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What is Modernity?

Spring 2021

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HABIB UNIVERSITY

CORE 102: What is Modernity?

Spring 2021

4 Credits

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Course LMS URL: https://hulms.instructure.com/courses/1074 (Main Canvas site).
Hardware Prerequisites: Access to laptop/desktop with a Webcam to join online sessions.
Software Prerequisite: Zoom for online meetings.
Content Area: This course is a required course for 'Historical & Social' Thought in the Habib Liberal Core.
Campus Safety Policy: Please read the current campus safety policy and protocols if the classes are in-person.

I. Rationale

No one in the medieval world thought they were 'medieval.' The belief that we live in a distinct *period of world-history* (as opposed to, say, cosmological history) – that of 'modernity' – sets us apart from all premodern peoples. It is a defining aspect of who we are, essential to our modern sense of ourselves. It is thus imperative to the task of understanding both ourselves and our world – indeed imperative to the task of thoughtful self-cultivation assigned to us by Habib University's pedagogical charter of *yohsin* – to ask the question: What is it to be modern? What is modernity?

The interrogation and investigation of modernity is an essential dimension of Habib University's Liberal Core in its pursuance of a strenuously universalist and critical humanities and social sciences curriculum.

Our 'modernity' is the very air we breathe. It encompasses, at an ever-gathering pace, all aspects of our lives. This is why the question of modernity has been a central concern across the range of disciplines and fields of the arts, humanities and social sciences throughout the modern period. This course will address the most critical and essential elements of our global and regional modernity today, modernity in our time and context.

Beginning with an investigation of the conditions of emergence of this unique *world-historical identity*, we then turn to the historical emergence and formation of key structures and features of the modern in the following domains: political modernity; economic modernity; modernity and ecology; and modernity and religion. By the end of the semester the historical character and specificity of these foundational spheres of our present will be visible.

II. Course Learning Outcomes

This course falls under the 'Historical & Social Thought' requirement in the Habib Liberal Core Curriculum, and has the following learning outcomes:

(1) The ability to identify key historical, ideological, economic, ecological and religious features of the modern world.
(2) The ability to read and analyze complex social-scientific and historical literature.
(3) The ability to write cogent and informed expository prose on critical issues of our times.
(4) The ability to discuss and argue about complex texts and questions in an oral setting.

III. Format and Procedures

The course has a combined main lecture (50 minutes) and two seminar (section) meetings with a duration of 75 minutes each.

A. Medium of instruction:

***Main lecture**:* All online main lectures will be asynchronous and will be recorded and uploaded on the University's Video Management System (VMS)[1]. A link to the folder of recordings will be available on the course LMS/Canvas site. You must read the respective reading from the course pack (shared on the main Canvas site) and watch the recorded main lecture before their seminar (section) meeting.

***Seminars**:* All online seminar meetings will be synchronous (liv) sessions on Zoom. All video recordings of the seminar meetings will be made available on the course LMS/Canvas.

B. Recording Policy:

As per Habib University's teaching policy during COVID-19, all synchronous and synchronous sessions will be recorded and uploaded on the University's Video Management System (VMS). A link to the folder of recordings will be available on the course LMS/Canvas.

C. Engagement, Net-etiquette and Participation Rules

- You are strongly recommended to keep your camera on at all times during the live (synchronous) sessions on Zoom.
- You are expected to actively participate in the seminar activities and class discussions. Instructors may use social annotations tools (e.g., *hypothesis.is*), OneNote, *mural*, or breakout rooms in Zoom in their respective sections.

[1] http://vms.habib.edu.pk/

IV. Course Readings and Supplemental Material

All readings will be available in one course pack on the course's Canvas (main) site as a PDF along with other support material. Any further supplemental material or lecture slides will be shared by instructors on their respective section sites on Canvas.

V. Assessments, SEL, and Grading Procedures

A. Student's Engagement (SEL) / Class Participation (30%):

'What is Modernity?' will engage a large amount of knowledge about modernity – every class time will be crucial. Moreover, like CORE 101: Rhetoric & Communication, this course in the Liberal Core also aims to develop different forms of attention essential to listening, reading, thinking, and speaking. It is evident that you cannot develop your powers of attention if you do not actively engage. Engagement is basic to all other goals of the class.

You are expected to watch all pre-recorded main lectures and attend all synchronous sessions. Your biweekly student engagement level (SEL) shall be considered 'satisfactory' if you actively participate in the seminar live sessions (i.e., in class discussions and activities), have turned in your weekly reading responses (of about 250 words) each week and other assignments in time Class participation is crucial to the success of 'What is Modernity?' Participation will count for a substantial **30% of your grade**, which will depend upon your weekly reading responses and participating in class discussion during live (synchronous) sessions.

B. Essays (70%): The pre-eminent goal of the Liberal Core is to develop your writing abilities and 'What is Modernity?' is the second, crucial course in that journey. Your faculty will spend a large amount of time and effort assessing and improving your writing skills. The harder and more sincerely you work, the more enjoyable this time and labor will be for both you and them – and the reward of this pleasure will show in your grade. The most substantial share of your grade will be assessed through your writing: **three papers – the first and second papers will each worth 20% and the third worth 30% of the final grade.** It is critical that you turn in papers on time. You must have a good excuse for any delays in submitting a paper late. Otherwise, a substantial percentage of your grade will be deducted by the instructor.

C. Grading Scale

Grading Scale		
Letter Grade	**Numerical Equivalent**	**Percentage**
A+	4.00	[97-100]
A	4.00	[94-96)
A-	3.67	[90-93)
B+	3.33	[80-89)
B	3.00	[75-79)
B-	2.67	[70-74)
C+	2.33	[67-69)
C	2.00	[63-66)
C-	1.67	[60-62)
F	0.00	[0-59)

VI. Course Attendance Policy

You are expected to attend all synchronous (live) seminar sections. If in case you are unable join a live session, you must inform your instructor within 24 hours along with a reason. All absences must therefore be accounted for and agreed upon with your section professor. You should attend all classes that you have registered for at Habib University, but given that 'What is Modernity?' is part of the Habib Liberal Core, failing this class is an especially serious matter, as it will have run-on consequences for your entire trajectory at Habib. Your oline presence is the first prerequisite of attention – the next is participation, the active exercise of your powers of attention.

VII. Accommodations for students with disabilities

In compliance with the Habib University policy and equal access laws, your instructors will be available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first two weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. You are encouraged to register with the Office of Academic Performance to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

VIII. Inclusivity Statement

We understand that our members represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. Habib University is committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
- be open to the views of others
- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community
- value each other's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner

- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature
- use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in this course and across the Habib community

IX. Office hours

Your instructor will share their office hours and Zoom/MS Teams links on your seminar Canvas site.

Office hours are your chance to meet the instructor for closer personalized interaction. This may be to discuss specific queries on particular course work, for a general discussion on the course, your overall performance in the course, or any other course related aspects. Instructors are also happy to discuss more general academic matters, e.g. your eventual career goals, the state of the art in their research area, ideas for research projects, and so on.

While instructors welcome interaction with the students, office hours are time that they dedicate in their schedule for the above interaction.

X. Academic Integrity

Plagiarism: *Webster's Dictionary* defines plagiarism as 'the act of using another person's words or ideas without giving credit to that person.' Essentially, when it is done deliberately, plagiarism is a form of cheating. Etymologically, it comes from the Latin, *plagiare*, which means 'to kidnap.' But unlike in a literal kidnapping, the plagiarist has seized nothing that is valuable in itself. In the production of ideas, in writing, the aim is to think and to articulate – the writing on the paper is merely a means to exercising, to getting better at thinking and articulating. It is thus better to turn in poor work rather than cheat, for you will have exercised yourself and there will be some benefit to that, as well as the opportunity to improve. If you cheat, you will be in a worse position next time, both in an oral context, when you are conversing with your classmates and faculty, as well as with the next writing assignment. It is really a vicious cycle, and will cause you unnecessary and endless difficulty, pain and stress. Above all, cheating means that you have lost an important opportunity for thoughtful self-cultivation – which is what we're here for in the first place. There is no becoming excellent through cheating. Deliberate plagiarism will thus be rewarded with severe consequences: failure and expulsion from the class.

XI. Week-wise schedule

Week	Reading(s)/Assessment	Notes
Week 01 **Jan. 13 – 15**	**<u>Modernity and World-Historical Identity (1)</u>** Sven Lindqvist, *Exterminate All the Brutes: One Man's Odyssey into The Heart of Darkness & the Origins of European Genocide*, Part IV, pp. 121-160.	**First Day of Classes: January 13** Sessions **Add/Drop** course(s) period.
Week 02 **Jan. 18 – 22**	**<u>Modernity and World-Historical Identity (2)</u>** Stuart Hall, 'The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,' in *Formations of Modernity*, pp. 276-295. Anna Tsing & Gail Hershatter, 'Civilization,' in *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture & Society*, pp. 35-39. Naoki Sakai & Meaghan Morris, 'West,' in *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture & Society*, pp. 372-374.	Sessions **Last day to Add / Drop course(s): January 20**
Week 03 **Jan. 25 – 29**	**<u>Modernity and World-Historical Identity (3)</u>** Stuart Hall, 'The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,' in *Formations of Modernity*, pp. 296-331.	Sessions Last day to Complete 'I' Grades for Fall 2020: January 27, 2021 Letter Grades for 'I' Grades granted in Fall 2020 due: January 29, 2021
Week 04 **Feb. 01 – 05**	**<u>Modernity and World-Historical Identity (4)</u>** Jose Maria Sbert, 'Progress,' in *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, pp. 212-227 Ben Ehrenreich '*Progress and the demented quest for historical purity*' *Baffler* January 2019. Read online here: https://thebaffler.com/salvos/after-the-storm-ehrenreich ***First writing assignment due Midnight Feb 19 (Friday night): 1,000-1,200 words.***	Sessions **Kashmir Day: February 05**
Week 05 **Feb. 08 – 12**	**<u>Political Modernity – The Modern Nation-State (1)</u>** David Held, 'The Development of the Modern State,' in *Formations of Modernity*, pp. 72-104. Barry Hindess, 'State,' in *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture & Society*, pp. 337-339.	Sessions

Week 06 **Feb. 15 – 19**	**<u>Political Modernity – The Modern Nation-State (2)</u>** David Held, 'The Development of the Modern State,' in *Formations of Modernity*, pp. 104-125.	Sessions **Last Day to Drop Course(s): February 16**
Week 07 **Feb. 22 – 26**	**<u>Political Modernity - The Modern Colonial State (3)</u>** Mike Davis, 'The Origins of the Third World', in *Late Victorian Holocausts*, pp. 279-310.	Sessions
Week 08 **Mar. 01 – 05**	**<u>Political Modernity - The Modern Colonial State (4)</u>** Mahmood Mamdani, *Neither Settler, Nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities*, 'Introduction', pp. 6-41 (of the pdf)	Sessions
Week 09 **Mar. 08 – 12**	**<u>Economic Modernity (1)</u>** Vivienne Brown, 'The Emergence of the Economy,' in *Formations of Modernity*, pp. 128-153. ***Second writing assignment due April 02 (Friday night): 1,200-1,500 words.***	Sessions
Week 10 **Mar. 15 – 19**	**<u>Economic Modernity (2)</u>** Vivienne Brown, 'The Emergence of the Economy,' in *Formations of Modernity*, pp. 154-175. J. K. Gibson-Graham, 'Economy,' in *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture & Society*, pp. 94-97.	Sessions
† Conference Week March 22 - 26 **Fall 2020 Final Exams; Phase - II** **Habib University's Annual Postcolonial Higher Education Conference: March 22, 2021** † Pakistan Day: **March 23, 2021**		
Week 11 **Mar. 29 – Apr. 02**	**<u>Economic Modernity (3)</u>** Ronaldo Muck, 'Neoliberalism and Politics & the Politics of Neoliberalism,' *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader*, pp. 60-69. Michael Hobbes, 'Generation Screwed: Why Millenials are facing the scariest financial future of any generation since the Great Depression', *Highline. Huffington Post*, December 14, 2017, read online here: http://highline.huffingtonpost.com/articles/en/poor-millennials/	Sessions

Week 12 **Apr. 05 – 09**	**<u>Modernity & Ecology (1)</u>** From Christophe Bonneuil & Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History, and Us*: Chapter 1, 'Welcome to the Anthropocene', pp. 3 - 18 Chapter 5, 'Thermocene: A Political History of CO_2', pp. 99 - 121	Sessions **Last Day to Withdraw from Course(s): April 6, 2021**
Week 13 **Apr. 12 – 16**	**<u>Modernity & Ecology (2)</u>** From Christophe Bonneuil & Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History, and Us*: Chapter 10, 'Capitalocene. A Combined History of Earth Systems and World-Systems', pp. 222 – 252	Sessions **First Ramzan *: April 14, 2021**
Week 14 **Apr. 19 – 23**	**<u>Modernity & Religion (1)</u>** Tomoko Masuzawa, Chapter 5 (Sections 1 & 2), in The Invention of World Religions, pp. 147-163**.** ***Third writing assignment due midnight May 04: 1,800-2,100 words.***	Sessions
Week 15 **Apr. 26 – 30**	**<u>Modernity & Religion (2)</u>** Tomoko Masuzawa, Chapter 5 (Sections 3 & 4) + Chapter 6 (Sections 1-4), in *The Invention of World Religions*, pp. 163-206.	Sessions
Week 15 ½ **May 03 – 07**	Last Day of Classes: **May 4, 2021** Reading Days: **May 5 to 7, 2021**	
May **10 - 14 & 17**	† Eid ul Fitr: May 14 to 17, 2021	
May 18 - 21 **& 24 – 27**	End Term Examinations Days Online forms for "I" grade by Faculty due: May 27, 2021	
June 01	Final Grades due and announcement of Graduating Students	
June 04	Final Grades due for Remaining Students	

N.B.:

* Subject to the sighting of moon.

† No class(es)

"EXTERMINATE *All the* BRUTES"

SVEN LINDQVIST

Translated from the Swedish by Joan Tate

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All Jews and Negroes ought really to be exterminated. We shall be victorious. The other races will disappear and die out.

WHITE ARYAN RESISTANCE, SWEDEN, 1991

You may wipe us out, but the children of the stars can never be dogs.

SOMABULANO, RHODESIA, 1896

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"Race is everything: literature, science, art, in a word, civilization, depend on it."

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At the beginning of the nineteenth century, eighteenth-century criticism of imperialism still lived on, and for many it was self-evident to take a stand against genocide.

In his great history of colonialism, *European colonies in various parts of the world viewed in their social, moral and physical condition* (1834), John Howison writes:

> The continent of America has already been nearly depopulated of its aborigines by the introduction of the blessings of civilisation. The West Indian archipelago, from the same cause, no longer contains a single family of its primitive inhabitants. South Africa will soon be in a similar condition, and the islanders of the Pacific Ocean are rapidly diminishing in numbers from the ravages of European diseases and the despotism of self-interested and fanatical missionaries. It is surely time that the work of destruction should cease; and since long and melancholy experience has proved us to be invariably unsuccessful in rendering happier, wiser, or better, the barbarians whom we have visited or conquered, we may now conscientiously let them alone and turn a correcting hand towards ourselves and seek to repress . . . our avarice, our selfishness, and our vices.

This was an attitude with roots in both Christian faith and Enlightenment ideas of equality. But during nineteenth-century European expansion, another attitude appeared. Genocide began

to be regarded as the inevitable byproduct of progress.

To the great anthropologist, J. C. Prichard, it was obvious that "the savage races" could not be saved. What had to be aimed at instead, he said in his lecture "On the Extinction of Human Races" (1838), was to collect in the interests of science as much information as possible on their physical and moral characteristics.[57]

The threat of extermination provided motivation for anthropological research, which in exchange gave the exterminators an alibi by declaring extermination inevitable.

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That same year, 1838, Herman Merivale gave a series of lectures at Oxford on "Colonization and Colonies." He noted Prichard's theory that "the white is destined to extirpate the savage" was becoming more and more usual. Extermination was not only due to war and epidemics, but had deeper and more secret causes: "the mere contact with Europeans is fatal to him in some unknown manner."

Merivale fiercely rejects this theory. There are no examples of inexplicable mortality. "The waste of human life" is enormous, we know that. But it has natural reasons. The main reason is that "civilization" out there in the wilderness is represented by "the trader, the backwoodsman, the pirate, the bushranger"; to put it briefly, by whites who can do anything they like with no risk of criticism or control.

"The history of European settlements in America, Africa and Australia, presents everywhere the same general features—a wide and sweeping destruction of native races by the uncontrolled violence of individuals, if not of colonial authorities, followed by tardy attempts on the part of governments to repair the acknowledged crime."

A British parliamentary commission set up in 1837 to investigate the causes of the misfortunes that had afflicted the Tasmanians and other native peoples came to the same conclusion. The

commission found that Europeans unlawfully took over native territories, reduced their numbers, and undermined their way of life. "Gross cruelty and injustice" were the main causes of the natives dying out.[58]

As a direct consequence of the commission's work, The Aborigenes Protection Society was formed in 1838 with the aim of putting a stop to the extermination of native peoples. For the rest of the century, this organization continued its increasingly uphill battle against genocide.

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Where am I? In a concentration camp? In the Third World? The naked bodies around me are emaciated and covered with sores. Christmas is approaching. Some well-fed men are putting up a net with coarse, strong meshing. On the other side of the net is the sculpture of a naked giantess painted in red and gold and decorated with an iron, a club and boots. The net stops us reaching this fat and happy woman.

The men putting up the net are working in a hail of crude jokes. They will soon set their dogs on us. They are already laughing themselves silly when they see us scrambling on the net. In vain we reach out for club and iron. We don't even reach the boots.

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Prejudice against alien peoples has always existed. But in the middle of the nineteenth century, these prejudices were given organized form and apparent scientific motivation. In the Anglo-Saxon world, the pioneer was Robert Knox. His book, *The Races of Man: A fragment* (1850) reveals racism at the actual moment of birth, just as it takes the leap from popular prejudice via Knox's conceded ignorance to "scientific" conviction.

Knox had studied comparative anatomy with Cuvier in Paris. Cuvier's great feat was to prove that innumerable animal species had ceased to exist. But how they died out and why, he did not explain, Knox says.

We know equally little about why the dark races go under. "Did we know the law of their origin we should know the law of their extinction; but this we do not know. All is conjecture, uncertainty."

All we know is that since the beginning of history, the dark races have been the slaves of those lighter skinned. What is that due to? "I feel disposed to think that there must be a physical and consequently, a psychological inferiority in the dark races generally."

This is perhaps not due to lack of size in the brain but rather a lack of quality in it. "The texture of the brain is, I think, generally darker, and the white part more strongly fibrous; but I speak from extremely limited experience."

How limited this experience was is clear in another part of the book, where Knox says that he had done an autopsy on only *one* colored person. He maintains he found in this corpse a third fewer nerves in arms and legs than in a white man of corresponding size. The soul, instinct, and reason of both races must therefore, it is obvious, he maintains, be different to a corresponding degree.

