. I’m older now and, praised be God, a bit wiser too.

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I have witnessed many things, seen many places, and learned much. But,” and now Sancho stretched letting forth a loud sigh, “in order to learn even more it is necessary to sleep. And that I will now do—alone!”

He began to rise from the table. But then he turned to Francisco and drew his face close to that of the youth.

“No, my young friend, my master was no fool. Nor am I. There will be plenty of time to prove it and much to discuss when, tomorrow, we continue our journey. But for now . . .” And so it was, with a wave of his hand, that Sancho retired for the night.

\* \* \*

The dawn had passed quickly. The colors accompanying the sunrise left only a grey, murky sky. It was already hot and humid when the stranger entered the yard and found Sancho busily at work. He inquired gruffly where the three of them were going and then waved farewell. Sancho answered distractedly without looking up. He was preparing a little surprise for his new friends. As they came through the door, Francisco and Manuel were still discussing the somewhat high cost their host had exacted from them. But they were pleased with the litter that was now harnessed to Dapple.

“A wonderful thought, my son,” Manuel noted ironically. “It seems that labor pays the price of deceit . . .”

“Such words!” Sancho replied in a wounded tone. “And after what I have built for you, Brother Manuel.”

“Do I look that old?” Manuel said in an irritated tone. “Don’t you think there is something unseemly about a man of the cloth being dragged along the ground?”

“Now, now, Brother! Don’t be angry. If things come to such a pass then you should enjoy the ride,” Sancho sighed. “Anyway, in my village, there is a saying: riding easy is the better half of living well—at least the bottom half, eh?”

So it was that, after saying their farewells, the trio greeted the day and set out for Toledo. They sauntered along in rhythm with Dapple pulling the litter. A little way down the road, however, Sancho’s body froze as if it had been pierced by an arrow.

A pair of windmills came into view. They somehow seemed larger than they were as their blades listlessly cut the sky. Sancho closed his eyes as the monks stopped and watched. It was a moment of great intensity and he surrendered to his dramatic instincts by letting forth a deep moan that mimicked a hog.

Manuel thought that it suited him rather well. Not for a moment did he believe that it was Sancho Panza, the character created by the immortal Cervantes, who was escorting him through Spain. Not for a moment did he take the fellow for what he claimed to be. Perhaps he was mad, Manuel thought, or perhaps he had set out to imitate his imaginary hero in the same way that Don Quixote had once sought to emulate his legendary knights of times past. The old man's eyes focused on the peasant. Sancho squinted, retreated from the image, stumbled over the donkey's leg, and fell to the ground. Francisco stifled a laugh. Sancho arose and, with great dignity, pulled his pants up around his enormous belly and placed his sombrero back on his greasy hair.

"You must know that I miss him! Oh, life wasn't easy for a simple peasant like myself! Strange lands! Strange people! Endless talk about knights who never existed! One crazy idea after the other and, always, off we would go! The only time I had any peace was when he slept! But, even then, he had his nightmares! Worse! If he always decided to hold forth in the morning, he always seemed to expend his wind at night. What a man! Half the time, I could barely understand what he was saying."

Sancho shook his head solemnly, patted Dapple on the rear, and gave a weary sigh that somehow seemed slightly exaggerated to the observant Brother Manuel.

"You should have seen him when he first came to me with his plan! Ah! What a sight he was! Thin as a stick, I tell you, with blazing eyes, hair down to his shoulders, and dirty to his bones. I swear before the Blessed Virgin and all the saints that he stank like a pig. But then it is said that even the magnificent Phillip II hated to bathe, that they had to pry the footwear from the Queen Mother when she died . . ." Francisco wanted to interrupt, but Sancho continued breathlessly. "Ah, young one! I, my wife before me now as I saw her then. As soon as Don Quixote walked into the yard, she was already off to the kitchen for the food that we always give to the wandering idiot anointed by God. But the anointed don't ride their horses backwards and they wear a bedpan for a helmet."

And, with those words, Sancho clasped his hands. "What would you have thought of my little Teresa then? 'An honorable nobleman,' she cried and then spat while glaring at me. 'Don't you come home drunk as well!'

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“May the saints preserve her!”

“I don’t think she will have much trouble, my son,” replied Manuel, stifling a laugh. “Your wife sounds like a righteous woman,” he continued sententiously. “I would worry a bit more about my own soul if I were you!”

“How wise you are! How holy is she! More so than I! But have pity, Brother! She did not have to listen. Before you and my Lord, let me swear that my master misled me with beautiful words from the start! For days on end, he told me of the valiant deeds that we would perform and the Island that I would receive to govern for myself! Who could have resisted the temptation?”

Francisco’s mind wandered as Sancho spoke. It wandered to the lowly and the insulted, the poor and the forgotten, in every town Manuel and he had visited on every journey they had made. How they listened! To the priests who knew as little as they, but who knew some phrases from the Bible and who, even if they didn’t, could speak the right words—especially when the price of a mass was right! What seductive power those words held! Each became a stitch in the tapestry of heaven. He thought of this in a fury that almost broke into the open when he exclaimed, “Sancho! How could you believe such rubbish! Didn’t you recognize the words of madness when you heard them? Govern an Island!” he cried contemptuously. “You are only a peasant!”

“Francisco!” Manuel cried angrily.

“I’m sorry, Sancho,” Francisco mumbled. “I only . . .”

“It’s all right, no offense taken,” Sancho said. “It’s true. I am only a peasant.” But then, with a big smile and a slap on Francisco’s back, he added, “And yet, now I am more than a peasant! I am Sancho Panza! All because my master laced the world with fantasy as the poor sometimes lace their water with wine! . . . What you said, for a moment there, made me think of my blessed Teresa Gutierrez!