From total ignorance, via this autopsy, Knox takes a giant stride directly to statements such as: "To me, race, or hereditary descent, is everything; it stamps the man," and "Race is everything: literature, science, art, in a word, civilization, depend on it."

There is something almost touching about the childish openness with which Knox exposes the lack of empirical basis for his statements. The sixth chapter of *The Races of Man*, which deals with the dark races, goes on like this: "But now, having considered the physical constitution thus briefly of some of these dark races, and shown you that we really know but little of them; that we have no data whereon to base a physical history of mankind; let me now consider . . ."

Consider what?

Well, on the basis of this established lack of facts, Knox unhesitatingly delivers categorical statements on the inferiority and inevitable destruction of the dark races.

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Darwin spoke of "the savage races," without clearly stating which he meant. Wallace and several other authors wrote "the lower" or even "the lower and more depraved races," leaving the reader in profound uncertainty. Was it what we in our day call the Fourth World they were talking about? Or was it the entire Third World? Or even more?

Many people considered that *every* race was inferior and more depraved than the white race; and among the white "races," *all* were lower than the Anglo-Saxon race. Under such circumstances, how large a part of mankind was condemned to extinction?

Knox uses the expression "the dark races." Which are they exactly? That question is not easy to answer, says Knox. Are the Jews a dark race? The Gypsies? The Chinese? Dark they certainly are to some extent; and so are the Mongolians, American Indians, and Eskimos, the inhabitants of almost the whole of Africa, the Far East, and Australia. "What a field of extermination lies before the Saxon, Celtic, and Sarmatian races!"

He is indignant over one thing only: hypocrisy. The British in New Zealand have just (1850) carried out the most audacious annexation in the history of aggression. "The Aborigenes are to be protected!" the British say. Thank you very much! says Knox. They may not become British, when their land is taken from them; they are to be "protected"!

The Saxons do not protect the dark races, says Knox, do not mix with them, do not let them keep a single acre of the land in the occupied countries; at least that is the situation in Anglo-Saxon America, and the Saxon conquerors are moving south.

"The fate, then, of the Mexicans, Peruvians and Chileans, is in

no shape doubtful. Extinction of the race—sure extinction—it is not even denied."

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Can the dark races become civilized? "I should say not," says Knox. "Their future history, then, must resemble the past. The Saxon race will never tolerate them—never amalgamate—never be at peace . . . . The hottest actual war ever waged—the bloodiest of Napoleon's campaigns—is not equal to that now waging between our descendants in America and the dark races; it is a war of extermination—inscribed on each banner is a death's head and no surrender; one or other must fall."

"I blame them not," Knox goes on. "I pretend not even to censure: man acts from his impulses, his animal impulses, and he occasionally employs his pure reason to mystify and conceal his motives from others."

The Americans were presumably already on their way to extinction when the Europeans first arrived. "Now, the fate of all these nations must be the same; it results from the nature of their populations, and nothing can arrest it."

Look at South Africa. The Saxon spirit of progress there led to massacres of the natives. "Have we done with the Hottentots and Bosjeman race? I suppose so: they will soon form merely natural curiosities: already there is the skin of one stuffed in England; another in Paris if I mistake not. . . . In a word, they are fast disappearing from the face of the earth."

And Chinese, Mongolians, Tartars or whatever they are called, how will things go for them? Well, it is known what happened in Tasmania. The Anglo-Saxon swept the natives out of their own country. "No compunctious visitings about the 'fell swoop' which extinguished a race."

The Chinese can expect the same. China appears to be totally at a standstill with neither inventions nor discoveries. The famous

Robert Knox. Contemporary caricature from Knox, the Anatomist, *by Isobel Rae, Edinburgh, 1964.*

Chinese art must belong to another race from which the Chinese borrowed it without really understanding it.

No, the Chinese have probably seen their best days, have lived through their definitive track and period of time, now hastening toward the terminal where all that remains are remnants left by extinct creatures—like the mammals and birds in Cuvier's world of the past—that have long since ceased to exist.

121

Who was this man who with such delight wallowed in the destruction of human beings? He was a Scot, had served as an army doctor in South Africa, and had founded a school of anatomy in Edinburgh. As a young student, Darwin heard his controversial lectures.[59]

All anatomists at that time bought specimens from grave robbers, but Knox was suspected of having turned to professional assassins to ensure suitable corpses. That was the end of his scientific career.

He saw himself as a voice crying in the wilderness. He and he alone had discovered a great truth, the truth of race, which only numskulls and hypocrites could deny.

Origin of Species meant a turning point for Knox's ideas. Darwin neither confirmed nor denied them, but his theory of evolution was clearly useful for the racists.

Knox was restored to favor and shortly before his death he became a member of the Ethnographical Society, in which a new group of "racially conscious" anthropologists were now setting the tone.

In 1863, Knox's followers broke away and formed the Anthropological Society, which was more markedly racist. The first lecture—"On the Negro's Place in Nature"—emphasized the negro's close relationship to the ape. When a rebellion of rural blacks was ruthlessly crushed in Jamaica, the society held a public

meeting. Captain Gordon Pim stated in his speech that it was a philanthropic principle to kill natives; there was, he said, "mercy in a massacre."

Time had begun to catch up with Robert Knox. Previously, race had been seen as one of several factors influencing human culture. After Darwin, race became the wholly decisive explanation in far wider circles. Racism was accepted and became a central element in British imperial ideology.[60]

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I am in good company, simply following those in front of me and knowing others are following behind. We are on our way up a narrow staircase. The banister is a thick rope suggesting safety. The stairs go around and around inside a church tower; or perhaps it is a minaret? The whole of the staircase grow narrower and narrower, but as there are so many people behind, there is no longer any possibility of turning around or even stopping. The pressure from behind forces me on. The staircase suddenly stops at a garbage chute in the wall. When I open the hatch and squeeze my way through the hole, I find myself on the outside of the tower. The rope has disappeared. It is totally dark. I cling on to the slippery icy wall of the tower while vainly trying to find a foothold in the emptiness.

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After Darwin, it became accepted to shrug your shoulders at genocide. If you were upset, you were just showing your lack of education. Only some old codgers who had not been able to keep up with progress in natural history protested. The Tasmanian became the paradigm, to which one part of the world after another yielded.

W. Winwood Reade, a member of both the Geographical Soci-

ety and the Anthropological Society in London, and a correspondent member of the Geological Society in Paris, ends his book *Savage Africa* (1864) with a prediction on the future of the black race.

Africa will be shared between England and France, he prophesies. Under European rule, the Africans will dig the ditches and water the deserts. It will be hard work, and the Africans themselves will probably become extinct. "We must learn to look at this result with composure. It illustrates the beneficent law of nature, that the weak must be devoured by the strong."

A grateful posterity will honor the memory of the blacks. One day, young ladies will sit tearfully beneath the palm trees and read *The Last Negro*. And the Niger will be as romantic a river as the Rhine.[61]

124

On January 19, 1864, the Anthropological Society in London arranged a debate on the extinction of the lower races.[62]

In his introductory talk, "The Extinction of Races," Richard Lee reminded his listeners of the fate of the Tasmanians. The turn had now come of the Maori people of New Zealand, whose population had been halved in a few decades.

The reason for this could not yet be clearly given. Disease, insobriety and "the antagonism between the white and the coloured population" were important external factors. But they did not explain why the female population diminished more quickly than the male, nor did it explain the large number of infertile marriages.

Whatever the reasons, everywhere around us we could see the way one world leaves room for another more highly developed world. Within a few years the surface of the earth will be quite changed. We civilized people know better how to the use the land that for so long has been "the black man's" undisturbed home. A new era is dawning that will multiply the undertakings of man.

The tide of European civilization is rising over the earth.

Through its moral and intellectual superiority, the Anglo-Saxon race is sweeping away the earlier inhabitants. Light is consuming the darkness, said Richard Lee.

His opponent, T. Bendyshe, named the Philippines as one of the many examples of higher and lower races actually being able to live together without the lower being eradicated. So there was no question of any natural law.

The natives die out only where their land is taken from them and thus their means of earning a living. Although some Indian tribes of North America had been almost exterminated, there are sufficient numbers left to repopulate the continent—as long as they were given back their lands. For man reproduces himself regardless of race, according to Malthus's laws, said Bendyshe finally.

A. R. Wallace, the codiscoverer of the theory of evolution, maintained that the lower a race was the more land it needed to live off. When Europeans with their greater energy took over the land, the lower races could only be saved if they were swiftly civilized. But civilization could be acquired only slowly. So the disappearance of the lower races was only a question of time.

125

Later that same evening, in his lecture on "The Origin of Human Races," Wallace explained in greater detail how he looked on extermination. Quite simply, it was another name for natural selection. Contact with Europeans leads the lower, mentally underdeveloped peoples of other continents to inevitable destruction, says Wallace. The European's superior physical, moral and intellectual qualities meant that he reproduces himself at the expense of the savage, "just as the weeds of Europe overrun North America and Australia, extinguishing native productions by the inherent vigour of their organisation, and by their greater capacity for existence and multiplication."

When Darwin read that, he heavily underlined the word

"weeds" and added in the margin his own example: the rat. In *Descent of Man* he later wrote: "The New Zealander . . . compares his future fate with the native rat almost exterminated by the European rat."[63]

European animals and plants adapted without difficulty to the climate and soil of America and Australia, but only a few American and Australian plants, among them the potato, gained distribution in Europe.

These parallels from the worlds of plants and animals provided apparent confirmation of the belief in the biological superiority of Europeans and the inevitable decline of the other races.

But the parallels could also bring about doubts. Why did the weed spread more quickly and effectively in the colonies than any other European plants? Was it really through its moral and intellectual superiority that the European rat exterminated other rats?

126

We are having Christmas dinner with the Tideliuses across the street. I hardly reach the height of the table, which has been laid in the big salon with its black mirrored cupboard and formal high-backed oak chairs. The chandelier sparkles, the cutlery and porcelain, too. The tablecloth is of thick stiff white material, so it bulges a little at the creases and Mrs. Tidelius reaches forward to smooth out the bulge with her hand. A pitiful little squeak is heard, as when the mower exposes a mouse nest in the cornfield. In those days the fields stretched right up to the edges of our lawn. Uffe and I often hung around by the big barn of the manor house, where the rats were as natural as the barn cat. That is the direction our thoughts go as the rat squeaks and Mrs. Tidelius starts up with a shriek. Mr. Tidelius hurries to her rescue. He is twice as old as she is, an elegant, active old man, vigorous in his gait as every morning at six o clock he takes a walk to the train to go to his ladies' tailoring business in Samuelsgatan. An excellent tailor, but no specialist in

rats. He lifts the tablecloth to look underneath it—and whoops, the rat runs on along the crease, toward the center of the table, tipping over glasses on its way. A tremendous hullabaloo ensues as everyone tries to rescue glasses and plates, while they all lift the cloth, pull at the underlay, trying to trap the rat, now squealing with rage and terror and rushing hither and thither underneath the cloth, apparently growing each time it changes direction.

It is difficult to imagine my father doing what he now does. Later, in his old age, he became so mild and gentle. But when I was small, he was different. I still remember when that old rat, its fur quite gray, and as large as a small cat, coming leisurely gliding across our lawn. It was precisely the rat's unroubled way of moving as if it had a perfect right to that enraged my father. He threw open the terrace door, rushed down the slope, grabbing a piece of boarding in passing, caught up with the rat, which too late saw the danger, and killed it against the base of the fencing just as it was about to save itself. That is what he is like in his rage when he goes out into the kitchen for the big ax—we all still had wood-burning stoves in kitchens—raises it above his head and, to the joint squeals of bravo from the women, brings it down with all his strength straight through the bulge in the tablecloth. The cutting edge goes right through the damask and underlay and thuds into the dark oak table. It is sure also to have killed the rat, which is no longer rushing back and forth under the cloth, but is suddenly quite still. The shrieks stop. We all stand immobile, looking at the handle of the ax slanting up toward the ceiling and still trembling from the force of the blow. We can't continue Christmas dinner with the corpse of a rat on the table. The four parents clear the table. Finally they loosen the axe. Then they each go to a corner of the table and first lift the cloth, then the underlay. There is no sign of the rat. It has disappeared. But no one says anything. No one asks where it has gone. They all just stand there looking at the deep white bite the axe has made in the top of the table. "I'll cut a piece of oak," says my father, who is a woodwork master, "and stain it the same color. It'll hardly be noticed." His host and hostess thank him effusively

But dinner is eaten in an oppressive atmosphere and we do not stay late.

127

Even those who remained in the Ethnographical Society realized that the lower races were doomed to destruction.

On March 27, 1866, Frederick Farrar gave a lecture on "Aptitude of the Races." He divided the races into three groups: savage, semi-civilized and civilized. Only two races, the Aryan and the Semitic, were civilized. The Chinese belonged to the semicivilized, as they had once been brilliant but suffered from "arrested development." The savage races had always lived in the same ignorance and wretchedness. Farrar argued that:

> They are without a past and without a future, doomed, as races infinitely nobler have been before them, to a rapid, an entire, and, perhaps for the highest destinies of mankind, an inevitable extinction.
>
> . . . nor out of all their teeming myriads have they produced one single man whose name is of the slightest importance to the history of our race. Were they all to be merged tomorrow in some great deluge, they would leave behind no other traces of their existence than their actual physical remains.
>
> And I call them *irreclaimable* savages . . . [because] so far as being influenced by civilization, they disappear from before the face of it as surely and as perceptibly as the snow retreats before the advancing line of sunbeams.[64]

The Indians are an example. Or take a specimen from the hundred millions of Africa, not one of the most degenerate such as the Hottentots, but a real, pure-blooded Negro. What hope was there

that he could be civilized? The great majority of Negroes will go under in a decline from which only a few can be saved.

Many races have already disappeared. These races—"the lowest types of humanity, and presenting its most hideous features of moral and intellectual degradation"—were doomed to go under. "Because darkness, sloth, and brutal ignorance cannot co-exist with the advance of knowledge, industry, and light."

128

What actually did happen when knowledge, industry, and light exterminated the inferior races?

Darwin knew. He had seen General Rosas's men butchering Indians, smothered in blood and vomit. He knew how eyes were gouged out when an Indian had sunk his teeth into a thumb and refused to let go, how women were killed and prisoners made to talk. He had a name for it. He called it the "struggle for life."

Darwin knew what the struggle for life was like. And yet he believed it developed and ennobled the species of man. Wallace shared his belief. The eradication of the lower races was justified, for it would gradually reduce the differences between races until the world would again be inhabited by one single, almost homogenous race in which no one was inferior to the noblest example of the humanity of the day. That is what Wallace believed.

But the strange thing was, he went on, that the little progress made toward this goal did not at all appear to be due to natural selection. Clearly "the best" were not those who were victors in this struggle for existence. The intellectually and morally mediocre, not to say deficient, in short, the weeds, succeeded best in life and reproduced themselves most rapidly.

129

Wallace had put his finger on a tender spot. William Greg took up the problem in an article in *Frazer's* magazine (September 1868), which Darwin read and commented on.[65]

What worried Greg was primarily that the middle classes, "who form the energetic, reliable, improving element of the population" have far fewer children than the upper classes and the lower classes, as both, though for opposite reasons, lack any grounds for restraint.

"The righteous and salutary law of natural selection" has been eliminated, and so our societies threaten to become overcivilized, like the ancient Greeks and Romans once became.

But fortunately the laws of nature are still alive in relations between the races, Greg goes on. Here the most favored are still the most capable and stronger. They are the ones who win the competition and "exterminate, govern, supercede, fight, eat, or work the inferior tribes out of existence."

Greg sees the struggle between the races as the only way of keeping civilized societies vital and capable of progress. Only by exterminating others can we avoid the racial decay that will otherwise be the consequences of civilization eliminating natural selection.

130

I have been cooking food on the computer. I cook it on the screen in the door of the microwave oven where it heats the food.

On my way home with dinner on a dish, I am jumped on in the underground by a man in ethnic clothing and a colorful little knitted cap. He takes the dish away from me. I try to stop him and wake up from having kicked a chair beside my bed with great strength. It still hurts when I walk.

131

Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton, continued the discussion in his book *Hereditary Genius* (1869). The history of geological changes, according to Galton, demonstrates how animal species have constantly been forced to adapt to new conditions of life. Civilization is the kind of new condition human species have to learn to live with. Many have failed. A large number of human races have been totally eradicated under the pressure of the demands of civilization. Galton further observes that "probably in no former period of the world has the destruction of the races of any animal whatever, been affected over such wide areas and with such startling rapidity as in the case of the savage man."

This should be a lesson to us. For even we who have created civilization are succumbing to it. Statesmen and philosophers and equally craftsmen and workers are today faced with demands they cannot master, Galton writes.

The conclusion is clear: if we do not want to go the same way as extinct animals and humans, we must seek to improve hereditary factors and through that increase our ability to survive the conditions of life civilization has created.

Galton devoted the rest of the century to studying and suggesting various methods of achieving such an improvement of hereditary factors. He had many followers, not just in Germany. The State Institute for Racial Biology in Uppsala was still in existence in the 1950s.

132

That passage in Galton is taken up by Benjamin Kidd in his hugely successful *Social Evolution* (1894), in which he observes that the Anglo-Saxon has exterminated the less developed peoples even more effectively than other races have managed to. Driven by the inbuilt forces of his own civilization, the Anglo-Saxon goes to the

foreign country to develop its natural resources—and the consequences seem to be inescapable.

This struggle between races, entailing that the inferior are driven to subjugation, even eradication, is nothing distant and past. It is what is still happening in front of our very eyes, under the protection of the Anglo-Saxon civilization we are so proud of and like to link with the most elevated ideals.

For the race that wishes to keep its place in the competition, the eradication of other races is one of the stern imperative conditions. We can humanize those conditions, but not change them fundamentally—they are far too deep-rooted in physiological grounds, the effects of which we cannot shirk, writes Kidd.

133

Common to Wallace, Greg, Galton, and Kidd was their unease over society's terrain not tallying with the map. The wrong people were reproducing themselves. The selection did not favor those who ought to be favored. Then it was a solace to look on the struggle of the races. There, at last, the theory seemed to tally with reality. For it was precisely that reality which had once given rise to the theory.

Common to them was also their unease over changes in society, already very different from what they had experienced as children. Had we created a society which one day would break us as it had already broken the savages? Did it threaten us from within with creeping racial decay? Had we moved too far away from nature?

Common to them all was also the desire to excuse and approve genocide. Extermination was inevitable, apparently vitalizing the exterminators, and it had profound secret causes. Nor was it certain that it was particularly unpleasant for the victims.

To be exterminated could not be called "misery," Galton maintains. It was more a question of listlessness and apathy. The sexes simply lost interest in each other after contact with civilization, and

thus their descendants diminished. It was unfortunate, but could hardly be called "misery". . .

But what caused the apathy? What were these profound physiological causes people talked about? At the beginning of the 1800s, in the days of Howison and Merivale, the answers to these questions seemed evident and clear.[66] In the 1890s they had vanished into a racist fog.

134

~~Put up to be shot from behind. Waiting for the shot, the pain, the end.~~

~~We are several. While we wait, we write. We stand writing before the shots are fired.~~

~~When our bodies are as cold as corpses, at last a postal order for two pounds arrives. "With thanks for your co-operation," it says on the counterfoil.~~

135

I believe I have demonstrated that one of the fundamental ideas of the nineteenth century was that there are races, peoples, nations, and tribes that are in the process of dying out. Or as the prime minister of England, Lord Salisbury, expressed it in his famous speech in the Albert Hall on May 4, 1898: "One can roughly divide the nations of the world into the living and the dying."[67]

It was an image that came frighteningly close to reality.

The weak nations become increasingly weaker and the strong stronger, Salisbury went on. It was in the nature of things that "the living nations will fraudulently encroach on the territory of the dying."

He spoke the truth. During the nineteenth century, Europeans had encroached on vast territories in northern Asia and North

America, in South America, Africa, and Australia. And the "dying nations" were dying just because their lands had been taken from them.

The word *genocide* had not yet been invented. But the matter existed.

I do not maintain that Joseph Conrad heard Lord Salisbury's speech. He had no need to. It was enough with what he had read of Dilke's in *Cosmopolis*, in Wells's *The Wars of the Worlds*, in Graham's *Higginson's Dream*. Conrad could no more avoid hearing of the ceaseless genocide that marked his century than his contemporaries could.

It is we who have suppressed it. We do not want to remember. We want genocide to have begun and ended with Nazism. That is what is most comforting.

I am fairly sure the nine-year-old Adolf Hitler was not in the Albert Hall when Lord Salisbury was speaking. He had no need to. He knew it already. The air he and all other Western people in his childhood breathed was soaked in the conviction that imperialism is a biologically necessary process, which, according to the laws of nature, leads to the inevitable destruction of the lower races. It was a conviction which had already cost millions of human lives before Hitler provided his highly personal application.

LEBENSRAUM, TODESRAUM

"das Recht der stärkeren Rasse,
die niedere zu vernichten"
[The right of the stronger race to annihilate the lower]

136

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Germans had still not exterminated any people, so were able to look more critically on the phenomenon than did other Europeans. The most thorough investigation into people threatened with extermination was made by the German anthropologist Theodore Waitz, in *Anthropologie der Naturevölker* (Anthropology of Primitive Peoples) (1859–62), which summarizes and analyzes information from reports by traveling scholars. His pupil, Georg Gerland, took up the problem of extermination in *Über das Aussterben der Naturvölker* (On the Extinction of Primitive Peoples) (1868).

Gerland goes through and evaluates every conceivable reason named in the debate: primitive peoples' lack of care of their own bodies and of children, taboos about certain foods, features of personality such as indolence, rigidity, and melancholy, sexual depravity and inclination to addiction to intoxicants, tribal warfare, cannibalism and human sacrifices, frequent capital punishment, an inhospitable environment, and finally influences from higher cultures and the whites' treatment of colonized peoples.

He concludes that the diseases of the whites have often been decisive exterminating factors. Even healthy whites can be infectious as they carry a "miasma," a "dust of disease," which was the name in those days for what we would call bacteria and viruses.

The miasma works more powerfully the further away and more free of this dust a people has previously lived. The Europeans have slowly acquired a resistance to miasmas which peoples living in nature lack. So they die.

But an even more decisive factor is the hostile behavior of the

whites, constituting one of the blackest chapters in the whole history of mankind. What could be called "cultural violence" is even more efficacious than physical violence, Gerland says.

The way of life of primitive peoples is so wholly adapted to climate and nature that sudden changes, however innocent and even useful they may seem, are devastating. Radical changes such as the privatization of land that had previously been public property, disturb the basis of a whole way of life. Europeans destroy out of rapacity or lack of understanding the basis of everything the natives thought, felt, and believed. When life loses its meaning for them, they die out.

Physical force is the clearest and most tangible factor in extermination. The bloodthirstiness of the whites is especially frightening as it is exercised by intellectually highly developed people. It cannot be said that violence is taken to only by individuals who could be made individually responsible—no, "the cruelties have been carried out fairly uniformly by whole populations in the colonies or anyhow have been approved by them; yes, even today violence is not always condemned."

It is no law of nature that primitive people must die out. Hitherto only a few peoples have been completely exterminated. Nowhere have we found any physical or mental inability to develop among them, Gerland ends. If the natural rights of the natives are respected, they will live on.

Darwin read this book and refers to it in *The Descent of Man* (1871).[68] But he was more influenced by Lyell and Wallace and Greg and Galton, who had already drawn "Darwinian" conclusions for man and society from *Origin of Species* (1859). Darwin was forestalled by those who parroted him, and he seems to have been seduced by their higher bids.

137

At the turn of the century, the German authority in this field was Friedrich Ratzel. He devotes the tenth chapter of his *Anthropogeographie* (1891) to "the decline of peoples of inferior cultures at contact with culture."

It has been, he writes, a deplorable rule that low-standing peoples die out at contact with highly cultivated people. This applies to the vast majority of Australians, Polynesians, northern Asians, North Americans, and many peoples in South Africa and South America. "The theory that this dying out is predestined by the inner weakness of the individual race is faulty," Ratzel writes. It is the Europeans who cause the destruction; as "the superior race" is in a minority, it must weaken the natives in order to gain domination. The natives are killed, impoverished, and driven away, their social organization destroyed.

The basic feature of white policies is the assault of the strong on the weak, the intention to take their land from them. This phenomenon has taken its most grandiose form in North America. Land-hungry whites crowd in between the weak and partly decayed settlements of the Indians. In Ratzel's day, the still increasing immigration into native lands was contrary to treaties and one of the main reasons for the extinction of the Indians.

That far, Ratzel sounds just like Gerland. Since Waitz's day this had been the standpoint of German anthropology. After all, the Germans had no colonies.

138

However, at the beginning of the 1890s, colonial ambitions had also begun to arise in Germany. The same year that Ratzel published his *Anthropogeographie*, he became a founding member of the Pan-German League, a radical right-wing organization that had the creation of a German colonial empire highest on its agenda.

This gives rise to some contradictions in Ratzel's view on the extinction of the lower races.

The question is whether this "deplorable process" is not after all driven on by a certain "demonic necessity," he goes on. Violence and the theft of land are indeed the main reasons for the decline of native peoples, but the logic that this is precisely why they die out would be far too simple.

Anyone looking more deeply will see that the European assaults really only intensify an already existing evil. In peoples with little culture there are inner forces of destruction that are released for the slightest reason. Their decline can therefore not be seen only as a result of attacks by more advanced peoples.

No, those with little culture have fundamentally passive characters. They seek to endure rather than overcome the circumstances that are reducing their numbers. Contact with Europeans simply hastens an extinction already underway. Many peoples at lower cultural levels have died out for internal reasons, with no assaults from the outside.

Thus Ratzel has gone full circle. He now maintains what he began by denying. For a future empire builder, the new standpoint was undeniably more comfortable.

139

The Jews could not really be regarded as "a people of inferior culture" in the sense Ratzel meant. A standard accusation against them was the opposite, that their position in German cultural life was far too dominating. But in his book *Politische Geographie* (1897), Ratzel nevertheless is able to pair them with people who, according to him, are condemned to annihilation. Jews and gypsies are brought together with "the stunted hunting people in the African interior" and "innumerable similar existences" into the class of "scattered people with no land." [69]

Land with no peoples, on the other hand, no longer exists. Not

even the deserts can today be regarded as ownerless empty spaces. So a growing people needing more land has to conquer land, "which through killing and displacement of the inhabitants is turned into uninhabited land."

Pericles depopulated the island of Aegina to prepare room for Attic settlers. Rome carried out the same transplantations. Since then these have become increasingly necessary as uninhabited land became rarer and, finally, nonexistent. "Colonization has long since become displacement."

The history of American colonization provides a great many examples of people being removed and displaced. "The higher the culture of the immigrants stands above that of the original inhabitants, the easier the process. . . ." The United States is the best example of swift spatial expansion: from 1.8 million square kilometers in 1783 to 4.6 million in 1803 and 9.2 million in 1867.

Europe is the most thickly populated continent and the one whose population is growing fastest. So colonies are for Europe a necessity.

But it is a mistake to think that colonies have to be on the other side of the oceans. Border colonization is also colonization. Occupations near at hand are more easily defended and assimilated than distant ones. Russia's spread into Siberia and Central Asia is the most important example of this type of colonization, Ratzel maintains.

Hitler was given Ratzel's book in 1924, when he was in Landsberg prison writing *Mein Kampf*.

140

There are toads for dinner. Live toads. I wake just as I am to bite the head off a toad. It is still throbbing in my hand.

141

What about international law, then? The British had always regarded their expansion as a self-evident right. The French expansion in Northern Africa and the Russian in Central Asia, on the other hand, they regarded as reprehensible aggressive acts. And that German expansion was the height of immorality—on that point, the French, Russians, and British were all in agreement.

Robert Knox drew the conclusion that might is right: "Whilst I now write, the Celtic race is preparing to seize Northern Africa by the same right as we seized Hindostan—that is might, physical force—the only real right is physical force." [70]

The British are now appalled by the French invasion and regard it as ruthless aggression. We forget, says Knox, that "laws are made to bind the weak, to be broken by the strong." Could we really expect mighty France to be content to be "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd" and stay within the borders that chance and fortunes of war had handed her? No, of course not.

And this even if France is regarded simply as a nation! If we look on it from a more elevated viewpoint and remind ourselves that France represents a race, then we realize that the French claims are fully justified. "The Celtic race of men demand for their inheritance a portion of the globe equal to their energies, their numbers, their civilization, and their courage," Knox wrote in 1850. The same argument was now used in German as a motive for German expansion eastward.

142

As lecturer in German at Glasgow (1890–1900), Alexander Tille became familiar with British imperial ideology. He "Germanized" it by linking Darwin's and Spencer's theories to Nietzsche's superman morality into a new "evolutionary ethic."

In the field of international law, this evolutionary ethic entails

that the stronger are right. By displacing the lower races, man is only doing what the better organized plants do with the less well organized, and what more highly developed animals do to the less developed. "All historical rights are invalid against the rights of the stronger," writes Tille in *Volksdienst* (Service to the people) (1893).

In nature, the higher are everywhere victorious over the lower. The weaker races die out even if no blood flows. It is "the right of the stronger race to annihilate the lower." Tille further argues that "when that race does not maintain its ability to resist then it has no right to exist, for anyone who cannot maintain himself must be content to go under."[71]

These iron "laws" were so generally worded by Tille that they could easily be applied not only to primitive peoples on other continents but also to the economically less successful peoples of Europe.

The Pan-German League paper *Alldeutsche Blätter* in the following year, 1894, stated that the conditions of life for the German race could be assured only through "elbow room" stretching from the Baltic to the Bosphorus. In that process one should not allow oneself to be hindered by the fact that inferior peoples such as Czechs, Slovenes, and Slovaks would lose their existence, anyhow worthless to civilization. Only "peoples of higher culture" have the right to a nationality of their own.[72]

143

When the big boys go into attack, I entrench myself on the upper floor of my childhood home. I confront them on the stairs and defend myself by breaking off large bits of the banisters and the rail to use as weapons. But they are light and brittle as meringue and at once fall to pieces. I am overwhelmed in a flash.

Then the wallpaper comes away from the walls of my parents' bedroom and slips to the ground. Not that I have ever been particularly fond of that showy large-flowered pattern, but nonetheless

it is frightening that it is falling off. A pattern is a kind of skeleton even if it is on the outside. An entire architecture of life has collapsed, leaving behind the bare walls.

144

In Southwest Africa in 1904, the Germans demonstrated that they too had mastered an art that Americans, British, and other Europeans had exercised all through the nineteenth century—the art of hastening the extermination of a people of "inferior culture."

Following the North American example, the Herero people were banished to reserves and their grazing lands handed over to German immigrants and colonization companies. When the Hereros resisted, General Adolf Lebrecht von Trotha gave orders in October 1904 for the Herero people to be exterminated. Every Herero found within the German borders, with or without weapons, was to be shot. But most of them died without violence. The Germans simply drove them out into the desert and sealed off the border.

"The month-long sealing of desert areas, carried out with iron severity, completed the work of annihilation," the General Staff writes in the official account of the war. "The death rattles of the dying and their insane screams of fury . . . resounded in the sublime silence of infinity." The General Staff's account further reports that "the sentence had been carried out" and "the Hereros had ceased to be an independent people."[73]

This was a result the General Staff was proud of. The army earned, they stated, the gratitude of the whole fatherland.

When the rainy season came, German patrols found skeletons lying around dry hollows, twenty-four to fifty feet deep, dug by the Hereros in vain attempts to find water. Almost the entire people—about eighty thousand human beings—died in the deserts. Only a few thousand were left, sentenced to hard labor in German concentration camps.

Thus the words "concentration camp," invented in 1896 by the Spaniards in Cuba, anglicized by the Americans, and used again by the British during the Boer War, made their entrance into German language and politics.[74]

145

The cause of the rebellion was "the Hereros's warlike and freedom-loving nature," the General Staff stated.

The Hereros were not particularly warlike. Their leader, Samuel Maherero, over two decades had signed one treaty after another with the Germans and ceded large areas of land to avoid war. But just as the Americans did not feel themselves bound by their treaties with the Indians, equally, the Germans did not think that as a higher race they had any need to abide by treaties they made with the natives.

As in North America, the German plans for immigration at the turn of the century presupposed that the natives were to be relieved of all land of any value. The rebellion was therefore welcomed as an opportunity to "solve the Herero problem."

The arguments the English, French, and Americans had long used to defend genocide were now also put into German: "Existencies, be they peoples or individuals who do not produce anything of value, cannot make any claim to the right to exist," wrote Paul Rohrbach in his best-seller *German Thought in the World* (1912). It was as head of German immigration in Southwest Africa that he had learned his colonial philosophy:

> No false philanthropy or racial theory can convince sensible people that the preservation of a tribe of South Africa's kaffirs . . . is more important to the future of mankind than the spread of the great European nations and the white race in general.
>
> Not until the native learns to produce anything of

value in the service of the higher race, i.e. in the service of its and his own progress, does he gain any moral right to exist.

146

From my place on the hotel roof terrace, I look down over the market place in Agadez. A black man is walking along wearing shiny reflector sunglasses and a gray corduroy suit. Has he any right to exist?

And that man in the black trench coat? Or him over there in a red jogging suit with white reveres? Everything suits a beauty, it is said, but that should be: everything suits a pride. These people move like kings, most of all the men of white shirts and flapping cloaks with turbans like eagle's nests on their heads. They often walk hand in hand. They carry nothing except possibly a toothbrush in their mouths or a sword at their sides.

Their way of life is threatened. The nomads are attacked from one direction by the assailing deserts, from the other by cultivators' fields, which today go right up to the borders of the desert.

When drought strikes, when the grazing vanishes and the wells dry, the nomads make their way to Agadez. Some return when the drought is over, but most remain—far too impoverished to take up the struggle against the desert again. They live in a circle around Agadez, crammed into small round tents of raffia mats, and have already tripled the population of the town.

They meet in the camel market. I sometimes go there when the dust has made it impossible to continue the day's work. The strong evening wind sweeps people and animals into a fog of dust. In this haze, heavily veiled men stand looking at each other's camels.

The camels protest against every change, with loud complaining screams. Their mouths are ash gray and evil smelling, their tongues as pointed as wedges. They hiss like dragons, strike like snakes, inflict hideous bites, and rise reluctantly on tall wobbling

legs to stand there like some kind of outsized greyhounds with swollen stomachs and wasp waists at their loins, superciliously looking down on the world around them, their eyes filled with unspeakable contempt.

The same arrogance marks their masters. They often cannot even imagine abandoning their lifestyle. But nor can they live by selling their camels to each other. Nor can they live by transporting homemade desert salt from Bilma or Tueggidam in caravans, when one single truck carries a larger load than a hundred camels.

Tuaregs are not hunted as are the natives in the Amazon or the jungles of Borneo, but the basis of their life is disappearing like a melting ice floe. Many succeed in jumping over to other floes. The old camel yards have become repair workshops and diesel stations. As drivers, the Tuaregs find a use for their knowledge of the desert. Others despise such change or cannot cope with it.

147

A German schoolmaster is sitting on the roof this evening. For seven years he has spent his vacations in the Sahara and his idea of sport is to get as far south as possible before he has to return. Tomorrow he is to take the bus to Niamey, then fly back to Germany, where the neo-Nazis are attacking some refugee camps almost every night, his crackling transistor tells us. In Sweden, too, refugee quarters have been set on fire. In Paris, Le Pen is speaking on May Day.

"I've heard him," says a French engineer working for Michelin in Nigeria. "I thought that when Fascism came back, it would be disguised in bright friendly colors, so that it would be difficult to recognize. I didn't think it would come in a brown shirt and black leather. I didn't think it would be shaven heads, swastikas, boots, and officer's shoulder belts. I didn't think it would call itself 'national and socialist.' "

But just as recognizably, it is coming, swaggering with its her-

itage from Nazism. The same roar after every sentence when the leader speaks. The same hatred of aliens. The same preparedness for violence. The same wounded manhood.

"And the same soil," says the German. "After the war, *everyone* was afraid of unemployment. Everyone knew where that had led to and could do so again. That insight lasted for twenty-five years. Then it was forgotten."

The advantages are tempting. Unemployment rates of 5,10,15, or 20 percent give the employer a wonderful upper hand. The workforce stands on tiptoe, longing to be exploited.

And this is just the beginning. The great mass of unemployed are on the other side of Europe's Rio Grande, in Asia and Africa. Just wait until they come flooding in, said the German. Wait until the border falls just like the Wall fell and everything will be one great labor market. Who will then win elections?

148

The Pan-German League's "elbow room" was given wings when Friedrich Ratzel renamed it *Lebensraum* at the turn of the century.

The geographer Ratzel was originally a zoologist. In the concept of *Lebensraum*, he linked the biological theory of life with the geographical theory of space, into a new theory, charged with political dynamite.

Between the never-ending movement of life and the unalterable space of the earth lies a contradiction that always and everywhere gives rise to struggle, Ratzel writes in *Der Lebensraum* (1901, in book form 1904). Since life first reached the limits of space, life has been fighting with life for space.

What is called the struggle for existence is really a struggle for space. True "lack of space" we see most clearly in animals living together in colonies. The first to arrive take the best places, those who come later have to be content with the worst. Among them, infant mortality is greatest, and corpses lie scattered over the ground.

Similar courses of events arise in human life, says Ratzel. His readers knew what he was aiming at. Germany was one of the last to arrive among the European nations. In a world the colonial powers had already divided up between themselves, Germany had to be content with the worst places. This was why the children of the unemployed were dying in Berlin and Hamburg—that was the conclusion the reader was expected to draw.

As a young man, Ratzel had traveled in North America and seen the way whites and Indians fought over lands. This struggle became for him a paradigm, which he constantly returned to.

A few hundred thousand Indians, degraded and removed to unfavorable areas, had seen their continent Europeanized as to people, animals, and plants. The Spaniards built towns and ruled the crop-growing Indians. The Germanic and French settlers in North America took over the land from the natives in order to cultivate it themselves. "The result was an annihilating struggle, the prize for which was the land, the space."