“Oh! The oaths that she showered upon me! ‘May rats gnaw at your carcass!’ ‘May serpents sprout from your ears!’ ‘May the Devil send you lower than he!’ ‘Fool!’ ‘Idiot!’ And more! Yes! She could curse that one! . . . I remember how she pulled my hair and punched my flab! But it served no purpose! I had made my decision! I would become more than what I was! I would be Sancho the peasant no longer! Not I! I would become Sancho Panza—governor!

“I would make my Teresa a queen: Teresa I! My daughters would marry gentlemen, and I would have a dowry for each. My faithful Dapple would eat the finest oats, my chickens would peck at the finest feed, and my

pigs would breed in the finest slop. I would set a royal table and sit on a royal chair—with dignity!

“But wait! There was another reason I went with him! . . . How well I remember sitting on my donkey, eating a piece of bread and onion, wandering through a plain, thinking to myself, how much more pleasant this was than work. Even if the sainted, and recently departed, priest of my village were to spin in his grave, still I would have to admit it! Anything is better than work! Day after day, the calluses on my hands, the blisters on my feet! It was time for me to call the shots—with power. And this I was promised by my master, Don Quixote.”

“And that is all, Sancho?” asked Francisco. “Are you telling us that the jewel of Spanish literature glistened only with dreams of gold, rank, and idleness? Are those the only reasons you went off with him? No wonder they called him the ‘knight of the sad countenance!’”

“Those reasons are not good enough?” But, then, another smile made its way over Sancho’s face. “But those were the reasons! Or, at least, those were the reasons I went off the *first time*. A man, after all, is not built with a single stroke of the hammer.”

“But Sancho . . .” began Francisco.

“Look around you, my friend,” Sancho continued. “Poverty weakens the spirit. It took my master to show me that life was more than those around me could believe it was. He showed me that there was more to life than my dirty yard. And how do you think he did it? Hah! You think it was through an appeal to my charitable spirit and talk of aiding the weak and the helpless? I am the weak and helpless! . . . My master knew! People like me don’t need small dreams, but big ones! And what a dream he offered me! His madness touched the grime in my stomach and the hope in my skull.

“But Sancho,” Manuel asked, “did you not help trap him in a hospital in order to cure his addled brain? Did you not see . . .”

“Yes, I did. But life is not that simple,” Sancho exclaimed without missing a breath while fingering Dapple’s bridle. “Do you remember Don Quixote’s most famous adventure, when he attacked the windmills thinking they were giants? Do you remember why he attacked?”

Manuel was about to speak, when Francisco said: “I thought because he wanted to perform a valiant deed that would spread his name throughout the world.”

“True enough,” Sancho sighed. “But it is also true that the old innkeeper, who first knighted him, convinced Don Quixote that those who would follow the code of old must have money on their person in order to fulfill their gallant missions. My master, unfortunately, never thought of that.

He believed what that old ass-face told him! Believed him because he could not do otherwise! He couldn't look reality in the eye. Would that he knew the character of that man who owned the windmills. He paid his people barely enough to fill their bellies and that he performed vile acts with their wives! But Don Quixote knew none of this! And had he known it probably would have made no difference! He would have charged those windmills anyway. His head was always turned upwards," said Sancho whimsically. "It took me time to learn what that meant."

"Enough Sancho," Manuel interrupted. "I no longer know what is your story and what is not. I no longer know what was invented by Cervantes and what is invented by you. My head spins. I must lie down." And, no sooner did Manuel recline than he fell asleep.

The old man secured, Francisco and Sancho once again began to walk, but at a slower pace. The air had grown thick, and sunlight streamed through the clouds. Speaking softly, so as not to disturb Manuel, they continued their discussion.

"There is still something that bothers me, Sancho," Francisco said. "You say that followed your master out of greed and ambition. But everyone knows that you joined him out of loyalty in the famous battle of the sheep when Don Quixote mistook some shepherds flocks for warring armies: Christian and pagan. Did you know then that your master was deluded. Didn't you think that these were indeed warring armies?"

"Ah! Wisdom always comes too late. But don't get the wrong idea! I didn't really take part in the battle itself." Puffing himself up, he continued, "My task was more important! I had to guard the rear and steady my poor frightened ass—which I did rather well if I do say so myself!"

Both of them laughed. But Sancho could still see a look of sadness on Francisco's face when he asked, "Well, why then did you follow him?"

"Look, you were right," Sancho said, changing his tone. "They weren't just illusions. My master wished to turn his words into deeds. It never quite turned out right, but . . . Anyway, what else did I have to do? Man does not live by bread alone." And then, after a momentary pause, he added, "Especially when he doesn't have any!"

It seemed that the armed figures appeared from nowhere. There were cries and dust swirled in the air. Curses, shouting, and violence overtook them. Sancho counted six men. Manuel screamed as the litter was overturned, and the others were thrown from their horses. Francisco felt a kick to his stomach and Sancho's eyes bulged from the pressure of hands around his throat. Before it was over, each of them had been beaten mercilessly. Crawling on the ground beneath the kicks and the blows, the unfortunate travelers instinctively closed in together and formed a circle. While their assailants laughed, and continued their assault, the three friends tried to protect themselves as best they could. Soon enough, the three found themselves sprawled over one another like a bundle of rages. Blood streamed from noses, ears, mouths, and limbs, only to congeal in the dirt.

At last it came to an end. Only the donkey was left: the horse and the provisions had all been stolen. Through half open eyes, Francisco was barely able to see the highwaymen riding off into the distance. He tried to rise, but he was too weak. Slowly, thinking of the stranger with the bulbous nose, his head fell backward. The sun turned orange and the sky purple. Ever backwards did he fall. The orange sun and the purple sky fused into a bonfire before which there stood an old priest. He wore the white cloak and habit of the Holy Brotherhood. The prisoners with faces of gray were shrieking from fear. But then, again from nowhere, the movement of a broken lance caused the image to vanish. It was being waved like a magic wand by none other than Don Quixote de la Mancha, wearing a rusted bedpan for a helmet and an old copper dish for a breastplate. Francisco called for help. But there was no response. Don Quixote had his eyes turned upwards to the sky. But, for Francisco, the sky vanished. He looked down and the darkness overtook him.