This struggle is not only over *Lebensraum*, as when a bird builds its nest. It concerns the much larger *Lebensraum* needed to earn a livelihood. To conquer and hold sufficient *Lebensraum*, others have to be displaced, that is, lose space—which often entails the species weakening and dying out, leaving the space completely.

The shortage of living space on this earth makes it necessary for an old species to disappear to open the space for a new species to evolve. Extinction is a presupposition for creation and progress. "The history of primitive peoples dying out on the appearance of a people of higher culture provides many instances of this."

How much of the loss of space by the old species is due to inner reasons, such as declining life force, and how much due to the victorious progress of the new species is still an open question. What is certain is that the decline of a species is always expressed by it being crowded together into an increasingly smaller space.

One of the greatest riddles in the history of evolution is that some of the oldest and largest animal groups died out on the threshold of the Tertiary period. The reptiles dominating land

and water during the Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous periods died out in the Tertiary period and were replaced by mammals and birds.

We do not know why. From our starting point, Ratzel says, it is enough to establish what happened: an animal species replaced another in the space. Extinction is often preceded by a decline in numbers, which also suggests a reduction of the space.

Ratzel did not have to draw the conclusion himself. It was already clear: a people that does not wish to share the fate of the dinosaurs must constantly increase its living space. Territorial expansion is the safest, indeed fundamentally the only real sign of the vitality of the nation and the race.

149

Ratzel's theories were a good summary of what had happened during the nineteenth century. The spread of Europeans over four continents, the growth of the British, French, and Russian empires, such examples seemed to demonstrate that territorial expansion was necessary and favored the conquerors. A stagnant territory was considered as abnormal and as ill-omened as a stagnant economy is considered today.

But even in 1900, when the concept of *Lebensraum* was born, that approach was outmoded. Size of territory had been decisive for agricultural states, but for industrial states, other factors were much more important. Geographically insignificant, Germany developed her economy at the end of the 1800s as rapidly as the huge United States and considerably more quickly than the British Empire. Technology and education were already more important economic driving forces than spatial size.[75]

So the *Lebensraum* theory was backward-looking. Perhaps just because of that it became an enormous success. It appealed to the major power that had arrived last to imitate its predecessor. "The loser from 1870," as France was called in Germany, had since then

built up the second largest colonial empire. Why not Germany? The Germans had lagged behind. Germany must catch up.

The *Lebensraum* theory urged Germany to use the strength the country had gained through new means of production (industry) to acquire more of the old means of production (land), roughly like the new industrial barons showing off their power by displacing the old nobility from their manors and estates.

An expanding people needs space, it was said. A people who cannot "feed itself" is doomed to die out. Why? No answer.

Hitler started the war to acquire more agricultural land a few decades before all the states of Europe began to pay their farmers to reduce cultivation.

150

When Adolf Hitler entered politics, one of the opportunities for Germany to expand had been closed. The British Navy ruled the seas and stopped every attempt to conquer new lands in the colonies.

There remained the continent. In *Mein Kampf* (1925–27) Hitler describes how Germany and England are to divide up the world between them. Germany is to expand eastward just as England had already expanded westward in America and south in India and Africa. The culmination of Hitler's policy of eastward expansion was the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.[76]

German propaganda portrayed the war as an anti-Communist crusade. In that way, Hitler hoped to win sympathy among all those in western Europe and the United States who hated communism. But the crusade would never have come about if there had not also been economic reasons for it.

In the short term, by conquering the agricultural areas of the western Soviet Union, Hitler wanted to improve the food situation in wartime Germany. In this way an unknown number of millions of people (*zig Millionen Menschen*) in the Soviet Union were

to die of starvation, which would also be a long-term advantage.

In the long term, Hitler intended to incorporate these agricultural areas into the German *Lebensraum*. The land, "which through killing and displacement of the inhabitants is turned into uninhabited land" (cf. Ratzel), would come into German possession. The decimated Slavic population, like the Hereros in Southwest Africa, would be the servants and workers of their German masters.

151

On the night of September 18, 1941, Hitler painted for his collaborators a rosy future in which the Ukraine and the Volga basin had become the bread basket of Europe. There, German industry would exchange grain for cheap utility goods. "We'll send to the Ukraine kerchiefs, glass beads, and other things colonial peoples like."[77]

Of course, he was joking. But to understand Hitler's campaign to the east it is important to realize that he considered he was fighting a colonial war. For wars of that kind, special rules applied—those already laid down in *Politik* (1898) by the German extreme right's most beloved political scientist, Heinrich von Treitschke: "International law becomes phrases if its standards are also applied to barbaric people. To punish a Negro tribe, villages must be burned, and without setting examples of that kind, nothing can be achieved. If the German Reich in such cases applied international law, it would not be humanity or justice but shameful weakness."

Treitschke was only putting into words the practice European states had long applied and which Hitler now used against his future "colonial peoples" in the east.

In the war against the western powers, the Germans observed the laws of war. Only 3.5 percent of English and American prisoners of war died in captivity, though 57 percent of Soviet prisoners of war died.

Altogether, 3.3 million Russian prisoners of war lost their lives,

two million of them in the first year of the war, through a combination of starvation, cold, disease, execution, and gassing. The first to be gassed in Auschwitz were Russians.

There is a crucial difference between these killings and the murders of Jews. Of non-Jewish Russians, only certain categories —first and foremost intellectuals and Communists—were totally exterminated. Among other Russians, according to the plans, some ten million or so were to be weeded out, but the remainder were to live on as a slave labor force under German command. On the other hand, the Jewish people as a whole were to be exterminated.[78]

In that, the Holocaust was unique—in Europe. But the history of Western expansion in other parts of the world shows many examples of total extermination of whole peoples.

152

My stomach is being filled with a great blood blister. My whole belly is full of black blood.

Just as a toenail blackens and falls off when the blood has coagulated under it, my body blackens and drops off.

All that is left is the throbbing blood beneath its membrane, thin and shimmering like a soap bubble.

An immense drop of black blood, for a moment still held together by its surface tension—that is me, before I burst.

153

"Many of the most horrendous of Nazi actions (especially the massacre of the Jews) . . . had comparatively little to do with the imperialist parts of the Nazi program," writes Woodruff D. Smith in *The Ideological Origins of Nazi Imperialism* (1986).

Smith is a great specialist in this field, but in my opinion he is

wrong. Imperialist expansion gave the Nazis the practical opportunity and economic reasons to exterminate the Jews. The extermination project's theoretical framework, the *Lebensraum* theory, is part of imperialist tradition. To the same tradition belongs the historical model of extermination of Jews: genocide in the colonies.

When the mass murder of Jews began, there were only a quarter of a million Jews left in Germany. The rest had either fled or been banished. The great Jewish populations were in Poland and Russia. Hitler had the practical possibility of eradicating them only by attacking and capturing these areas.

The main intention behind the conquest was not to murder Jews, just as the Americans did not advance westward in order to murder Indians. The intention was to expand Germany's own *Lebensraum*. The Russian Jews lived in just those areas Hitler was after, making up 10 percent of the total population there and up to 40 percent of the urban population.

To faithful Nazis, the killing of Jews was a way of implementing the most central point of the party program. For those less faithful, it was a practical way of reducing the consumption of food and making room for the future German settlement. German bureaucracy spoke of "de-Jewishing" (*Entjudung*) as a way of clearing out "superfluous eaters" (*überzähligen Essern*) and in that way creating a "balance between population and food supply."

Hitler himself was driven throughout his political career by a fanatical anti-Semitism with roots in a tradition of over a thousand years, which had often led to killing and even to mass murder of Jews. But the step from mass murder to genocide was not taken until the anti-Semitic tradition met the tradition of genocide arising during Europe's expansion in America, Australia, Africa, and Asia.

According to the *Lebensraum* theory, the Jews were a landless people, like the stunted hunting people of the African interior. They belonged to an even lower race than Russians and Poles, a race which could not lay claim to the right to live. It was only natural that such lower races (whether Tasmanians, Indians, or Jews)

should be exterminated if they were in the way. The other Western master races had done just that.

The Nazis gave the Jews a star on their coats and crowded them into "reserves"—just as the Indians, the Hereros, the Bushmen, the Amandabele, and all the other children of the stars had been crowded together. They died on their own when the food supply to the reserves was cut off. It was a sad rule that low-standing people died out on contact with highly cultivated people. If they did not die fast enough, then it was merciful to shorten their suffering. They were going to die anyhow.

154

Auschwitz was the modern industrial application of a policy of extermination on which European world domination had long since rested.

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FORMATIONS OF MODERNITY

EDITED BY STUART HALL AND BRAM GIEBEN

CHAPTER 6 THE WEST AND THE REST: DISCOURSE AND POWER

Stuart Hall

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1 INTRODUCTION

The first five chapters of this book examine the long historical processes through which a new type of society — advanced, developed and industrial — emerged. They chart in broad outline the paths by which this society reached what is now called 'modernity'. This chapter explores the role which societies *outside* Europe played in this process. It examines how an idea of 'the West and the Rest' was constituted; how relations between western and non-western societies came to be represented. We refer to this as the formation of the 'discourse' of 'the West and the Rest'.

1.1 WHERE AND WHAT IS 'THE WEST' ?

This question puzzled Christopher Columbus and remains puzzling today. Nowadays, many societies aspire to become 'western' — at least in terms of achieving western standards of living. But in Columbus's day (the end of the fifteenth century) going West was important mainly because it was believed to be the quickest route to the fabulous wealth of the East. Indeed, even though it should have become clear to Columbus that the New World he had found was *not* the East, he never ceased to believe that it was, and even spiced his reports with outlandish claims: on his fourth voyage, he still insisted that he was close to Quinsay (the Chinese city now called Hangchow), where the Great Khan lived, and probably approaching the source of the Four Rivers of Paradise! Our ideas of 'East' and 'West' have never been free of myth and fantasy, and even to this day they are not primarily ideas about place and geography.

We have to use short-hand generalizations, like 'West' and 'western', but we need to remember that they represent very complex ideas and have no simple or single meaning. At first sight, these words may seem to be about matters of geography and location. But even this, on inspection, is not straightforward since we also use the same words to refer to a type of society, a level of development, and so on. It's true that what we call 'the West', in this second sense, *did* first emerge in western Europe. But 'the West' is no longer only in Europe, and not all of Europe is in 'the West'. The historian John Roberts has remarked that, 'Europeans have long been unsure about where Europe "ends" in the east. In the west and to the south, the sea provides a splendid marker ... but to the east the plains roll on and on and the horizon is awfully remote.' (Roberts, 1985, p.149.) Eastern Europe doesn't (doesn't yet? never did?) belong properly to 'the West'; whereas the United States, which is not in Europe, definitely does. These days, technologically speaking, Japan, is 'western', though on our mental map it is about as far 'East' as you can get. By comparison, much of Latin America, which is in the western hemisphere, belongs economically to the Third World, which is struggling — not very successfully — to catch up with 'the West'. What are these different societies 'east' and 'west' of, exactly? Clearly, 'the West' is as much an idea as a fact of geography.

The underlying premise of this chapter is that 'the West' is a *historical,* not a geographical, construct. By 'western' we mean the type of society discussed in this series: a society that is developed, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular, and modern. Such societies arose at a particular historical period — roughly, during the sixteenth century, after the Middle Ages and the break-up of feudalism. They were the result of a specific set of historical processes — economic, political, social and cultural. Nowadays, any society, wherever it exists on a geographical map, which shares these characteristics, can be said to belong to 'the West'. The meaning of this term is therefore virtually identical to that of the word 'modern'. Its 'formations' are what we have been tracing in the earlier chapters in this book. This chapter builds on that earlier story.

'The West' is therefore also an idea, a concept — and this is what interests us most in this chapter. How did the idea, the language, of 'the West' arise, and what have been its effects? What do we mean by calling it a *concept?*

The concept or idea of 'the West' can be seen to function in the following ways:

First, it allows us to characterize and classify societies into different categories — i.e. 'western', 'non-western'. It is a tool to think with. It sets a certain structure of thought and knowledge in motion.

Secondly, it is an image, or set of images. It condenses a number of different characteristics into one picture. It calls up in our mind's eye — it *represents* in verbal and visual language — a composite picture of what different societies, cultures, peoples and places are like. It functions as part of a language, a 'system of representation'. (I say 'system' because it doesn't stand on its own, but works in conjunction with other images and ideas with which it forms a set: for example, 'western' = urban = developed; or 'non-western' = non-industrial = rural = agricultural = under-developed.)

Thirdly, it provides a standard or model of comparison. It allows us to compare to what extent different societies resemble, or differ from, one another. Non-western societies can accordingly be said to be 'close to' or 'far away from' or 'catching up with' the West. It helps to explain *difference.*

Fourthly, it provides criteria of evaluation against which other societies are ranked and around which powerful positive and negative feelings cluster. (For example, 'the West' = developed = *good* = desirable; or the 'non-West' = under-developed = *bad* = undesirable.) It produces a certain kind of *knowledge* about a subject and certain attitudes towards it. In short, it functions as an *ideology.*

This chapter will discuss all these aspects of the idea of 'the West'.

We know that the West itself was produced by certain historical processes operating in a particular place in unique (and perhaps

unrepeatable) historical circumstances. Clearly, we must also think of the *idea* of 'the West' as having been produced in a similar way. These two aspects are in fact deeply connected, though exactly how is one of the big puzzles in sociology. We cannot attempt to resolve here the age-old sociological debate as to which came first: the idea of 'the West', or western societies. What we can say is that, as these societies emerged, so a concept and language of 'the West' crystallized. And yet, we can be certain that the idea of 'the West' did not simply reflect an already-established western society: rather, it was essential to the very formation of that society.

What is more, the idea of 'the West', once produced, became productive in its turn. It had real effects: it enabled people to know or speak of certain things in certain ways. It produced knowledge. It became *both* the organizing factor in a system of global power relations *and* the organizing concept or term in a whole way of thinking and speaking.

The central concern of this chapter is to analyse the formation of a particular pattern of thought and language, a 'system of representation', which has the concepts of 'the West' and 'the Rest' at its centre.

The emergence of an idea of 'the West' was central to the Enlightenment', which was discussed at length in Chapter 1. The Enlightenment was a very European affair. European society, it assumed, was the most advanced type of society on earth, European man (*sic*) the pinnacle of human achievement. It treated the West as the result of forces largely *internal* to Europe's history and formation.

However, in this chapter we argue that the rise of the West is also a *global* story. As Roberts observes, '"Modern" history can be defined as the approach march to the age dominated by the West' (Roberts, 1985, p.41). The West and the Rest became two sides of a single coin. What each now is, and what the terms we use to describe them mean, depend on the relations which were established between them long ago. The so-called uniqueness of the West was, in part, produced by Europe's contact and self-comparison with other, non-western, societies (the Rest), very different in their histories, ecologies, patterns of development and cultures from the European model. The difference of these other societies and cultures from the West was the standard against which the West's achievement was measured. It is within the context of these relationships that the idea of 'the West' took on shape and meaning.

The importance of such perceived difference needs itself to be understood. Some modern theorists of language have argued that *meaning* always depends on the relations that exist between the different terms or words within a meaning system (see Chapter 5). Accordingly, we know what 'night' means because it is different from — in fact, opposite to — 'day'. The French linguist who most influenced this approach to meaning, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1912), argued that the words 'night' and 'day' on their own can't mean anything; it is

the *difference* between 'night' and 'day' which enables these words to carry meaning (to signify).

Likewise, many psychologists and psychoanalysts argue that an infant first learns to think of itself as a separate and unique 'self' by recognizing its separation — its difference — from others (principally, of course, its mother). By analogy, national cultures acquire their strong sense of identity by contrasting themselves with other cultures. Thus, we argue, the West's sense of itself — its identity — was formed, not only by the internal processes that gradually moulded Western European countries into a distinct type of society, but also through Europe's sense of difference from other worlds — how it came to represent itself in relation to these 'others'. In reality, differences often shade imperceptibly into each other. (When exactly does 'night' become 'day'? Where exactly does 'being English' end and 'being Scottish' begin?). But, in order to function at all, we seem to need distinct, positive concepts many of which are sharply polarized towards each other. As Chapter 5 argues, such 'binary oppositions' seem to be fundamental to all linguistic and symbolic systems and to the production of meaning itself.

This chapter, then, is about the role which 'the Rest' played in the formation of the idea of 'the West' and a 'western' sense of identity. At a certain moment, the fates of what had been, for many centuries, separate and distinct worlds became — some would say, fatally — harnessed together in the same historical time-frame. They became related elements in the same *discourse*, or way of speaking. They became different parts of one global social, economic and cultural system, one interdependent world, one language.

A word of warning must be entered here. In order to bring out the distinctiveness of this 'West and the Rest' discourse, I have been obliged to be selective and to simplify my representation of the West, and you should bear this in mind as you read. Terms like 'the West' and 'the Rest' are historical and linguistic constructs whose meanings change over time. More importantly, there are many different discourses, or ways in which the West came to speak of and represent other cultures. Some, like 'the West and the Rest', were very western-centered, or Eurocentric. Others, however, which I do not have space to discuss here, were much more culturally relativistic. I have elected to focus on what I call the discourse of 'the West and the Rest' because it became a very common and influential discourse, helping to shape public perceptions and attitudes down to the present.

Another qualification concerns the very term 'the West', which makes the West appear unified and homogeneous — essentially one place, with one view about other cultures and one way of speaking about them. Of course, this is not the case. The West has always contained many internal differences — between different nations, between Eastern and Western Europe, between the Germanic Northern and the Latin Southern cultures, between the Nordic, Iberian and Mediterranean peoples, and so on. Attitudes towards other cultures within the West

varied widely, as they still do between, for example, the British, the Spanish, the French and the German.

It is also important to remember that, as well as treating non-European cultures as different and inferior, the West had its own *internal* 'others'. Jews, in particular, though close to western religious traditions, were frequently excluded and ostracized. West Europeans often regarded Eastern Europeans as 'barbaric', and, throughout the West, western women were represented as inferior to western men.

The same necessary simplification is true of my references to 'the Rest'. This term also covers enormous historical, cultural and economic distinctions — for example, between the Middle East, the Far East, Africa, Latin America, indigenous North America and Australasia. It can equally encompass the simple societies of some North American Indians and the developed civilizations of China, Egypt or Islam.

These extensive differences must be borne in mind as you study the analysis of the discourse of 'the West and the Rest' in this chapter. However, we can actually use this simplification to make a point about discourse. For simplification is precisely what this discourse itself *does.* It represents what are in fact very differentiated (the different European cultures) as homogeneous (the West). And it asserts that these different cultures are united by one thing: the fact that *they are all different from the Rest.* Similarly, the Rest, though different among themselves, are represented as the same in the sense that *they are all different from the West.* In short, the discourse, as a 'system of representation', *represents* the world as divided according to a simple dichotomy — the West/the Rest. That is what makes the discourse of 'the West and the Rest' so destructive — it draws crude and simplistic distinctions and constructs an over-simplified conception of 'difference'.

2 EUROPE BREAKS OUT

In what follows, you should bear in mind the evolution of the system of European nation-states discussed in Chapter 2. 'The voyages of discovery were the beginning of a new era, one of world-wide expansion by Europeans, leading in due course to an outright, if temporary, European ... domination of the globe.' (Roberts, 1985, p.175.) In this section we offer a broad sketch of the early stages of this process of expansion. When did it begin? What were its main phases? What did it 'break out' from? Why did it occur?

2.1 WHEN AND HOW DID EXPANSION BEGIN?

Long historical processes have no exact beginning or end, and are difficult to date precisely. You will remember the argument in Chapter 2 that a particular historical pattern is the result of the interplay between a number of different causal processes. In order to describe them, we are

forced to work within very rough-and-ready chronologies and to use *historical generalizations* which cover long periods and pick out the broad patterns, but leave much of the detail aside. There is nothing wrong with this — historical sociology would be impossible without it — provided we know at what level of generality our argument is working. For example, if we are answering the question, 'When did western Europe first industrialize?', it may be sufficient to say, 'During the second half of the eighteenth century'. However, a close study of the origins of industrialization in, say, Lancashire, would require a more refined time-scale. (For further discussion of this point, see the Introduction to this volume.)

We can date the onset of the expansion process roughly in relation to two key events:

1 The early Portuguese explorations of the African coast (1430–1498), and
2 Columbus's voyages to the New World (1492–1502).

Broadly speaking, European expansion coincides with the end of what we call 'the Middle Ages' and the beginning of the 'modern age'. Feudalism was already in decline in western Europe, while trade, commerce and the market were expanding. The centralized monarchies of France, England and Spain were emerging (see Chapter 2). Europe was on the threshold of a long, secular boom in productivity, improving standards of living, rapid population growth and that explosion in art, learning, science, scholarship and knowledge known as the Renaissance. (Leonardo had designed flying machines and submarines prior to 1519; Michelangelo started work on the Sistine Chapel in 1508; Thomas More's *Utopia* appeared in 1516). For much of the Middle Ages, the arts of civilization had been more developed in China and the Islamic world than in Europe. Many historians would agree with Michael Mann that, 'the point at which Europe "overtook" Asia must have been about 1450, the period of European naval expansion and the Galilean revolution in science'; though as Mann also argues, many of the processes which made this possible had earlier origins (Mann, 1988, p.7). We will return to this question at the end of the section.

2.2 FIVE MAIN PHASES

The process of expansion can be divided, broadly, into five main phases:

1 The period of exploration, when Europe 'discovered' many of the 'new worlds' for itself for the first time (they all, of course, already existed).
2 The period of early contact, conquest, settlement and colonization, when large parts of these 'new worlds' were first annexed to Europe as possessions, or harnessed through trade.

3 The time during which the shape of permanent European settlement, colonization or exploitation was established (e.g. plantation societies in North America and the Caribbean; mining and ranching in Latin America; the rubber and tea plantations of India, Ceylon and the East Indies). Capitalism now emerged as a global market.
4 The phase when the scramble for colonies, markets and raw materials reached its climax. This was the 'high noon of Imperialism', and led into the First World War and the twentieth century.
5 The present, when much of the world is economically dependent on the West, even when formally independent and decolonized.

There are no neat divisions between these phases, which often overlapped. For example, although the main explorations of Australia occurred in our first phase, the continent's shape was not finally known until after Cook's voyages in the eighteenth century. Similarly, the Portuguese first circumnavigated Africa in the fifteenth century, yet the exploration of the African interior below the Sahara and the scramble for African colonies is really a nineteenth-century story.

Since we are focusing on 'formations', this chapter concentrates on the first two phases — those involving early exploration, encounter, contact and conquest — in order to trace how 'the West and the Rest' as a 'system of representation' was formed.

2.3 THE AGE OF EXPLORATION

This began with Portugal, after the Moors (the Islamic peoples who had conquered Spain) had finally been expelled from the Iberian peninsula. Prince Henry 'The Navigator', the pioneer of Portuguese exploration, was himself a Crusader who fought the Moors at the battle of Ceuta (North Africa; 1415) and helped to disperse the Moorish pirates who lurked at the entrance to the Mediterranean. As Eric Newby explains:

> With the pirates under control there was a real possibility that the Portuguese might be able to take over the caravan trade — an important part of which was in gold dust — that Ceuta enjoyed with the African interior. In the event, the attempt to capture this trade failed ... . And so there emerged another purpose. This was to discover from which parts of Africa the merchandise, particularly the gold dust, emanated and, having done so, to contrive to have it re-routed ... to stations on the Atlantic coast in which the inhabitants would already have been converted to Christianity and of which the King of Portugal would be the ruler. (Newby, 1975, p.62)

This comment pinpoints the complex factors — economic, political and spiritual — which motivated Portuguese expansion. Why, then, hadn't they simply sailed southwards before? One answer is that they thought their ships were not sufficiently robust to endure the fierce currents and contrary winds to be encountered around the curve of the North African coastline. Another equally powerful factor was what is called the 'Great Barrier of Fear' — evident, for example, in the belief that beyond Cape Bojador lay the mouth of Hell, where the seas boiled and people turned black because of the intense heat. The late-mediaeval European conception of the world constituted as much of a barrier to expansion as technological and navigational factors.

In 1430, the Portuguese sailed down the west coast of Africa, hoping to find not only the sources of the African gold, ivory, spice and slave trades, but also the legendary black Christian ruler, 'Prester John'. In stages (each consolidated by Papal decree giving Portugal a monopoly 'in the Ocean Sea ... lying southward and eastward'), the Portuguese pushed down the African coast, and past the 'Great Barrier Of Fear'. In 1441, the first cargo of African slaves captured by Europeans arrived in Portugal — thereby beginning a new era of slave-trading.

In 1487/8 Bartolomeo Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope and Pedro da Covilhão, taking the caravan route overland, reached the Sudan from where he sailed to India (1488). Later, Vasco da Gama sailed around Africa and then, with the aid of a Muslim pilot, across the Indian ocean to the city of Calicut (1497–8). Within ten years Portugal had established the foundations of a naval and commercial empire. Displacing the Arab traders who had long plied the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, they established a chain of ports to Goa, the East Indies, the Moluccas and Timor. In 1514, a Portuguese mission reached Canton (China), and in 1542 the first contact was made with Japan.

By comparison, the exploration of the New World (America) was at first largely a Spanish affair. After long pleading, Columbus, the Genoese navigator, finally persuaded King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to support his 'western Enterprise' to find a westerly route to the treasures of the East. Deliberately underestimating the distance of Asia from Europe (he chose the shortest of a number of guesses on offer from mediaeval and classical sources) he sailed into the 'Green Sea Of Darkness' in 1492. In four remarkable voyages he became the first European to land on most of the islands of the Caribbean and on the Central American mainland. He never relinquished his belief that 'I am before Zaiton (Japan) and Quinsay (China), a hundred leagues, a little more or less' (Columbus, 1969, p.26). The misnamed 'West Indies' are a permanent reminder that the Old World 'discovered' the New by accident. But Columbus opened up a whole continent to Spanish expansion, founded on the drive for gold and the Catholic dream of converting the world to the Christian faith. Shortly afterwards, Amerigo Vespucci (to whom the American continents owe their name) sailed north to Carolina, and south along the coast of Brazil to Rio, Patagonia and the Falkland Islands.

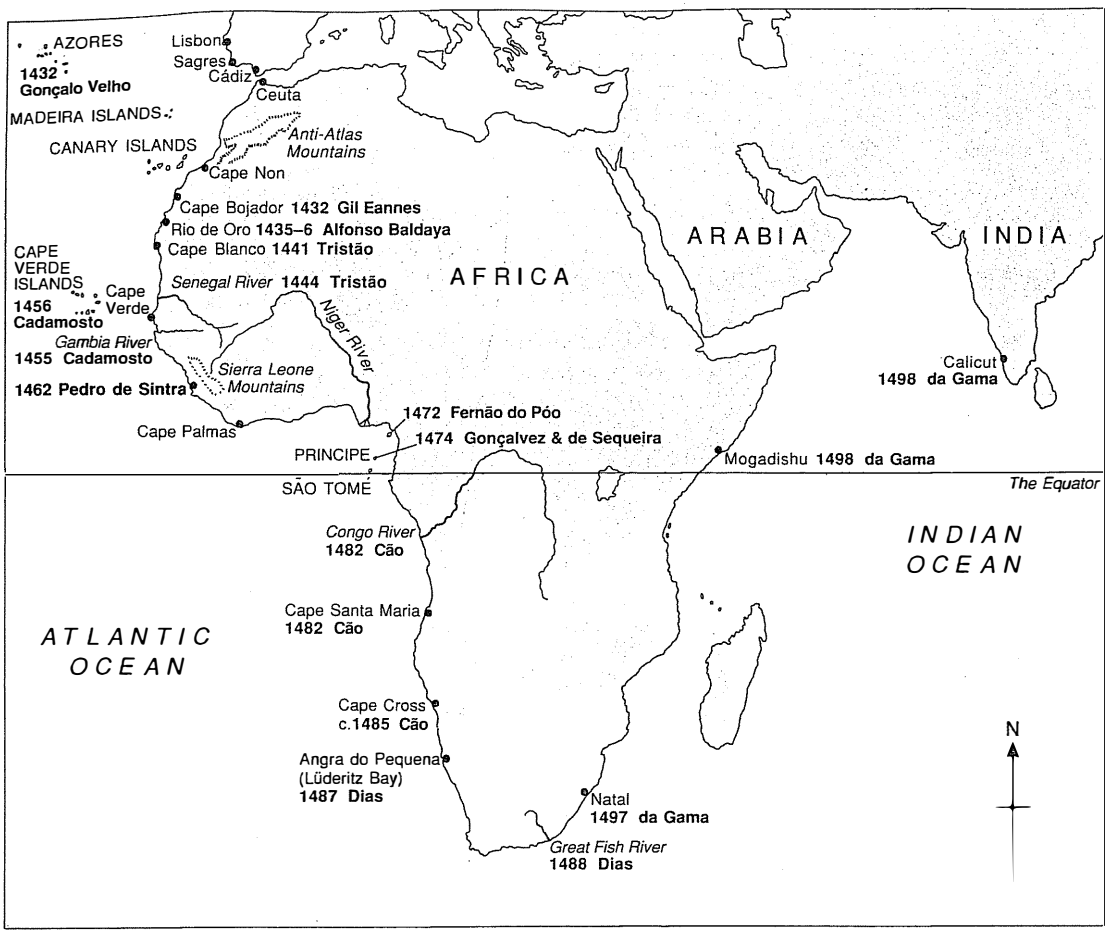

Figure 6.1 Portuguese expansion

In 1500 a Portuguese called Pedro Cabral, sailing to India, was blown out into the Atlantic and landed fortuitously on the coast of Brazil, giving Portugal her first foothold in what was to become Latin America. The threatened Spanish–Portuguese rivalry was aggravated by papal decrees favouring the Spanish, but was finally settled by the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), which divided the 'unknown world' between the Spanish and the Portuguese along a line of longitude running about 1500 miles west of the Azores. This line was subsequently revised many times and other nations, like Spain's arch enemy and Protestant rival, England, greedy to partake of the riches of the New World, soon made nonsense of it with their buccaneering exploits and raids along the Spanish Main. 'Nevertheless', as John Roberts observes of the treaty,

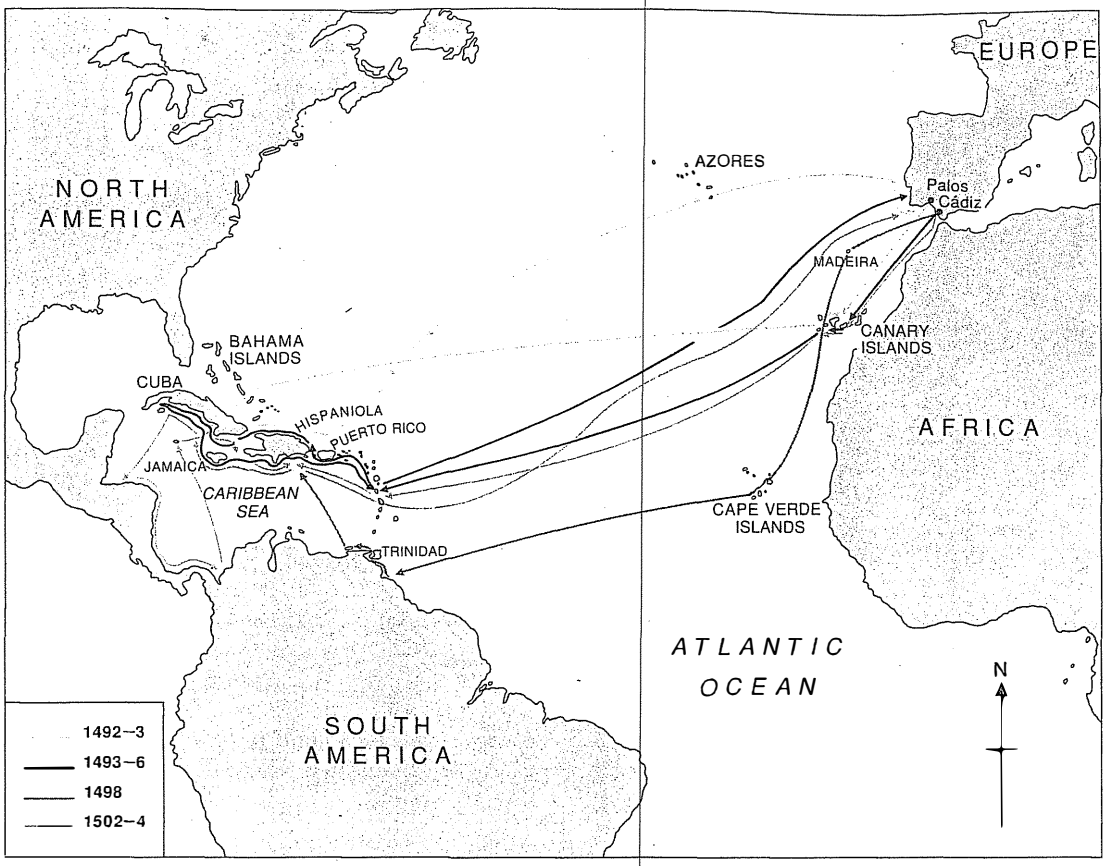

Figure 6.2 The voyages of Christopher Columbus

> ... it is a landmark of great psychological and political importance: Europeans, who by then had not even gone round the globe, had decided to divide between themselves all its undiscovered and unappropriated lands and peoples. The potential implications were vast ... The conquest of the high seas was the first and greatest of all the triumphs over natural forces which were to lead to domination by western civilisation of the whole globe. Knowledge is power, and the knowledge won by the first systematic explorers ... had opened the way to the age of western world hegemony.
> (Roberts, 1985, p.194)

In 1519–22, a Portuguese expedition led by Magellan, circumnavigated the globe, and Sir Francis Drake repeated this feat in 1577–80.

The early Spanish explorers of the New World opened the way to that ruthless band of soldier-adventurers, the Conquistadors, who completed the conquest of Central and South America, effecting the transition from exploration to conquest and colonization.

In 1513 Balboa, having explored the northern coast of South America, crossed the Isthmus of Darien to the Pacific. And in 1519 Cortés landed in Mexico and carried through the destruction of the Aztec empire. Pizarro pushed south through Ecuador to the Andes and Peru, and destroyed the Inca empire (1531–4), after which Orellana crossed the continent by way of the Amazon (1541–4). The Conquistadors were driven by the prospect of vast, unlimited fortunes. 'We Spaniards', Cortés confessed, 'suffer from a disease that only gold can cure' (quoted in Hale, 1966, p.105).

The Spanish proceeded to push up into what is now New Mexico, Arizona, Florida, and Arkansas (1528–42). Meanwhile, further north, other nations were also busy exploring. John Cabot, a Venetian sailing under English patronage, landed at Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and New England (1497–8). In 1500–1, the Portuguese Corte Real, and in 1524 the Italian Verrazano explored the Atlantic seaboard of North America. They were followed in 1585–7 by Sir Walter Raleigh, and a number of British colonies were soon established: Newfoundland (1583), Roanoke (1585), and Jamestown (1607).

Yet further north, British explorers such as Gilbert, Frobisher, Davis, Hudson and Baffin (1576–1616) tried in vain to find an alternative route to the East via a north-west passage through the arctic seas. This quest was partly responsible for the opening up of North America, and Dutch, French and English colonies sprang up along the Atlantic seaboard. Nevertheless, the serious exploration of Canada and North America was led largely by the French: Cartier, Champlain and their followers exploring the St. Lawrence river, the Great Lake, and the Mississippi river down to the Gulf of Mexico (1534–1682).

The Spanish and Portuguese established an early presence in the Far East, and soon the Spanish were exploring the Pacific, colonizing islands, and even commuting out of Manilla in the Philippines to the west coast of America (1565–1605). But the Dutch and the English set out to flout the Spanish and Portuguese commercial monopolies. The British East India Company was founded in 1599, the Dutch East India Company in 1602. After their independence from Spain in 1584, the Dutch became one of the most powerful commercial nations, their East Indies trade laying the basis for the flourishing of Dutch *bourgeois* culture (Schama, 1977). From a base in the old spice empire, the Dutch reached Fiji, the East Indies, Polynesia, Tasmania, New Zealand, and in 1606 were the first Europeans to catch sight of Australia. Over the next 30 years they gradually pieced together the Australian jigsaw-puzzle, though the Australian coast was not completely mapped until after Cook's famous voyages (1768–79) to Tahiti, the South Pacific and the Antarctic.

By the eighteenth century, then, the main European world-players — Portugal, Spain, England, France and Holland — were all in place. The serious business of bringing the far-flung civilizations they had

discovered into the orbit of western trade and commerce, and exploiting their wealth, land, labour and natural resources for European development had become a major enterprise. (China and India remained closed for longer, except for trading along their coasts and the efforts of Jesuit missionaries.) Europe began to imprint its culture and customs on the new worlds. European rivalries were constantly fought out and settled in the colonial theatres. The colonies became the 'jewels in the crown' of the new European empires. Through trade monopolies and the mercantilist commercial system, each of these Empires tried to secure exclusive control of the flow of trade for its own enrichment. The wealth began to flow in: in 1554 America yielded eleven per cent of the Spanish Crown's income; in 1590, fifty per cent.

2.4 BREAKING THE FRAME

Towards the end of the fifteenth century, then, Europe broke out of its long confinement. What had bottled it up for so long? This is a difficult question to answer, but we can identify two sets of factors — the first, material, the second cultural.

Physical barriers to the East

The Middle Ages represented an actual *loss* of contact with and knowledge of the outside world. Alexander the Great's conquests (336–323 BC) had taken the Macedonian–Greek armies as far east as the Himalayas. Only his troops' reluctance prevented him from reaching what he believed to be the limits of the inhabited world. The Roman Empire stretched from Britain to the Arabian deserts. But in the Middle Ages Europe closed in on itself. It retained some knowledge of India (especially among Venetian traders), but beyond that lay unknown territory. Though every port and trade route on the Mediterranean was mapped, the basic contours of other seas and continents were shrouded in mystery. For example, though Europe bought great quantities of Chinese silk, transported by caravan across Central Asia, it took little interest in the great civilization from which the silk came.