Eliot Katz

### Walt's Trees

Here in Alberta's forests, the trees honor a long-term peace treaty  
In the wind they bow hello to their neighbor trees  
They lower branches welcoming new human arrivals to the tower  
None defend themselves with guns or night-vision missiles  
None have developed high-tech pepper spray for crowd control  
None go to Congress every 10 minutes pounding wood tables—  
    "give more war money"  
In Nose Mountain, no four start general trees moan over lost suitcases  
None irritate me with recitals of Joyce Kilmer's early works  
In distance, I spot clear-cuts, where buzz saws've carved giant figure 8's  
Who would cut down such beautiful herds of leaving breathing organisms?  
Walt's trees, will you forgive my daily reading of *The New York Times*?

Eliot Katz  
June 2001

### No Ideas But in Moving Hands

No idea but in moving hands

With no ideas for writing, Vivian reminds me at times like this  
    to exercise the hand  
so move hand—write about how far you are from all the action  
    in New York  
move hand—write about how nice to get away from Bushisms  
    for the week  
move hand—faster, so much to be done and such a short  
    life to do it  
move hand—keep the mama & papa bears guessing  
movie hand—turn up the Leonard Cohen CD and keep away  
    from temptation of those 2 TV stations  
move hand—write a novel 'bout your days running a homeless  
    outreach center  
move hand—let the gods know you're not afraid

*Eliot Katz*

move hand—swish the air and turn the broom into an appetizing  
stalk of edible corn  
move hand—persuade the earth's forests to denounce the Nike swoosh  
move hand—age the wine and smile gracefully  
move hand—try to imagine a utopia no one has yet written  
move hand—even if nobody reads yr poems, the least you can do  
is keep the graveyard at bay

Eliot Katz  
July 2001

### **45<sup>th</sup> Birthday in 2002**

Turned 45 while low back spasmed first time in few months—  
body getting old, but at least concepts of life  
becoming clearer:  
everyone on planet has 3 basic needs:  
material (food, water, shelter, medical, solid spot of earth),  
spiritual (creativity, religion, therapy, meditation, love, purple skies),  
empowerment (via elections, movements, razor blades, or bombs).  
Humans rarely choose the healthiest alternative  
in any field.

Deep in their heart everyone knows 2,000 year old concept  
of a sole omniscient god  
is a fiction centuries outlived.  
What keeps monotheism alive? Some say fear of afterlife—  
I think fear of censure by other human beings for revealing  
what lies deep in the heart—  
one's honest skeptical thoughts thrown aside  
for sake of church, mosque, temple, TV news picnics—  
And thus thousands still die every year for praying  
to a god with different sized shoes.

We've known long before Argentina that IMF austerity  
will not solve globalized poverty  
and yet defenders of a free market that isn't free  
still fill all our top op-ed pages.

*Eliot Katz*

As for the bombs used when democracy's highway blocked,  
everyone now understands that's a problem—  
    when it's others doing the bombing.  
Life on the planet is obvious  
    but not in the same  
    to any two folks—  
that's the challenge of building love  
the dilemma of a world growing colder  
    even as global warming infiltrates our core.

Eliot Katz  
January 2002

### **The Weather Seems Different**

Is it snowing in Athens tonight & Apollo with ice in his beard  
    is having a difficult time singing  
About six twin engine miniplanes have crashed coast to coast  
    in empty fields & a Bank of America building  
My love, you know that death is both a separation  
    and a permanent glue.  
You know that I am the son of a patient duct tape expert  
    and the daughter of a wine never allowed to age  
Love, we are all things to each, we are needy in just the ways  
    each other needs but doesn't yet comprehend  
In the open fields of Somalia there are civilians running circles  
    freaked out shivering they might be next  
From a satellite 10,000 miles above earth, like an empty chair  
    with telescope  
a disembodied human eye stares at us & stares at Columbia  
    he is looking below the oceans for new caves  
He is looking for people who are not yet in favor of empty chairs  
    placing nuclear-tipped dynamite in empty caves  
The danger is real, one can feel it in the air  
    even if unsure from which directions it is borne  
We are all getting older, we have realized this year it's time  
    to get serious about ducking death's temporary wings

*Eliot Katz*

Time to get our 10-dimensional affairs in order, between your  
big toe and its chipped nail  
there is a fire-breathing vulture just waiting for the dimensional wall  
to collapse even for a millisecond  
History repeats itself but sometimes as a young student pilot  
unsure how to create an effective farce  
My dear, the vulture escape for my 45<sup>th</sup> birthday last night  
it was in our bedroom pecking below the sheets  
It has eaten us alive and regurgitated us back into this world—  
time will tell whether we are healthier than before

Eliot Katz  
January 2002

Review: *American Pharaoh:*  
*Richard J. Daley, His Battle for Chicago and The Nation*  
by Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor

Reviewed by  
Kurt Jacobsen

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If you hanker after an utterly unscripted and exciting American party convention, the 1968 Democratic Party jamboree in Chicago still can't be beat. Right in front of telly cameras the city's Finest exhibited their formidable repressive skills in streets and alleys throughout the ravaged Windy City. Antiwar demonstrators—one in six later were reckoned to be agents provocateurs—were easy and plentiful targets but conscientious cops chewed up any journalist in sight and even Gene McCarthy campaign workers were bashed senseless in their 15<sup>th</sup> floor hotel accommodations. Tear gas wafted way up to the suite of Vice President and soon-to-be party presidential nominee Hubert H. Humphrey and made his eyes water—if he wasn't already in tears over the shambles the convention had made of his electoral prospects.

According to a new biography, Richard J. Daley, the legendary Irish-American machine boss of Chicago and arguably most powerful mayor of that turbulent era, tried mightily to manufacture a glossy, air-brushed image of his city for foreign (that is, non-Chicagoan) television viewers to admire. Why, he even thoughtfully installed freshly painted seven foot redwood fences along the route that convention delegates traveled between their nice hotels on the Loop (city center) and the Amphitheater to spare them a view of the south side high-rise squalor (especially the State Street corridor housing projects), which were generated by his own myopic development policies.

Oddly and ironically enough Daley disliked the Vietnam War, according to the authors of *American Pharaoh*. "Daley really could read public opinion in [his local neighborhood] Bridgeport pretty well," remarks co-author and *Chicago Tribune* books editor Elizabeth Taylor, "When some of Bridgeport's best boys were killed in Vietnam, he could see that public opinion would be

bad for the war and he expressed this opinion” privately to President Lyndon Johnson, suggesting that he simply throw in a “losing hand.”

Yet Daley was far too discreet a party man—and too wary of jeopardizing federal largesse by antagonizing LBJ—to publicly express his misgivings about the Southeast Asian slaughter and, what’s more, he didn’t sympathize with those gaggles of grubby dissenters infiltrating Chicago. “This was his town and he didn’t care that they were opposed to the Vietnam War,” Taylor observes. “What was important was getting control back over his city and he was happy to break heads in order to do it.”

“Daley wanted so much to show his beautiful Chicago for the world to see,” co-author and *Time* magazine writer Adam Cohen chimes in, “but the whole world was watching as people were put through glass windows, heads were bashed, and a police riot took place. Cameras detected Daley on the convention floor shouting profanities at Senator Abraham Ribicoff, who had scolded him for his “Gestapo tactics in the streets.” One Daley loyalist indignantly replied that the mayor never ever used foul language; after all, he “was a daily communicant.” On a notorious television spot with famed news anchor Walter Cronkite, who was disgusted at police misconduct, Daley barreled in to accuse the protesters, as Taylor relates, of being nothing but rabid “terrorists and communists. He really smeared the opponents so he could say his city was in danger and he was in danger—and Cronkite totally folded.” Daley—never celebrated for his oratory—won the media game too.

Cohen and Taylor assemble ample evidence that whenever in a tight spot Daley behaved like the Monty Python pet shop owner in the dead parrot sketch. He lied, denied and blustered—claiming in 1966 that there were no ghettos in Chicago and pretending, to boot, that he lacked influence over realtors or school boards to remedy what had become the most segregated big city in America. After the ’68 convention, most Chicagoans endorsed Daley and their police for beating back the weird barbarian hordes. (Actually, only a tenth of the expected hundred thousand dissenters showed up in August because dire warnings were spread about the reception that Daley was preparing.) Protesters later were put on a trumped-up trial for conspiracy to riot, a trial so plainly rigged that it would even have embarrassed a KGB court. (The inevitable convictions were overturned on appeal.)

Daley’s opponents never doubted that the word came down straight from the Boss. Chicago cops were no fans of longhaired kids or civil rights marchers

but they behaved professionally enough when they were kept in line by their leadership. A “shoot-to-kill” order issued during black riots after Martin Luther King’s assassination in April 1968 and an unprovoked police attack on an anti-war demonstration a few weeks later set the ferocious tone. Denial of permits to sleep in the parks virtually guaranteed violent confrontations would erupt. Ever since then, glib pundits reveled in crediting the Chicago protesters with electing Richard Nixon, but the blame lay at least as much with Daley’s antics, which, as the authors show, stemmed directly from his governing style. Daley didn’t want Nixon infesting the White House any more than the people in the streets did. How did it happen?

Daley, the authors readily agree, saved Chicago from the downward spirals of Cleveland, Detroit or Saint Louis in the 1950s. “We tried to write a book about how he built the city and the word Pharaoh was something that civil rights leaders dubbed Daley,” Taylor explains. “We use Pharaoh in all the senses of the word: powerful, autocratic, a real builder. He built a beautiful skyline, the tallest buildings, and huge highways. But he also built some of the greatest embarrassments to Chicago: the public housing projects.” One strength of the book is pointing out an alternative workable way—available at the time—of arranging these highly volatile residential patterns in a fairer fashion.

Chicago looks enchanting from the deck of a sailboat—the skyline of behemoth buildings glitter like jagged jewels at dusk—but a good deal less so from atop the squalid rows of segregated hi-rises Daley approved despite many warnings about the social perils of shoving poor people into isolated tower blocks. Daley, above all, needed to keep blacks geographically contained (over half a million Southern blacks arrived during the 1950s alone) so as to feed the power of his compliant underlings in the “black submachine” and to allay fears of his white voter base too. The trouble is that Daley had to balance the white working class neighborhoods (which were shrinking with white flight to suburbs) and the growing black bloc and accordingly got into nasty binds that he always managed to slip out of.

The fabled Boss did not boss around rich folk. “Daley loved power,” Studs Terkel notes. “He bent toward powerful people and he had disdain for those who did not have power.” Despite his populist noises about ruling on behalf of ordinary people in the neighborhoods, the first thing he did when elected in 1955 was to befriend economic élites who, of course, were Republicans. “He virtually handed over the planning of Loop development to a bunch of

downtown businessmen,” Cohen says. “They drew up a plan for city hall that included building up buffers between the Loop and poor black areas.” It made perfect economic sense to them and it was a mere coincidence that it made perfect racist sense too. The wealthy and well-connected get what they want “and in exchange they give a lot of money to Daley and back the machine.” The neighborhoods as a whole were short-changed, although obviously some areas less than others. He had to be careful. Even Daley’s patently empty promises of reforms in order to fob off the black civil rights leaders in the 1960s wound up enraging many ethnic whites anyway.