A key factor in this was that, after the seventh century AD, 'sea-routes and land-routes alike were barred by the meteoric rise of Islam, which interposed its iron curtain between West and East' (Latham, 1958, p.8). It was Arab middlemen who brought eastern goods to the European sea-ports of the Mediterranean and Black Sea to sell. The Crusades (1095–1291) were the long, and for a time unsuccessful, struggle of Christian Europe to roll back this 'infidel threat'. But just when, at last, Europe seemed to be winning, a thunderbolt struck from a quarter unexpected by both Islam and Christendom: the invasions of the Mongol and Tartar nomads from the Central Asian steppes (1206–60), which left a trail of devastation in their wake. However, Islam suffered even more than Christendom from the Tartar invasions and, in the thirteenth century, the eastern curtain lifted briefly.

During this interval, the Venetian Marco Polo and other members of his family undertook their famous travels to the court of the Great Khan, China and Japan (1255–95).

Marco Polo's *Travels* with its tales of the fabulous wealth of the East played a decisive role in stimulating the European imagination to search for a westerly route to the East, a search that became increasingly important. For soon the eastern opening became blocked again by the rise of a new Islamic power, the Ottoman Empire, and China, under the Ming dynasty, once more turned inwards.

This had profound effects. It stimulated expansion westwards, favouring the European powers of the Atlantic seaboard (Spain, Portugal, Britain, Holland and France). It also tended to isolate Western from Eastern Europe — a process reinforced by the growing split between Western (Catholic) and Eastern (Orthodox) Churches. From this point onwards, the patterns of development within Western and Eastern Europe sharply diverged.

The barriers in the mind

A second major obstacle to the East lay in the mind — consisting not of only the sketchy knowledge that Europeans had of the outside world, but of the way they conceptualized and imagined it. To the north, they believed, there was 'nothing — or worse...barbarian peoples who, until

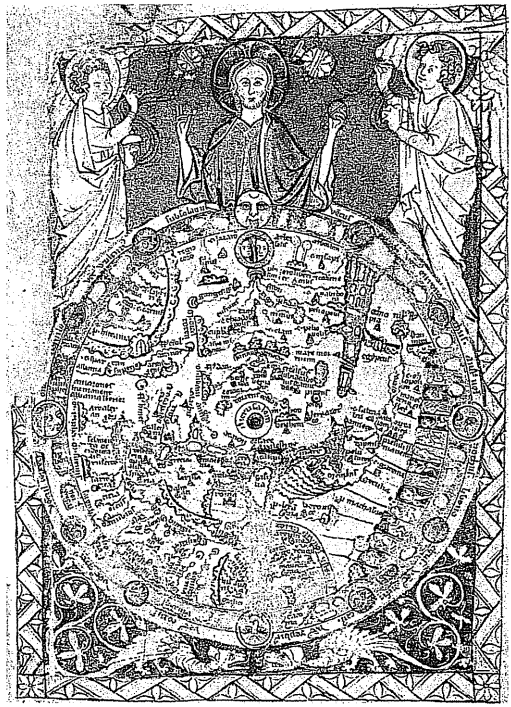

Figure 6.3 A mediaeval world map from a thirteenth-century psalter

civilized by the church, were only a menace' (Roberts, 1985, p.117). To the east, across the plains, there were barbarians on horseback: Huns, Mongols and Tartars. To the south lay the shifting empires of Islam, which, despite their early tolerance of Christianity and of the Jews, had advanced deep into Europe — to Poitiers and Constantinople, across North Africa and into Spain, Portugal and Southern Italy. The cradle of European civilization and trade was the Mediterranean. In the eastern Mediterranean, there was Byzantium — a civilization which was part of Christendom. But, as we said, the Catholic and Orthodox churches were drawing farther apart as the centuries passed.

For what lay beyond, Europe relied on other sources of knowledge — classical, Biblical, legendary and mythological. Asia remained largely a world of elephants and other wonders almost as remote as sub-Saharan Africa. There were four continents — Europe, Africa, Asia and 'Terra Australis Incognita' ('The Unknown Southern Land') — the way to the latter being judged impassable. On mediaeval maps, the land mass crowded out the oceans: there was no Pacific and the Atlantic was a narrow, and extremely dangerous, waterway. The world was often represented as a wheel, superimposed on the body of Christ, with Jerusalem at its hub (see Figure 6.3). This conception of the world did not encourage free and wide-ranging travel.

2.5 THE CONSEQUENCES OF EXPANSION FOR THE IDEA OF 'THE WEST'

Gradually, despite their many internal differences, the countries of western Europe began to conceive of themselves as part of a single family or civilization — 'the West'. The challenge from Islam was an important factor in hammering Western Europe and the idea of 'the West' into shape. Roberts notes that, 'The word "Europeans" seems to appear for the first time in an eighth-century reference to Charles Martel's victory [over Islamic forces] at Tours. All collectivities become more self-aware in the presence of an external challenge, and self-awareness promotes cohesiveness.' (Roberts, 1985, p.122.) And Hulme speaks of '... the consolidation of an ideological identity through the testing of [Europe's] Eastern frontiers prior to the adventure of Atlantic exploration. ... A symbolic end to that process could be considered Pius III's 1458 identification of Europe with Christendom.' (Hulme, 1986, p.84.)

But in the Age of Exploration and Conquest, Europe began to define itself in relation to a new idea — the existence of many new 'worlds', profoundly different from itself. The two processes — growing internal cohesion and the conflicts and contrasts with external worlds — reinforced each other, helping to forge that new sense of identity that we call 'the West'. Reading A and Reading B attempt to trace both these processes at work.

ACTIVITY 1

You should read now **Reading A, 'Explaining European development'**, by Michael Mann, which you will find at the end of this chapter.

As you read, you should bear the following points in mind:

1 Michael Mann offers an explanation of European development by making a series of historical generalizations about the main factors. At this stage, the details matter less than the broad notions offered by Mann. The question is: Why did Europe integrate and begin to 'take off' economically?

2 Mann's first argument relates to the main economic factors (land, capital, labour and markets). What does he say about them? What type of economic explanation is he using?

3 His second argument relates to the emergence of a common set of norms and values regulating behaviour ('normative regulation'). What fulfilled this role in Europe?

4 Which two factors does Mann say competition requires? (Note that, by 'multiple acephalous federation' he means that European societies had a small, localized, cell-like — rather than centralized — structure.)

5 What role, according to Mann, did Christianity play?

When you've completed the reading, try writing a *short paragraph* (300 words) summarizing Mann's argument.

Mann discusses both long-term socio-economic and religious factors. The next reading, by contrast, brings cultural and ideological aspects to the fore.

ACTIVITY 2

You should now read **Reading B, 'The idea of "Europe"'**, by John Roberts.

As you read, make a list of what you think are the *main points* in Robert's argument. When you have finished, *compare* your list with the points which I pick out, below. Did you miss something important? Have I left out something you thought important?

Robert's first point — that maps are 'fictions' which 'reflect changes in our pictures of reality' — provides a framework for the rest of the passage. His main argument concerns the centrality of Christianity to the idea of 'Europe.' For centuries, the concepts 'Europe' and 'Christendom' were virtually identical. Europe's cultural identity — what made its civilization distinct and unique — was, in the first instance, essentially religious and Christian. Eventually, the idea of 'Europe' acquired a sharper geographical, political and economic

definition. This brought it closer to the modern, secular concept of 'the West'. However, the West has never entirely lost touch with its Christian roots. The encounter with the new worlds — with *difference* — actually reinforced this new identity. It promoted that 'growing sense of superiority', which Roberts calls a 'Eurocentric' view of the world.

3 DISCOURSE AND POWER

We have looked at the historical process by which an idea of 'the West' emerged from Europe's growing internal cohesion and its changing relations to non-Western societies. We turn, next, to the formation of the languages or 'discourses' in which Europe began to describe and represent the *difference* between itself and these 'others' it encountered in the course of its expansion. We are now beginning to sketch the formation of the 'discourse' of 'the West and the Rest'. However, we need first to understand what we mean by the term 'discourse'.

3.1 WHAT IS A 'DISCOURSE'?

In common-sense language, a **discourse** is simply 'a coherent or rational body of speech or writing; a speech, or a sermon'. But here the term is being used in a more specialized way (see *Penguin Dictionary of Sociology:* DISCOURSE). By 'discourse', we mean a particular way of *representing* 'the West', 'the Rest' and the relations between them. A discourse is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about — i.e. a way of representing — a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. When statements about a topic are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed.

A discourse does not consist of one statement, but of several statements working together to form what the French social theorist, Michel Foucault (1926–1984) calls a **'discursive formation'**. (See *Penguin Dictionary of Sociology*: FOUCAULT) The statements fit together because any one statement implies a relation to all the others: 'They refer to the same object, share the same style and support "a strategy ...a common institutional ...or political drift or pattern"' (Cousins and Hussain, 1984, pp.84–5).

One important point about this notion of discourse is that it is not based on the conventional distinction between thought and action, language and practice. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But it is itself produced by a practice: 'discursive practice' — the practice of producing meaning. Since all social practices entail *meaning*, all practices have a discursive aspect. So discourse enters into and influences all social practices. Foucault would argue that the discourse of the West about the Rest was deeply implicated in practice — i.e. in how the West behaved towards the Rest.

To get a fuller sense of Foucault's theory of discourse, we must bear the following points in mind.

1 A discourse can be produced by many individuals in different institutional settings (like families, prisons, hospitals and asylums). Its integrity or 'coherence' does not depend on whether or not it issues from one place or from a single speaker or 'subject'. Nevertheless, every discourse constructs positions from which alone it makes sense. Anyone deploying a discourse must position themselves *as if* they were the subject of the discourse. For example, we may not ourselves believe in the natural superiority of the West. But if we use the discourse of 'the West and the Rest' we will necessarily find ourselves speaking from a position that holds that the West is a superior civilization. As Foucault puts it, 'To describe a ... statement does not consist in analysing the relations between the author and what he [*sic*] says ...; but in determining what position can and must be occupied by any individual if he is to be the subject of it [the statement]' (Foucault, 1972, pp.95–6).

2 Discourses are not closed systems. A discourse draws on elements in other discourses, binding them into its own network of meanings. Thus, as we saw in the preceding section, the discourse of 'Europe' drew on the earlier discourse of 'Christendom', altering or translating its meaning. Traces of past discourses remain embedded in more recent discourses of 'the West'.

3 The statements within a discursive formation need not all be the same. But the relationships and differences between them must be regular and systematic, not random. Foucault calls this a 'system of dispersion': 'Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever ... one can define a regularity ... [then] we will say ... that we are dealing with a *discursive formation*' (Foucault, 1972, p.38).

These points will become clearer when we apply them to particular examples, as we do later in this chapter.

3.2 DISCOURSE AND IDEOLOGY

A discourse is similar to what sociologists call an 'ideology': a set of statements or beliefs which produce knowledge that serves the interests of a particular group or class. Why, then, use 'discourse' rather than 'ideology'?

One reason which Foucault gives is that ideology is based on a distinction between *true* statements about the world (science) and *false* statements (ideology), and the belief that the facts about the world help us to decide between true and false statements. But Foucault argues that statements about the social, political or moral world are rarely ever simply true or false; and 'the facts' do not enable us to decide definitively about their truth or falsehood, partly because 'facts' can be construed in different ways. The very language we use to describe the so-called facts interferes in this process of finally deciding what is true, and what false.

For example, Palestinians fighting to regain land on the West Bank from Israel may be described either as 'freedom fighters' or as 'terrorists'. It is a fact that they are fighting; but what does the fighting *mean*? The facts alone cannot decide. And the very language we use — 'freedom fighters/terrorists' — is part of the difficulty. Moreover, certain descriptions, even if they appear false to us, can be *made* 'true' because people act on them believing that they are true, and so their actions have real consequences. Whether the Palestinians are terrorists or not, if we think they are, and act on that 'knowledge', they in effect become terrorists because we treat them as such. The language (discourse) has real effects in practice: the description becomes 'true'.

Foucault's use of 'discourse', then, is an attempt to side-step what seems an unresolvable dilemma — deciding which social discourses are true or scientific, and which false or ideological. Most social scientists now accept that our values enter into all our descriptions of the social world, and therefore most of our statements, however factual, have an ideological dimension. What Foucault would say is that knowledge of the Palestinian problem is produced by competing discourses — those, of 'freedom-fighter' and 'terrorist' — and that each is linked to a contestation over power. It is the outcome of *this* struggle which will decide the 'truth' of the situation.

You can see, then, that although the concept of 'discourse' side-steps the problem of truth/falsehood in ideology, it does *not* evade the issue of power. Indeed, it gives considerable weight to questions of power since it is power, rather than the facts about reality, which make things 'true': 'We should admit that power produces knowledge ... . That power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute ... power relations' (Foucault, 1980, p.27).

3.3 CAN A DISCOURSE BE 'INNOCENT'?

Could the discourse which developed in the West for talking about the Rest operate outside power? Could it be, in that sense, purely scientific — i.e. ideologically innocent? Or was it influenced by particular class interests?

Foucault is very reluctant to *reduce* discourse to statements that simply mirror the interests of a particular class. The same discourse can be used by groups with different, even contradictory, class interests. But this does *not* mean that discourse is ideologically neutral or 'innocent'. Take for example, the encounter between the West and the New World. There are several reasons why this encounter could not be innocent, and therefore why the discourse which emerged in the Old World about the Rest could not be innocent either.

First, Europe brought its own cultural categories, languages, images and ideas to the New World in order to describe and represent it. It tried to

fit the New World into existing conceptual frameworks, classifying it according to its own norms, and absorbing it into western traditions of representation. This is hardly surprising: we often draw on what we already know about the world in order to explain and describe something novel. It was never a simple matter of the West just looking, seeing and describing the New World/the Rest without preconceptions.

Secondly, Europe had certain definite purposes, aims, objectives, motives, interests and strategies in setting out to discover what lay across the 'Green Sea of Darkness'. These motives and interests were mixed. The Spanish, for example, wanted to:

(a) get their hands on gold and silver,

(b) claim the land for Their Catholic Majesties, and

(c) convert the heathen to Christianity.

These interests often contradicted one another. But we must not suppose that what Europeans said about the New World was simply a cynical mask for their own self-interest. When King Manuel of Portugal wrote to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain that, 'the principal motive of this enterprise [da Gama's voyage to India] has been ... the service of God our Lord, and our own advantage' (quoted in Hale, 1966, p.38) — thereby neatly and conveniently bringing God and Mammon together into the same sentence — he probably saw no obvious contradiction between them. These fervently religious Catholic rulers fully believed what they were saying. To them, serving God and pursuing 'our advantage' were not necessarily at odds. They lived and fully believed their own ideology.

So, while it would be wrong to attempt to reduce their statements to naked self-interest, it is clear that their discourse was moulded and influenced by the play of motives and interests across their language. Of course, motives and interests are almost never wholly conscious or rational. The desires which drove the Europeans were powerful; but their power was not always subject to rational calculation. Marco Polo's 'treasures of the East' were tangible enough. But the seductive power which they exerted over generations of Europeans transformed them more and more into a myth. Similarly, the gold that Columbus kept asking the natives for very soon acquired a mystical, quasi-religious significance.

Finally, the discourse of 'the West and the Rest' could not be innocent because it did not represent an encounter between equals. The Europeans had outsailed, outshot and outwitted peoples who had no wish to be 'explored', no need to be 'discovered' and no desire to be 'exploited'. The Europeans stood, vis-a-vis the Others in positions of dominant power. This influenced what they saw and how they saw it, as well as what they did not see.

Foucault sums up these arguments as follows. Not only is discourse always implicated in *power*; discourse is one of the 'systems' through which power circulates. The knowledge which a discourse produces

constitutes a kind of power, exercised over those who are 'known'. When that knowledge is exercised in practice, those who are 'known' in a particular way will be subject (i.e. subjected) to it. This is always a power-relation. (See Foucault, 1980, p.201.) Those who produce the discourse also have the power to *make it true* — i.e. to enforce its validity, its scientific status.

This leaves Foucault in a highly relativistic position with respect to questions of truth because his notion of discourse undermines the distinction between true and false statements — between science and ideology — to which many sociologists have subscribed. These epistemological issues (about the status of knowledge, truth and relativism) are too complex to take further here. (Some of them are addressed further in Book 4 (Hall *et al.*, 1992).) However, the important idea to grasp now is the deep and intimate relationship which Foucault establishes between discourse, knowledge and power. According to Foucault, when power operates so as to enforce the 'truth' of any set of statements, then such a discursive formation produces a 'regime of truth':

> Truth isn't outside power ... Truth is a thing of this world; it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint...And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish 'true' and 'false' statements; the means by which each is sanctioned; and the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.
> (Foucault, 1980, p.131)

3.4 SUMMARY

Let us summarize the main points of this argument. Discourses are ways of talking, thinking or representing a particular subject or topic. They produce meaningful knowledge about that subject. This knowledge influences social practices, and so has real consequences and effects. Discourses are not reducible to class-interests, but always operate in relation to power — they are part of the way power circulates and is contested. The question of whether a discourse is true or false is less important than whether it is effective in practice. When it is effective — organizing and regulating relations of power (say, between the West and the Rest) — it is called a 'regime of truth'.

New Keywords

A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the text:

BCE	Before Common Era (before the period dating from the birth of Christ)
C	Followed by numeral, century (C16: sixteenth century)
CE	Common Era (the period dating from the birth of Christ)
Ch	Chinese
eC	First period (third) of a century (eC16: early sixteenth century)
F	French
fw	Immediate forerunner of a word, in the same or another language
G	German
Gk	Classical Greek
It	Italian
L	Latin
lC	Last period (third) of a century (lC16: late sixteenth century)
lL	Late Latin
mC	Middle period (third) of a century (mC16: mid-sixteenth century)
mE	Middle English (c.1100–1500)
mF	Medieval French
mL	Medieval Latin
oE	Old English (to c.1100)
OED	*Oxford English dictionary: New dictionary on historical principles*, 2nd edn. Eds. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
oF	Old French
rw	Ultimate traceable word, from which "root" meanings are derived
Sp	Spanish

experience emerged. "The city is a state of mind," observed Robert Park, leader of the Chicago school of urban sociology, in 1915 (Park, 1967: 1). This is the city explored by scholars like Georg Simmel (1997 [1903]), Walter Benjamin (1999), Henri Lefebvre (1991), and Michel de Certeau (1984), as well as by theorists and artists inspired by the Situationist concept of psychogeography. How, they have all asked in their different ways, are social forces and relations crystallized in the fabric, institutions, and encounters of the city? And how is that external reality then translated into the intensity of modern experience? The history of the word suggests that, if anywhere, it is *between* the two that the city exists.