“So we’re not saying everyone loved integration and was angelic,” Cohen cautions, “until Daley came along and bent them to his will.” Bigotry, fear and adamant narrow-mindedness are stitched in the fabric of the city’s multi-ethnic history. Daley was born on the edge of the infamous stockyards of Upton Sinclair’s novel *The Jungle* in a place justifiably called Hardscrabble and renamed Bridgeport in the 1840s. His grandparents had fled the horrors of the Irish famine. “Daley’s world view was formed in Bridgeport: Irish, working class, xenophobic. A single avenue separated them from the black ghetto to the East and Bridgeport was deeply involved in the 1919 race riots where dozens of people were killed and injured.” Daley’s street gang/social club doubtless played a large role in racial violence. It’s a grim tradition.

In 1961 while Northern-born “freedom riders were heading South to desegregate it, there was a hotel fire on the black south side,” says Cohen “The Red Cross took a few fire victims to a church in Bridgeport near Daley’s home. Almost immediately a mob of local people came outside and cried: “They can’t stay here, they can’t stay here overnight.” The Red Cross couldn’t believe this was happening in America. They were told to evacuate the black fire victims or the church would be attacked. That was what Bridgeport was like and it says a lot about the cauldron that formed Daley’s personality.” At a victory celebration at the Conrad Hilton Hotel Daley remarked, “I can’t help thinking of your mothers and father and grandparents who never would have been allowed in this hotel.” But Daley never understood that Irish no longer were the out-group, so he had no sympathy for blacks. Daley’s idea of affirmative action, it was said, was nine Irishmen and a Swede.

All his ambitious spending projects were paid by soaring property taxes (up 86% in his first seven years) and by Daley’s knack at diving for dollars in the federal trough which he also channeled into his minion’s back room back-

rubbing deals and a patronage fiefdom of some 40,000 workers. Chicago news columnist Mike Royko dubbed the city council a “bunch of trained seals” who obsequiously did Daley’s bidding. Cohen and Taylor found that Daley hijacked the federal anti-poverty programs for the machine, which sapped the lion’s share before anything ever trickled down. Civil rights represented a threat to his power because open housing would disperse the black vote from his controlled “plantation” wards. There blacks were living in mostly rat-infested dwellings for which they “paid rents just as high as whites.”

When Martin Luther King came to Chicago in 1966 Daley gave him the Monty Python treatment. Daley’s talk about “A War on slums” was just that, mostly talk. “It was like a burglar had shown up in his house, a strange and frightening element had appeared and that was King for him,” according to Cohen. “King says we need the same freedom for people in Chicago as in Alabama. Daley truly does not understand anything that King is talking about because King was talking about the fair thing to do, about people being able to live wherever they wanted. But Daley was used to responding to appeals based on power. If King had said I have five wards that will turn out for you on election day and this is what I want in exchange, Daley would understand that. King got nowhere.”

Daley disregarded King’s warning that there would be explosive consequences arising from the strict segregation and other injustices. The West Side of Chicago, which erupted in 1967 and 1968, were the chief dumping ground for relocated blacks from Daley’s “urban renewal.” This telling irony was lost on Daley—as was the irony in 1968 of parallels between the Democratic Convention debacle and Soviet suppression of the “Prague Spring”—but his fears of new racial eruptions had reinforced his iron-fisted 1968 planning. The anti-war movement, in any case, was just another threat to the party discipline he always counted on. So the clashes in Chicago were, in a word, inevitable.

Daley died in 1976. After a long interregnum, including a stirring if bitterly contested spell by black mayor Harold Washington, a Daley dynasty got under way when eldest son Richard M. Daley—no more silver-tongued than his father—was elected Mayor in 1989. Still, Terkel observes that “the manner of speech is similar but never would the son do what his father did. He uses power in his own way but not in the outwardly brutish way Daley Senior did in 1968. Its different now although there still is police brutality as

we well know.” Toward the end of Daley’s life and after his death, many prominent machine cronies were convicted for financial fiddles and finagling but never did that particular taint spread to the Mayor himself. “That’s why he was unique” as a city boss, says Terkel. “It wasn’t the dough, it was power.”

Diana M. Judd

Review: *Our Posthuman Future*  
by Francis Fukuyama

Reviewed by  
Diana M. Judd

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*"O brave new world, That has such people in't!"*

-William Shakespeare  
*The Tempest*, Act V, Scene I

According to Francis Fukuyama, the only criticism of his well-known book *The End of History and the Last Man* he was unable to refute was that there could be no end of history unless there was an end of modern natural science and technology. His latest work, *Our Posthuman Future* appears to address this oversight. Fukuyama treats several current issues surrounding recent trends in biotechnology and genetic engineering with a mostly philosophical analysis, yet he also delves into some of the science driving the issues he raises. To his credit, Fukuyama emphasizes time and again that his point is not to dwell extensively on the science, but rather to theorize on its possible impact on politics.

His main argument is that "the most significant threat posed by contemporary biotechnology is the possibility that it will alter human nature and thereby move us into a 'posthuman' stage of history." While he never clearly defines what he means by the term "posthuman" even as he constantly alludes to the condition, he spends considerable time characterizing what constitutes our human nature. Relying heavily on the work of Aristotle, Kant, and Nietzsche, he sees human nature as "the sum of the behavior and characteristics that are typical of the human species, arising from genetic rather than environmental factors." The sum of these genetic factors he labels "Factor X," which is what gives us "dignity and a moral status higher than that of other living creatures." Factor X cannot be reduced to moral choice or the capacity for reason, language, sociability, sentience, emotions, or consciousness. Rather, it is the coming together of all these different factors that make us whole human beings, that give us the "mysterious" and

“ineffable” natures we all exhibit. What’s more, politics and human nature are complexly entwined. Fukuyama avers that our contemporary capitalist liberal democracy is grounded in assumptions about human nature, assumptions which are more “realistic” and “successful” than the assumptions of their competitors. His main concern is that the biotechnology revolution (which includes pharmacological advances as well as the increased potential of genetic engineering) may strive to make us both more and less human than we are, a situation that “will have possibly malign consequences for liberal democracy and the nature of politics itself.” The solution to this problem of biotechnology “is obvious,” Fukuyama claims: “[W]e should use the power of the state to regulate it.”

While there are several drawbacks to his formulation, Fukuyama does offer a few keen insights on the ways politics and science interact. For example, he observes that both the Right and Left use whichever side of the infamous “nature versus nurture” debate happens to promote their own political agendas. In his discussion of some controversial issues whose cause is often attributed to one half or the other of this dichotomy—intelligence, criminality, and homosexuality—Fukuyama observes that “in contrast to intelligence and crime, where the Left attacked the very idea of heritability, many gay activists seized on the idea of the ‘gay gene.’” Similarly, various groups on the Right have attempted both to scientifically prove that certain racial groups were inferior in some way or another *and* to claim that so-called “deviant” traits such as homosexuality were a matter of individual moral choice and thus culturally or legally punishable. By the same token, much feminist literature over the last few decades has tended to embrace alternatively the ideas that (a) women are essentially different than men on a biological and a social basis; and (b) differences between the sexes as they have existed are wholly socially constructed. Both arguments presumably intend to promote more respect for women and the idea of womanhood, as well as to increase opportunities and win legal rights, but in fact they rest on different foundations.

The point of Fukuyama’s observations, and one of the major points in *Our Posthuman Future* in general, is that neither the social constructionist view nor the hereditarian view “is tenable in the light of currently available empirical evidence.” In other words, the “nature versus nurture” debate is itself a fallacy: nature both imposes limits on and confers advantages to human beings, which affect who we are just as much as our environment, nutritional habits, and individual choices do.

While such insights into the use of science by various activists and interest groups are both useful and timely, Fukuyama tends towards a heavy-handed approach. Specifically, he relies too heavily on alarmism as a rhetorical device. For example, in his discussion of the meaning of human rights and their origins, he jarringly invokes imagery more characteristic of pulp-fictional dystopia than a philosophical treatment of the politics of technology. “What will happen to political rights,” he asks, “once we are able to, in effect, breed some people with saddles on their backs, and others with boots and spurs?” Similar rhetoric abounds. The sense of urgency he conveys seems geared to stop the inevitable Brave New World which is fast upon us. To emphasize his more considered arguments, Fukuyama invokes images such as that of human experimentation reminiscent of the Nazi regime in World War II (in fact, he summons this specter on several different occasions), the cross-breeding of humans and animals to create a new and horrific species, and a “Soylent Green” type scenario where human body parts may be recycled instead of wasted (not unlike the common practice of using animal parts in cow feed). Furthermore, if biotechnology goes unchecked, if scientists are allowed to prolong the human lifespan while birth rates in the developed world continue to decline, the resulting shift in global politics would be dramatic. In essence, Fukuyama makes the claim that such a shift would result in “a North whose political tone is set by elderly women, and a South [with no similar biotechnological advances] driven by . . . super-empowered angry young men. It was a group of such young men that carried out the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center.”

While Fukuyama is quick to point out that “biology is not destiny,” such prose serves little purpose other than an attempt to manipulate the reader. Perhaps this is merely the result of the thin line he walks between a serious treatment of the subject and a pandering to presumed populist paranoia. It may also be the outcome of his own personal biases, which come through clearly on the side of a stable, Christian, Western worldview. It is because of Christianity, he claims, that the West will most likely outlaw cloning. Asia, on the other hand, “lacks religion per se as it is understood in the West—that is, as a system of revealed belief that originates from a transcendental deity,” and so will probably allow human cloning. The reason is wholly based in religion, even as theology is for the most part downplayed throughout the book: because most of Asia is non-Christian, they possess “a somewhat lower degree of regard for the sanctity of human life.”

In short, what Fukuyama wants to protect from the biotechnology revolution is what he sees as our full range of complex natures. The “unity” and “continuity” of human nature is paramount, and grounded in the notion that we are more than the sum of our biological parts. The threat of altering our natural human selves is that we would somehow become less complex, and thus lose our “mysterious” or “ineffable” nature. Although his recommendation that new institutions need to be created to regulate the uses and possible abuses of biotechnology is sound on the face of it, the overall tenor of the book falls into the category of the kind of alarmism that has historically met most significant scientific or technological advances. Sounding a note of caution in the face of untested technology is common sense; but promoting what is little more than propagandistic rhetoric for the purpose of advancing one’s biases is simply unfortunate, especially when the one promoting it is a scholar of Fukuyama’s caliber. Both the academic realm and popular culture at large would benefit from a more even-handed approach to the important issues surrounding biotechnology and genetic engineering; alas, such is lacking in Fukuyama’s book.

## Review: *Jihad*, by Ahmed Rashid

reviewed by  
Anora Mahmudova

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I came to the United States almost five years ago and every time when asked about my national background I hesitantly answered, “Uzbekistan.” My hesitance was because people would usually say: “Ah, yes, Pakistan,” and nod as if they knew what I was talking about. Although that irritated me enormously, I excused them, for that region lay hidden in the mass of the Soviet Union for decades, and only emerged as the “stans” with load of oil and gas reserves in early '90s.

However, the 9/11 attacks and the following war in Afghanistan, cast a new light into Central Asia. The dictatorial governments of the Central Asian states which border Afghanistan kindly offered the United States their airbases to be used as launching pads in the “war against terror” in Afghanistan. Part of their motive was a growing fundamentalist threat in their very homelands.

Ahmed Rashid in his book *Jihad* describes Islamic militant threats, particularly in the five former soviet republics of Central Asia. The title of the book was perhaps inspired more by its potential sales appeal than the actual content, since it appeared on the bookshelves shortly after the bombing of Afghanistan had begun and when public interest in notions such as “jihad” was extremely high.

However, it is not really about “jihad” in general terms. It is about the growing tendency of Islamic groups to be drawn into militancy by repressive governments. Nonetheless, it is well written and chapters flow smoothly, and for anyone who has some knowledge of the history and geography of the region, it is quite a revealing study.