James Donald

See: ***CIVILIZATION, COUNTRY, PLACE, SPACE.***

Civilization

The OED is a **civilizational project**, dedicated to improving general use of the English language. Its genealogies of English usage model a key feature of **civilizational thinking**: the creation of legacies that not only set standards but also define a cultural space, in this case, English. Awareness of this frame alerts us to its erasure of the globally collaborative histories through which even words at the center of world power are shaped. The OED offers a **civilizational history** of the term "civilization."

According to the OED, "civilization" has been used since the lC18 to refer to "the action or process of civilizing or of being civilized." "Civilization is the humanization of man in society," said Arnold in 1879. The OED also points to the use of the term from the lC18 to denote "a developed or advanced state of human society." Examples stress the intersection between pre-modern empires and the colonial encounter. Buckle's 1857 *Civilization* characterizes Egyptian civilization as one which "forms a striking contrast to the barbarism of the other nations of Africa," while differentiating "the civilization of Europe" for its "capacity of development unknown to those civilizations which were originated by soil."

Raymond Williams's *Keywords* opens scholarly and political potentials within this project, offering a rich history of words that allows users to savor and question their meanings. But this is also a civilizational project, teaching the reader to select an English legacy from all our possible pasts. In *Keywords*, Williams traces the association of civilization with "the general spirit of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on secular and progressive human self-development," as well as its "associated sense of modernity" (R. Williams, 1976: 58). Civilization comes to stand for a "whole modern social process," including (in the thinking of John Stuart Mill, for instance) an increase in knowledge and physical comfort, the decline of superstition, the rise of forward-moving nations, the growth of freedom, but also "loss of independence, the creation of artificial

wants, monotony, narrow mechanical understanding, inequality and hopeless poverty'' (R. Williams, 1983: 58). Williams notes ''a critical moment when civilization was used in the plural'' (1983: 59), beginning in French usage in the eC19. From the C19 until the eC21, the slippage of the term ''civilization'' between its singular and plural uses has offered a logic of universal historical destiny to particular racial, religious, and cultural authorities.

Civilization became essential to discussions in anthropology and history in the lC19. In anthropology, the concept was associated with evolutionary distinctions contrasting civilization with savagery and barbarism. In history, the concept laid out world regions associated with imperial state-building and religious conversion. By the mC20, English discussion – influenced by criticisms of evolutionism – turned to the ahistorical and relativizing term ''culture.'' Williams's interest in civilization derived from his project to democratize the idea of culture. Yet other Western legacies kept civilization alive. In 1939, Norbert Elias (2000) traced the history of French and German commitments to the concept of civilization. French reformers used the term ''civilization'' in the mC18, he argues, to stress the importance of improving elite culture and politics – from within the elite world of manners. In contrast, German thinkers saw *zivilisation* as an affectation that could not substitute for the more genuine morality of *kultur*. Elias uses his Germanic perspective to offer a critical history of the **civilizing process**, in which increasing self-restraint in everyday human behavior creates an uncomfortable but regularized modernity. Meanwhile, C20 French thinkers continued to find civilization a productive tool for reform.

Neither Elias nor Williams takes us to the edges of empire, where much word- and world-making has occurred. Civilization had an explicit influence in world-making in the period when Europeans established world hegemony, from the mC19 through the mC20. European expansion was justified as a project of civilization. It did civilize, in the sense of bringing non-European elites into European ideas of civilization. Non-European elites made civilization their own, reshaping the concept to forge anti-colonial and nationalist struggles. Who would inherit the mantle of civilization? Claimants vied for the term and the world-making heritage it implied. These contests show civilization coming into its meanings through a globe-traversing, culture-crossing process of translation and contention. Following the ''traveling theory'' of civilization requires moving in and out of particular linguistic environments and modes of cultural politics.

Japan in the lC19 and eC20 was an important site for translations of the civilizational thinking of European expansionism. During the Meiji period (1868–1912), Western civilization became an explicit goal of the reconfigured, emperor-centered state, supporting the drive for Japanese national strength and fueling Japanese imperialist expansion. In the 1870s and 1880s, translators relied on Chinese characters to translate foreign words, either adding new meaning to the characters (as with ''civilization'') or using existing characters to coin new words (such as ''freedom'' or ''right''). The English word ''civilization'' was rendered into Japanese by the neologism *bunmeikaika*, which was written with Chinese characters but departed from earlier Japanese identifications with Chinese civilization.

Civilization became an official state project: priests appointed by the national government preached throughout Japan on topics including ''civilization and enlightenment.'' The rural populace did not easily accept this program. Many associated civilization and enlightenment with foreigners and with the fearful figure of the blood-sucking stranger. Civilization was sometimes understood temporally, as a state entered into by different societies at different moments, but it was more frequently rendered spatially, and ambitious nation-builders set out to transform Japan into Westernized space. In 1883, prominent critic and educator Fukuzawa Yukichi argued that an elaborate Tokyo palace for the emperor was necessary as a sign of civilization and progress, so that Japan could confer with other nations on an equal footing. He described civilization as a universal development whose initial location in Europe was incidental; Japan, too, could attain it. Well into the eC20 in Japan, civilization meant world civilization. Japan was qualified to participate because of its growing modernity (Figal, 1999; Fujitani, 1996; Howland, 1996, 2002).

Moving through heterogeneous channels, Japanese versions of civilization shaped a variety of social improvement movements – including anti-colonial movements – across Asia. Between 1894 and 1905, Japan gained ''civilized'' status in international law; others hoped to follow. Japan's complex identification of civilization with the West disrupted earlier patterns of civilizational thinking in China. Accompanied by a growth in Japanese political strength and military might, it helped to destabilize the loyalties of Chinese elites, many of whom went to Japan in search of thinking and technologies that would help them to reconfigure their own place in the world. In Tokyo, Chinese intellectuals joined others from throughout Asia and its diasporic populations to explore pan-Asianism, anarchism, Marxism, and the reconfiguration of gendered relations (Duara 2001; Karl, 2002). Civilizational debates were actively pursued in Chinese journals well into the 1920s. In China and Korea, Japanese-inspired ''pan-Asianism,'' expressed in intellectual debate as well as religious societies, inspired attention to the ''spiritual'' qualities of ''Asian civilization'' – at least until Japan's wartime mobilization, and subsequent defeat, discredited these projects. Most young Chinese intellectuals rejected claims to a unified civilizational order in favor of the language of nation, modernity, and revolution. Yet nation and civilization were tightly linked: nation-building was taken as a sign of a higher form of civilization (Duara, 2001).

These developments traveled widely. In Dutch colonial Java, for example, Javanese students were impressed when Japanese were granted ''European'' status; they formed their own civilizational aspirations, particularly after Chinese nationalists in Java offered them the nation as a model for social and cultural mobilization (Pramoedya, 1991a, 1991b). Nation and civilization moved together conceptually through Europe's colonies.

Gandhi's reported quip about **Western civilization** (''It would be a good idea'') sums up these great debates: who would be the proper inheritors of the legacy of human improvement? European powers claimed civilization as the reason for their far-flung conquests. Were not the colonial powers enlightening the natives, who had lived until then as savages?

But by the eC20, non-Europeans used this very rhetoric to object: was not colonialism a form of savagery to be resisted for the cause of freedom, justice, and equality, the very dreams of which the Europeans spoke so highly? As European critics were also noting (Adas, 1993), was not ''Western civilization'' limited, warlike, and materialistic? Might Europe's Others carry civilization toward a brighter future?

Civilization has been a player in diverse and contradictory debates. Consider education. In the 1950s and 1960s, French secondary education became embroiled in a fight over ''*civilization*'' as understood through the history of Ferdinand Braudel (1994). Braudelians wanted to move beyond a one-thing-after-another narrative of French history to teach global social history: civilization was the concept to open this door. Civilization lost and French political history was reinstated. Meanwhile, in the United States, a very different educational battle had begun to unfold.

The US university took up the cause of Western civilization during World War I. The first course was started at Columbia University in 1919 ''as a 'war baby', born of the struggle to make the world safe for democracy'' (Allardyce, 1982: 706). Similar courses, which brought US citizens inside the heritage of Europe, spread around the country. Courses in Western civilization were mainstays of US college education through the 1960s, at which point educators began to question the exclusion of non-white authors and non-European legacies of scholarship. In the 1970s and 1980s, new courses were organized to offer a more culturally inclusive education; this current became identified as **multiculturalism**. Multicultural curricula stimulated a virulent backlash particularly from conservative alumni, a key source of university funding. A small war broke out in academe in the 1980s, as multiculturalism and civilization were pitted against each other as opposing educational philosophies (Pratt, 1992).

Samuel Huntington's (1993) ''The clash of civilizations?'' had a powerful impact on this debate by arguing that the term ''civilization'' was not just relevant to teaching students about the past; civilization might be the organizing feature of post-Cold War politics. With the decline of the nation state, he argued, religion-based cultural politics would be at the base of world order and disorder. His argument, developed further in Huntington (1996), requires the patriotic consolidation of white Christian Western civilization against its competitors and potential enemies, at home and abroad. Huntington's homogeneous and tightly bounded civilizations resonate nicely with those still taught (despite a generation of historians who have refused such boundaries) in world history textbooks (Segal, 2000). Their familiarity and simplicity – as well as their apparent opening to pluralist appropriations – made them immensely charismatic. In the 1990s, conferences on civilizational clash and dialogue were convened across the world.

When US president George W. Bush championed a war of the worlds in 2001, the revised rhetoric of civilization was ready and waiting for him. Bush first turned to the Crusades as his image of war, but he was quickly criticized for alienating Muslim allies. Civilization was safer: on the one hand, it called to mind ''Christian civilization'' and the

specific cultural mobilization against the infidel that he required for the wars; on the other hand, it evoked global civility, and who could be opposed to that? One project aimed to discipline critical scholars by demanding that universities focus on "defending civilization" (Martin and Neal, 2001).

Meanwhile, civilization has proved a useful rhetoric for distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate forms of warfare. The civilized must punish the uncivilized by any means necessary. In this use of the term "civilization," the Bush administration reached back to colonial precedent. European colonial rule required the unrestrained punishment of the uncivilized for the good of civilization (Lindqvist, 1996). Through this history of civilized slaughter, indeed, the Bush administration's repetition of the term "civilization" invoked a Western civilizational heritage, although not an admirable one.

Anna Tsing and Gail Hershatter

See: ***CULTURE, EDUCATION, MODERN, MULTICULTURALISM, NATION, WEST.***

Class

In its most conventional and persistent sense, **class** refers to "a division or order. . . or rank or grade of society," common in the phrases "higher (upper), middle, lower classes." However, to aficionados of **class distinction**, such crude divisions are susceptible to infinite refinement. Each component may be subdivided, revealing such locations as upper-middle, middle-lower-middle, and so on. It is commonly observed that C18 and C19 British society was particularly obsessed with the niceties and observances of class in this sense, reflected in the novels of Jane Austen, for example (1996 [1813]). However, to say anything is "common" is to immediately risk its disparagement as belonging to the lower (uncivilized and uncultured) classes.

This sense of class – as a social ordering that articulated privilege and deference – has been at the heart of much British controversy about the **class system** and how to overcome it. It was institutionalized in political systems (the House of Lords and the monarchy persisting in a parliamentary democracy), in education systems (the persistence of private education and its privileged routes in universities and employment), and in a variety of cultural and social forms. Elitism, privilege, hereditary advantage, and snobbery have been constant focal points of social conflict and mobilization – though some would argue without much damage to the underlying unequal structures of material resources. The idea of class distinction persists in a variety of social evaluations of people and things – **being classy**, **having class**, distinctions between different classes of traveler in planes, boats, and trains, and so on. It is this sense of a class system of privilege and deference that is evoked in the claim that the USA is a **classless society**. Other meanings of "class," related to the unequal distribution of wealth, income, and power, may nevertheless be relevant to understanding the USA and other societies.

and restore social values and authority. Welfare had moved from being a solution to social problems to being the cause of social problems. A work-shy, demoralized, and dangerous underclass was the welfare state's major accomplishment (Murray, 1984).

Welfare was constructed with a specific, and narrower, meaning in the USA (Schram, 1995). Welfare became predominantly associated with public assistance (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) rather than social security or **welfare provision** more generally. **Being on welfare** was identified with households headed by black lone mothers (**welfare queens**) in a particularly vitriolic, racialized, and gendered politics of poverty. The **end of welfare** (in 1996) produced a **workfare** system with punitive conditions about the moral and sexual behaviors of claimants (Mink, 1998).

Welfare remains a contested site. The principle of collective public provision is under threat from privatization, marketization, and globalization, and their articulation in neo-liberal politics (Yeates, 2001). State programs have been cut back or made more conditional while emphasis is placed on corporate, voluntary, and familial sources of pensions, services, and care. Nevertheless, such changes have encountered organized campaigns to defend welfare states, create new rights, and overcome the inequalities of "second-class citizenship." The idea of the welfare state provides a rallying point for political action in countries without such systems, and remains surprisingly popular with people in countries with them. Citizenship – as a basis for **welfare claims** – has emerged as a critical focus for conflicts within, around, and beyond the borders of nation states.

John Clarke

See: ***CITIZENSHIP, POVERTY, RISK.***

The West

The West is a fairly recent mythical construct. Older uses of "west" or its equivalent in other languages indicated a direction or an area on a given political map, such as the west–east division of the Roman Empire in the mC3, the division of the Christian church into Western and Eastern from C11 (R. Williams, 1983: 333), the "New World" of the Americas perceived from Europe, or the oceans located furthest west of the Central Kingdom (China). However, the globalizing phrase "*the* West" came into general use only over the past two centuries as the capital originating in Western Europe came to be seen as omnipresent in colonial domination world-wide. "The West" supposedly unifies a group of people called **Westerners** in terms of their residential geographies, traditions, races, pedigrees, and shared civilization; it appears to be a proper name and this is often marked by a capital letter, as it is in this book. However, the term is notoriously slippery, and the unity that it affirms has increasingly been challenged in recent decades.

Used adverbially, "west" suggests a direction and often a movement towards a more or less vaguely indicated place: "There lies your way, due West" wrote Shakespeare in

Twelfth Night (1601). Associated with both the glowing color and growing darkness of sunset, "going west" is an old-fashioned phrase for death or disappearance ("dear old friends now 'gone west,'" 1915; "valuable evidence gone west," 1925), but it more powerfully carries in colonial contexts a utopian promise of space that is all the more alluring for being obscure: Henry Kingsley wrote in Australia of "splendid pastures, which stretch west farther than any man has been yet" (1859), while the famous injunction within the United States to "Go west, young man!" dates from 1851. These uses promote a fiction that "the west" is a definite place as well as a direction or an ever-receding frontier, making it easy to assume that the term can refer to a specific geographic region on the surface of the earth.

However, since the earth is a globe no single, stable location can lay exclusive claim to be west, since any point in the world can be so called from another. A global West can only be delimited within this mundane, universally available "west" if it is distinguished on non-geographical grounds from something *non*-west – the rest of the world, as in **the West and the Rest**. Here, the definition of "the West" is dependent upon how "the Rest" is determined: in 1297 "Engelond" is the far west of the world, but from the C16 and C17 an opposition between Europe and "Asia" or "the Orient" became active, with Orientalism emerging as a field of study and an aesthetic cult from the C18: "Once did she hold the gorgeous east in fee; And was the safeguard of the west" writes Wordsworth of Venice (1802). As these examples suggest, the West can be imagined as an identifiable cartographic referent only when the Rest is also thought of as fixed: "Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet" sang Kipling erroneously (1892). Yet the **non-West** also moves according to context and political need: defined from the C11 as the Islamic world in contrast to either the Christian or the Greco-Roman West (R. Williams, 1983: 333), it could stretch from the Mediterranean to India and China; shrink to a single enemy ("in the West there seems to be an impression that the fleet of Japan is a mere matter of show," 1902); and, in the C20 and especially after World War II, flow back to Europe as a communism opposed to the non-communist "Western" states.

Even as a cartographic index, "the West" has little coherence. The majority of people living in Western Europe believe themselves to be Westerners, but at the same time many white people in South Africa and Australia insist they too are Westerners. Conversely, people of color in North America are not necessarily recognized as Westerners even if most residents in North America have claimed, especially since the end of World War II, that they too are in the West. So it may appear that the West is primarily a racial index rather than a cartographic one; it is closely associated with racial fantasies of whiteness. But this assessment is at odds with the historical fact that Eastern Europe has been generally excluded from the West, not only during the Cold War but throughout the C20. Moreover, the racial notion of whiteness is loose enough to allow groups who may be excluded from whiteness in some regions of the world – peoples from the Middle East, for example – to be recognized as white in East Asia or North America. As people move from one place to

another, their racial identity may well change. Like the concept of race in general, whiteness as a social category is historically so arbitrary that it can hardly be an index of a stable identity.

However, "the West" as a mythical construct achieves powerful effects as it gathers varying and contradicting properties around itself; like the idea of the Orient, "the West" has "a history and a tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence" (Said, 1978: 5). Yet it is important not to forget that what we believe we apprehend by this myth is ambiguous and incongruous, precisely because "the West" is a reality whose supposed objectivity is globally accepted; as a mythic element it still regulates our hierarchical way of assigning a place to peoples and institutions on the world-historical map. Until a few decades ago, "the West" was unquestioningly used as a historical index to measure how modern a society might be in relation to another, thus mapping geographic location on to a historicist chronology of progress. Beyond as well as within the so-called developed countries, "modernization" *was* **Westernization**, and this formula made it possible to overlook painfully obvious problems with the idea that some societies run ahead of others and that the former are located in the West while the Rest lag behind. In fact every social formation contains things new and ancient just as it includes people young and old, but the fantasy of linear progress represses this complexity. Predictably, "the West" then serves as a norm of modernity against which something specifically local and **non-Western** is frozen in time as non-modern. This does not only lead to the simple denigration of the latter. Typically in ethnic nationalism, a "local" culture is valorized in systematic rivalry with the putative traits of the West.

Thus the West plays an ideological role in organizing desires in non-Western societies as much as in so-called Western ones. Until the 1980s many inhabitants of the Rest imagined the West to be the ideal marker of their future and the goal toward which their societies must progress. Recently, however, the power of "the West" as a social imaginary seems to be fading. An increasing number of young people are aware of "non-Western" aspects of societies in Europe and North America as well as of the "Western" aspects of life in many societies in the so-called non-Western parts of the world. It seems that, being neither as threatening nor as alluring as it once was, the figure of "the West" may be to some extent losing its grip on desires in many parts of the world in spite of its militant proponents – and the military might at their disposal.

Naoki Sakai and Meaghan Morris

See: ***COLONIALISM, ETHNICITY, ORIENTALISM, RACE, SPACE.***

Work

Work has been part of human activity in all societies. Certainly this was Marx's view in *Capital*, in which work is defined as "purposeful activity aimed at the production of use-

4 REPRESENTING 'THE OTHER'

So far, the discussion of discourse has been rather abstract and conceptual. The concept may be easier to understand in relation to an example. One of the best examples of what Foucault means by a 'regime of truth' is provided by Edward Said's study of **Orientalism**. In this section, I want to look briefly at this example and then see how far we can use the theory of discourse and the example of Orientalism to analyse the discourse of 'the West and the Rest'.