Rashid argues that the geography of Central Asia has played a great role in its history. As in real estate, location is everything. It lies in the middle of Eurasia, between Russia, China and Iran, where the Great Silk Road once passed. Whoever controlled the region had power across the whole continent.

So it has been conquered and re-conquered over the centuries passing from one empire to another. Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, and Tamerlane created their empires in this land. Later, Czarist Russia and Great Britain fought each other for influence over the region, in the “Great Game.”

For Rashid, Central Asia, with its historical and cultural heritage and current political and economic situation, might become a place to breed the next generation of “jihadis.” The region first adopted Islam when the Arabs invaded it in 751. But Islam intermingled with local religious elements to create a tolerant and eclectic form of Islam in the shape of Sufism. The region became a cradle of Sufism and produced numerous “saints” and religious scholars.

When the Czarist Russia conquered the Central Asian khanates—who by then were endlessly fighting with each other—they immediately saw Islam as a force capable of uniting people for resistance. Indeed, the bloodiest resistance came from rebels who fought against unbelievers to liberate their land.

The Bolsheviks who took over Russia in 1917 also tried to wipe out Islam, fearing it would be a threat to implementing a Communist regime in the region. Islam has been suppressed ever since. The local rulers, even when they passed as communists, were corrupt and operated on tribal rules which pandered to the Kremlin. However, even 70 years of Soviet rule could not completely eradicate Islam. People worshiped in secret, moving their mosques into graveyards, attending to both the living and the dead, writes Rashid. In the '60s, the government decided to loosen its prohibitions against Islam by opening official madrasahs and appointing government-approved muftis. Clerics were also allowed to travel abroad to study Islam. Often, it would be Al Ahzar University in Egypt or Islamic schools in Jordan.

The Soviets had sealed their southern borders, isolating its Central Asian population from their keen co-religionists in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Uygur province in China. The brief democratic period under Gorbachev and later the collapse of the Soviet Union with even briefer democracy in the newly independent states revived religion. Pious Muslims once again were allowed to go on the Haj or send their children to study Islam in Pakistan. On their return, they later introduced more fundamentalist streams of Islam that did not derive from the older more tolerant indigenous traditions attenuated by Soviet persecution. Thousands of mosques and

madrasahs mushroomed everywhere.

Rashid also describes the first encounter of numerous Uzbeks, Tajiks and other Central Asians with the Mujahedeen during the Soviet incursion of Afghanistan in late '70s, where many soldiers were drafted from the Central Asian republics. Those who were captured and eventually defected to the Mujahedeen had been impressed and inspired by the faith and fervor of the fighters for Islam.

The governments, who were afraid of independence, tried to do everything to stay with the Soviet Union, but after it fell apart they had no choice but to declare their states independent. These new pious Muslims went further and demanded the creation of an Islamic state based on Sharia.

In the beginning, all of the ex-communist rulers who were in power then and remain so until now, played on the emotions of the predominantly Muslim population. People who had become only marginally religious after decades of the Soviet rule now liked the idea of being freed from the Russians whom they believed were oppressing them. The governments changed their ideology from communism to nationalism with hints of Islam.

However, when the regimes sensed that people were forming Islamic parties, which could be an effective opposition force, they began another phase of a bloody repression. These governments—especially in Uzbekistan—imprisoned thousands of Muslims on the grounds that they belonged to the outlawed Islamic groups of IMU and Hiz-b-Tahrir (HT). Hundreds have been killed while held in custody, and the rest tortured in notorious prisons.

Like many observers in Central Asia, Rashid argues that the repression of ordinary Muslims along with the deteriorating economic situation in the region eventually drove them into militancy. “Well-fed, well-housed educated people have no need to join militants,” Rashid suggests.

Both the IMU and HT have an agenda of creating a Caliphate, a pure Muslim society based on mythological perceptions of an Islamic golden age, on the territory of Central Asia. IMU fighters fought along the Taliban against the Northern Alliance a year earlier and were great sympathisers of Osama bin Laden.

Both of these groups are outlawed in all Central Asian republics and are

on the State Department's list of "Terrorist organizations." Even though HT is not a militant group and as of today has not done anything but spread leaflets and organize private prayer sessions, anyone found linked to the groups has been imprisoned with sentences ranging from 12 to 20 years. Indeed, HT is more popular in Central Asia, because of its repression. In other countries, where it is legal, it has little or no impact on the youth, writes the author.

Rashid gives a thorough background on the history of Central Asian states, especially, the independence period or 1991-2001 and describes the events as someone who would be considered an "insider." Indeed, his information is based on his personal observations, as he was present in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan during the transitional period of the collapse of the Soviet Union and consequent independence for all republics. His resources include both top government officials and the Islamic groups' leaders, giving his statements tangible credentials. He has done an extensive research on Islamic groups, including Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, that is part of a current coalition government.

He further describes the relations of these states with their neighbours: Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and the newest ally the United States taking part in what he sees as a renewed "Great Game."

Rashid concludes with a call for Washington and the European Union to pay greater attention to the region and pressure the current governments into realizing democracy. He writes that the region has all the necessary conditions for terrorist groups to flourish and recruit among young men, who are jobless and with no future perspectives. Unfortunately, Washington has closed its eyes to human rights abuses, so long as they can be labeled as anti-terrorist acts. As long as local governments repress Islam, people's resentment will grow and the under-educated youth will prefer promised paradise for the martyrs who fought for the idea, rather than be brainwashed and promised a "great future" but live in the grim present of regimes whose sole religion is their own survival.

Review: *Five Moral Pieces*, by Umberto Eco

reviewed by  
Greg Tuculescu

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If, like me, you like to read with pencil in hand ready to underline passages that intrigue, stir your intellect, or simply turn the corners of your mouth, this is a collection that requires two pencils. As the title suggests, Eco's newest work is a collection of five pieces united under a common theme. Despite the apparent differences in subject, context, and time of composition, the pieces in the collection, as Eco assures the reader in his introduction, "are all ethical in nature, that is to say, they treat of what we ought to do, what we ought not to do, and what we must not do at any cost." The binding theme, however, is not what ultimately makes these pieces so enjoyable, but rather their balance of wit and insight that makes the volume a necessary addition to any bookshelf.

The first piece, "Reflections on War," uses the then emerging Gulf War as a springboard to examine the place of war fought with "the explicit consensus of nations" in the modern world. Eco begins by laying his cards on the table with a resounding boom: war, all war, even war that leads to desired ends, is never a reasonable alternative to the peaceful resolution of a conflict between nations. This is particularly the case with war in the modern age which is not logically consistent with its own ends. In Eco's words, "you cannot make war because the existence of a society based on instant information, rapid transport, and continuous intercontinental migration, allied to the nature of the new technologies of war, has made war impossible and irrational." We can no longer think of wars in chess-like, pre-World War dimensions. There was a time when the Greeks met the Persians on fronts and battles fields that determined the fate of a people and a nation, but these terms are much harder to define today; battlefields and fronts are infinitely harder if not impossible to pin down.

The present "War on Terror" in Afghanistan is a perfect example. The United States enters a country whose government we suspect is harboring a group whose members had organized an attack on the U.S. using weapons that were never intended to be used as anything more than rapid

transportation. Where are the fronts of this war? Afghanistan? Pakistan? New York? And who are we Americans—a nation of immigrants from all countries of the world including Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and many other Middle Eastern, European, Asian and African countries—fighting? Oh yes, we're fighting Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda. What is Al Qaeda except a rhetorical device used to justify the actions of a government at a loss for how to fight a war that cannot be won?

This is modern war. This is a war without boundaries. Not a game of chess, but an “autophagous game” that ultimately, as Eco concludes, “is a waste.” But how do we play a game that cannot be won? The answer is simple but the reality of its implementation is anything but: don't play. Unsolvable problems sometimes can “be solved by demonstrating that they cannot be solved.” And, for Eco, it is the responsibility of intellectuals to point out the logical fallacy of modern war. Even if it means sounding unpatriotic, or even, heaven forbid, anti-American. Intellectuals must identify critically what they consider a “satisfactory approximation of [their] own concept of truth” and then trumpet that truth, even if it means giving up loyalty to a nation.

I wouldn't have believed it had it not come from such a reputable scholar, but there is actually a press in this world more influenced by television and less concerned with international affairs than the American press: the Italian Press. Nevertheless, the shameful parallels one can draw from Italian to American media is more than enough to humble any sense of superiority we may feel. The essay “On the Press” moves through a kind of brief history of print since television to show how television quickly replaced print as the dominant news media and how, subsequently, print media have more and more come to adopt the forms and conventions of television. The homogenizing effect TV has had on all kinds of media—especially print media, which has always been most heterogeneous in both form and content—extends its neutralizing effect into society at large and into the world of politics.

At no time was this more apparent than during the 2000 presidential debates where “any differences [between the candidates] were all but ironed out as each politician tired to be as neutral and reassuring as possible.” Eco may as well have been commenting on the 2000 electoral debates. I'm surprised he did not add an addendum to the essay or at least a footnote to his praise of the *New York Times'* responsible reporting and refusal to adopt the flashy color formats of the *New York Daily News*. But not even the respectable

*Times* could withstand the pull of pretty pictures and the grunting masses that dish out their nickels and dimes to stare at them. I don't know if it's right to blame television alone for the turn modern media and the politics it supports have taken, yet when a country like Italy elects a porn star named Cicciolina to Parliament it's hard not to see it as resembling an episode of Jerry Springer more than a body concerned with affairs of state.

Is there any hope of escaping this dismal abyss of a phantom zone into which the press has fallen? The two solutions Eco provides are a little too pie-in-the-sky to be anything more than wishful thinking. He proposes creating either super secular papers that are forced to filter only the most essential world and national news and in the filtering will trim the unnecessary fat of sensationalism added to most news, or a kind of weekly *Encyclopedia Britannica* of all international and national news complete with the smallest contextual details and explications. But with a public already so hypnotized by the black box, I find it unlikely that such papers would ever become the "morning prayers for the modern man" Eco and Hegel hoped they would.

The final piece provides a particularly pertinent and thought-provoking end to a strong collection. "Migration, Tolerance, and the Intolerable" addresses the issue of the rise of migration and immigration that Europe has seen in recent years. This issue would be as easy to see to a tourist walking the streets of Rome as it would be to a native of the same city.

Increasing numbers of Africans, Albanians, and Asians can be seen selling trinkets on the streets to eke out a meager living in the cities of a country which has yet to decide what to do with them. Probably the strongest argument of the piece (one which resonates well with the situation facing the United States with respect to South and Central Americans) is the clear distinction Eco makes between "immigration" and "migration." The former Eco describes as what occurs when "some individuals move from one country to another." A phenomenon that may be "controlled politically, restricted, encouraged, planned, or accepted." Migration, on the other hand, is marked by the fact that it is a "natural phenomenon: it happens, and no one can control it." Migration is an extreme, where instead of assimilating into the culture into which a people moves, (as what happens with immigration) an entire population moves into an area and changes the political, cultural, and economic make up of a country or area. This phenomenon has happened many times throughout history and, Eco argues, and it is at work in Europe today. He poses interesting questions to foreign policy makers across the

globe: “Is it possible to distinguish from immigration and migration when the entire planet is becoming the territory of intersecting movements of people?” The days of being born, growing up, and dying never having ventured more than 20 miles from the place of your birth are long gone. The days of shifting peoples and cultures are upon us. The future will bring cultures and people into more frequent and closer collision, and, as Eco makes clear, there will be confrontation. We can only hope that events like those seen this past year do not herald the beginning of a long tortuous road to world peace, but I can say that if everyone were to consider the ethics and morality of the decisions they make with the clarity and openness Eco does, that road would be a short, sweet ride.