4.1 ORIENTALISM

In his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said analyses the various discourses and institutions which constructed and produced, as an object of knowledge, that entity called 'the Orient'. Said calls this discourse 'Orientalism'. Note that, though we tend to include the Far East (including China) in our use of the word 'Orient', Said refers mainly to the Middle East — the territory occupied principally by Islamic peoples. Also, his main focus is French writing about the Middle East. Here is Said's own summary of the project of his book:

> My contention is that, without examining Orientalism as a discourse, one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage — and even produce — the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. Moreover, so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism. In brief, because of Orientalism, the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought and action. This is not to say that Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient, but that it is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity 'the Orient' is in question. ... This book also tries to show that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.
> (Said, 1985, p.3)

ACTIVITY 3 You should now read **Reading C, '"Orientalism": representing the Other'**, by Edward Said.

When you have finished, test your understanding of the reading by answering the following questions. If you're not happy with your answers, read the relevant paragraph again.

What does Said mean by the following:

1 European ideas about the Orient are 'hegemonic' (paragraph 1)?
2 Orientalism is governed by a 'battery of desires, repressions, investments and projections' (paragraph 2)?
3 Orientalism has an 'archive' (paragraph 4)?
4 Orientalism 'supplied Orientals with a mentality, a genealogy' (paragraph 4)?
5 Orientalism 'promoted the difference between "us" and "them"' (paragraph 5)?

We will now analyse the discourse of 'the West and the Rest', as it emerged between the end of the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries using Foucault's ideas about 'discourse' and Said's example of 'Orientalism'. How was this discourse formed? What were its main themes — its 'strategies' of representation?

4.2 THE 'ARCHIVE'

Said argues that, 'In a sense Orientalism was a library or archive of information commonly...held. What bound the archive together was a family of ideas and a unifying set of values proven in various ways to be effective. These ideas explained the behaviour of Orientals; they supplied Orientals with a mentality, a genealogy, an atmosphere; most important, they allowed Europeans to deal with and even to see Orientals as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics.' (Said, 1985, pp.41–2.) What sources of common knowledge, what 'archive' of other discourses, did the discourse of 'the West and the Rest' draw on? We can identify four main sources:

1 **Classical knowledge:** This was a major source of information and images about 'other worlds'. Plato (c. 427–347 BC) described a string of legendary islands, among them Atlantis which many early explorers set out to find. Aristotle (384—322 BC) and Eratosthenes (c. 276–194 BC) both made remarkably accurate estimates of the circumference of the globe which were consulted by Columbus. Ptolemy's *Geographia* (2nd century AD) provided a model for map-makers more than a thousand years after it had been produced. Sixteenth-century explorers believed that in the outer world lay, not only Paradise, but that 'Golden Age', place of perfect happiness and 'springtime of the human race', of which the classical poets, including Horace (65–8 BC) and Ovid (43 BC–AD 17), had written.

The eighteenth century was still debating whether what they had discovered in the South Pacific was Paradise. In 1768 the French Pacific explorer Bougainville renamed Tahiti 'The New Cythera' after the island where, according to classical myth, Venus first appeared from the sea. At the opposite extreme, the descriptions by Herodotus (484–425 BC) and Pliny (AD 23–79) of the barbarous peoples who bordered Greece left

many grotesque images of 'other' races which served as self-fulfilling prophecies for later explorers who found what legend said they would find. Paradoxically, much of this classical knowledge was lost in the Dark Ages and only later became available to the West via Islamic scholars, themselves part of that 'other' world.

2 **Religious and biblical sources:** These were another source of knowledge. The Middle Ages reinterpreted geography in terms of the Bible. Jerusalem was the centre of the earth because it was the Holy City. Asia was the home of the Three Wise Kings; Africa that of King Solomon. Columbus believed the Orinoco (in Venezuela) to be a sacred river flowing out of the Garden of Eden.

3 **Mythology:** It was difficult to tell where religious and classical discourses ended and those of myth and legend began. Mythology transformed the outer world into an enchanted garden, alive with misshapen peoples and monstrous oddities. In the sixteenth century Sir Walter Raleigh still believed he would find, in the Amazon rain-forests, the king 'El Dorado' ('The Gilded One') whose people were alleged to roll him in gold which they would then wash off in a sacred lake.

4 **Travellers' tales:** Perhaps the most fertile source of information was travellers' tales — a discourse where description faded imperceptibly into legend. The following fifteenth century German text summarizes more than a thousand years of travellers tales, which themselves often drew on religious and classical authority:

> In the land of Indian there are men with dogs' heads who talk by barking [and] ... feed by catching birds. ... Others again have only one eye in the forehead. ... In Libya many are born without heads and have a mouth and eyes. Many are of both sexes. ... Close to Paradise on the River Ganges live men who eat nothing. For ... they absorb liquid nourishment through a straw [and] ... live on the juice of flowers. ... Many have such large underlips that they can cover their whole faces with them. ... In the land of Ethiopia many people walk bent down like cattle, and many live four hundred years. Many have horns, long noses and goats' feet. ... In Ethiopia towards the west many have four eyes ... [and] in Eripia there live beautiful people with the necks and bills of cranes. (quoted in Newby, 1975, p.17)

A particularly rich repository was Sir John Mandeville's *Travels* — in fact, a compendium of fanciful stories by different hands. Marco Polo's *Travels* was generally more sober and factual, but nevertheless achieved mythological status. His text (embellished by Rusticello, a romance writer) was the most widely read of the travellers' accounts and was instrumental in creating the myth of 'Cathay' ('China' or the East generally), a dream that inspired Columbus and many others.

The point of recounting this astonishing mixture of fact and fantasy which constituted late mediaeval 'knowledge' of other worlds is not to

poke fun at the ignorance of the Middle Ages. The point is: (a) to bring home how these very different discourses, with variable statuses as 'evidence', provided the cultural framework through which the peoples, places and things of the New World were seen, described and represented; and (b) to underline the conflation of fact and fantasy that constituted 'knowledge'. This can be seen especially in the use of analogy to describe first encounters with strange animals. Penguins and seals were described as being like geese and wolves respectively; the tapir as a bull with a trunk like an elephant, the opossum as half-fox, half-monkey.

4.3 A 'REGIME OF TRUTH'

Gradually, observation and description vastly improved in accuracy. The mediaeval habit of thinking in terms of analogies gave way to a more sober type of description of the fauna and flora, ways of life, customs, physical characteristics and social organization of native peoples. We can here begin to see the outlines of an early ethnography or anthropology.

But the shift into a more descriptive, factual discourse, with its claims to truth and scientific objectivity, provided no guarantees. A telling example of this is the case of the 'Patagonians'. Many myths and legends told of a race of giant people. And in the 1520s, Magellan's crew brought back stories of having encountered, in South America, such a race of giants whom they dubbed *patagones* (literally, 'big feet'). The area of the supposed encounter became known as 'Patagonia', and the notion became fixed in the popular imagination, even though two Englishmen who visited Patagonia in 1741 described its people as being of average size.

When Commodore John Byron landed in Patagonia in 1764, he encountered a formidable group of natives, broad-shouldered, stocky, and inches taller than the average European. They proved quite docile and friendly. However, the newspaper reports of his encounter wildly exaggerated the story, and Patagonians took on an even greater stature and more ferocious aspect. One engraving showed a sailor reaching only as high as the waist of a Patagonian giant, and The Royal Society elevated the topic to serious scientific status. 'The engravings took the explorers' raw material and shaped them into images familiar to Europeans.' (Withey, 1987, pp.1175–6.) Legend had taken a late revenge on science.

4.4 IDEALIZATION

'Orientalism', Said remarks, 'is the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery and practice.' 'In addition', he adds, Orientalism 'designate[s] that collection of dreams, images and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line' (Said, 1985, p.73). Like the

Orient, the Rest quickly became the subject of the languages of dream and Utopia, the object of a powerful fantasy.

Between 1590 and 1634 the Flemish engraver Theodor de Bry published his *Historia Americae* in ten illustrated volumes. These were leading examples of a new popular literature about the New World and the discoveries there. De Bry's books contained elaborate engravings of life and customs of the New World. Here we see the New World reworked — re-presented — within European aesthetic conventions, Western 'ways of seeing'. Different images of America are superimposed on one another. De Bry, for example, transformed the simple, unpretentious sketches which John White had produced in 1587 of the Algonquian Indians he had observed in Virginia. Facial features were retouched, gestures adjusted and postures reworked according to more classical European styles. The effect overall, Hugh Honour observes, was 'to tame and civilize the people White had observed so freshly' (Honour, 1976, p.75). The same transformation can be seen in the three representations of the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego (Figures 6.4a–c).

A major object of this process of idealization was Nature itself. The fertility of the Tropics was astonishing even to Mediterranean eyes. Few had ever seen landscapes like those of the Caribbean and Central America. However, the line between description and idealization is almost impossible to draw. In describing Cuba, for example, Columbus refers to 'trees of a thousand kinds ... so tall they seem to touch the sky', sierras and high mountains 'most beautiful and of a thousand shapes', nightingales and other birds, marvellous pine groves, fertile plains and varieties of fruit (quoted in Honour, 1976, p.5). Columbus's friend, Peter Martyr, later used his descriptions to express a set of rich themes which resound across the centuries:

> The inhabitants live in that Golden World of which old writers speak so much, wherein men lived simply and innocently, without enforcement of laws, without quarrelling, judges and libels, content only to satisfy Nature ... [There are] naked girls so beautiful that one might think he [*sic*] beheld those splendid naiads and nymphs of the fountains so much celebrated by the ancients.
> (quoted in Honour, 1978, p.6)

The key themes in this passage are worth identifying since they reappear in later variants of 'the West and the Rest':

(a) The Golden World; an Earthly Paradise;

(b) the simple, innocent life;

(c) the lack of developed social organization and civil society;

(d) people living in a pure state of Nature;

(e) the frank and open sexuality; the nakedness; the beauty of the women.

Figure 6.4a Inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego in their hut (Alexander Buchan, 1769)

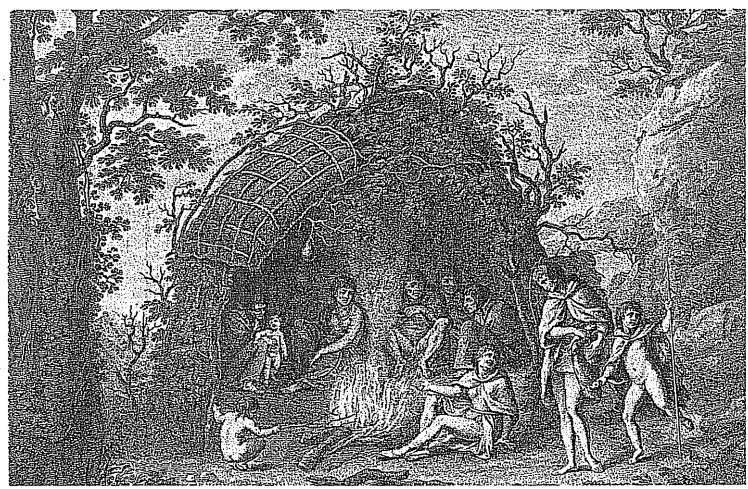

Figure 6.4b A view of the Indians of Tierra del Fuego (Bartolozzi, 1773)

Figure 6.4c Natives of Tierra del Fuego (Read, 1843)

In these images and metaphors of the New World as an Earthly Paradise, a Golden Age, or Utopia, we can see a powerful European fantasy being constructed.

4.5 SEXUAL FANTASY

Sexuality was a powerful element in the fantasy which the West constructed, and the ideas of sexual innocence and experience, sexual domination and submissiveness, play out a complex dance in the discourse of 'the West and the Rest'.

When Captain Cook arrived in Tahiti in 1769, the same idyll of a sexual paradise was repeated all over again. The women were extremely beautiful, the vegetation lush and tropical, the life simple, innocent and free; Nature nourished the people without the apparent necessity to work or cultivate; the sexuality was open and unashamed — untroubled by the burden of European guilt. The naturalist on Bougainville's voyage to the Pacific said that the Tahitians were 'without vice, prejudice, needs or dissention and knew no other god but Love' (Moorhead, 1968, p.51). 'In short', Joseph Banks, the gentleman-scientist who accompanied Cook, observed, 'the scene that we saw was the truest picture of an Arcadia, of which we were going to be kings, that the imagination can form' (quoted in Moorhead, 1987, p.38). As Cook's biographer, J.C. Beaglehole, remarks, 'they were standing on the beach of the dream-world already, they walked straight into the Golden Age and embraced their nymphs' (quoted in Moorhead, 1968, p.66). The West's contemporary image of tropical paradise and exotic holidays still owes much to this fantasy.

Popular accounts by other explorers, such as Amerigo Vespucci (1451–1512), were explicit — where Columbus had been more reticent — about the sexual dimension. New World people, Vespucci said, 'lived according to Nature', and went naked and unashamed; 'the women ... remained attractive after childbirth, were libidinous, and enlarged the penises of their lovers with magic potions' (quoted in Honour, 1976, p.56).

The very language of exploration, conquest and domination was strongly marked by gender distinctions and drew much of its subconscious force from sexual imagery (see Figure 6.5).

ACTIVITY 4

Examine Figure 6.5, entitled 'Europe encounters America'. This is a famous engraving of Europe's first 'encounter' with the New World, by the Dutch engraver Jan van der Straet. It is a sort of allegory. Examine the details closely. Then write a short paragraph describing the engraving in relation to the following two questions:

1 In what ways does the engraving capture or embody the themes of 'innocence' and 'sexuality'?

2 How are relations between 'Europe' and 'America' represented?

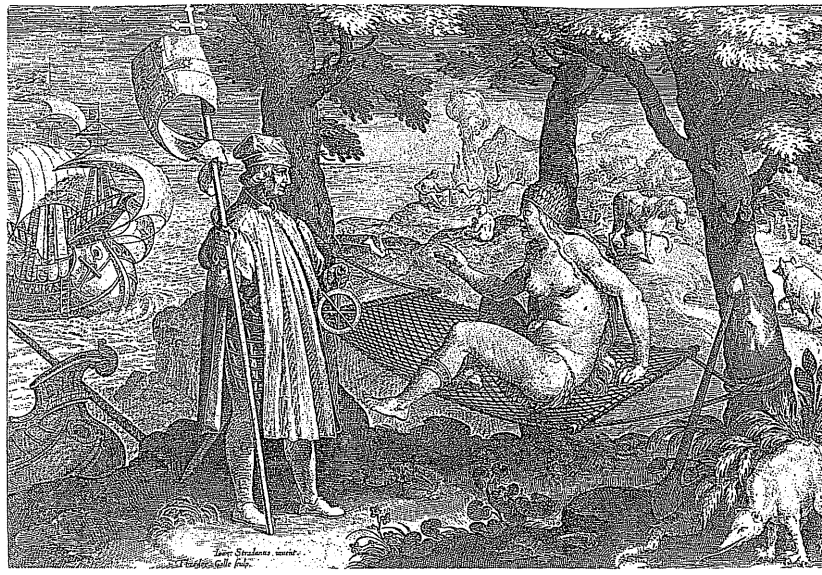

Figure 6.5 Europe encounters America (van der Straet, c. 1600)

In Figure 6.5, 'Europe' (Amerigo Vespucci) stands bold and upright, a commanding male figure, his feet firmly planted on *terra firma*. Around him are the insignia of power: the standard of Their Catholic Majesties of Spain, surmounted by a cross; in his left hand, the astrolabe that guided him, the fruit of Western knowledge; behind him, the galleons, sails billowing. Vespucci presents an image of supreme mastery. Hulme comments that, 'In line with existing European conventions, the "new" continent was often allegorized as a woman' — here, naked, in a hammock, surrounded by the emblems of an exotic landscape: strange plants and animals and, above all, a cannibal feast (see Hulme, 1986, p.xii).

4.6 MIS-RECOGNIZING DIFFERENCE

Said says that 'the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority' (Said, 1985, p.42). How was this strong marking of difference constructed?

Europeans were immediately struck by what they interpreted as the absence of government and civil society — the basis of all 'civilization' — among peoples of the New World. In fact these peoples did have several, very different, highly elaborated social structures. The New World the Europeans discovered was already home to millions of people who had lived there for centuries, whose ancestors had migrated to America from Asia across the neck of land which once connected the two continents. It is estimated that sixteen million people were living in the Western Hemisphere when the Spanish 'discovered' it. The highest

concentration was in Mexico, while only about a million lived in North America. They had very different standards and styles of life. The Pueblo of Central America were village people. Others were hunter-gatherers on the plains and in the forests. The Arawaks of the Caribbean islands had a relatively simple type of society based on subsistence farming and fishing. Further North, the Iroquois of the Carolinas were fierce, nomadic hunters.

The high civilization of the Maya, with its dazzling white cities, was based on a developed agriculture; it was stable, literate and composed of a federation of nations, with a complex hierarchy of government. The civilizations of the Aztecs (Mexico) and the Inca (Peru) were both large, complex affairs, based on maize cultivation and with a richly developed art, culture and religion. Both had a complex social structure and a centralized administrative system, and both were capable of extraordinary engineering feats. Their temples outstripped in size anything in Europe, and the Royal Road of the Incas ran for nearly 2,000 miles through mountainous terrain — further than the extent of the Roman empire from York to Jerusalem. (See Newby, 1975, pp.95–7.)

These were functioning societies. What they were *not* was 'European'. What disturbed western expectations, what had to be negotiated and explained, was their *difference.* As the centuries passed, Europeans came to know more about the specific characteristics of different 'native American' peoples. Yet, in everyday terms, they persisted in describing them *all* as 'Indians', lumping all distinctions together and suppressing differences in one, inaccurate stereotype. (See Berkhofer, 1978.)

Another illustration of the inability to deal with difference is provided by Captain Cook's early experience of Tahiti (1769). The Englishmen knew that the Tahitians held property communally and that they were therefore unlikely to possess a European concept of 'theft'. In order to win over the natives, the crew showered them with gifts. Soon, however, the Tahitians began to help themselves. At first the pilfering amused the visitors. But when the natives snatched Banks's spyglass and snuff-box, he threatened them with his musket until they were returned. Cook's crew continued to be plagued by incidents like this. A similar misunderstanding was to lead to Cook's death at the hands of the Hawaiians, in 1779.

The first actual contact with local inhabitants was often through an exchange of gifts, quickly followed by a more regular system of trade. Eventually, of course, this trade was integrated into a whole commercial system organized by Europe. Many early illustrations represent the inauguration of these unequal exchanges (see Figure 6.6).

In Theodor de Bry's famous engraving of Columbus being greeted by the Indians (Figure 6.6), Columbus stands in exactly the same heroic pose as Vespucci ('Europe') in van der Straet's engraving. On the left, the Cross is being planted. The natives (looking rather European) come, bearing gifts and offering them in a gesture of welcome. As Columbus noted in his log-book, the natives were 'marvellously friendly towards

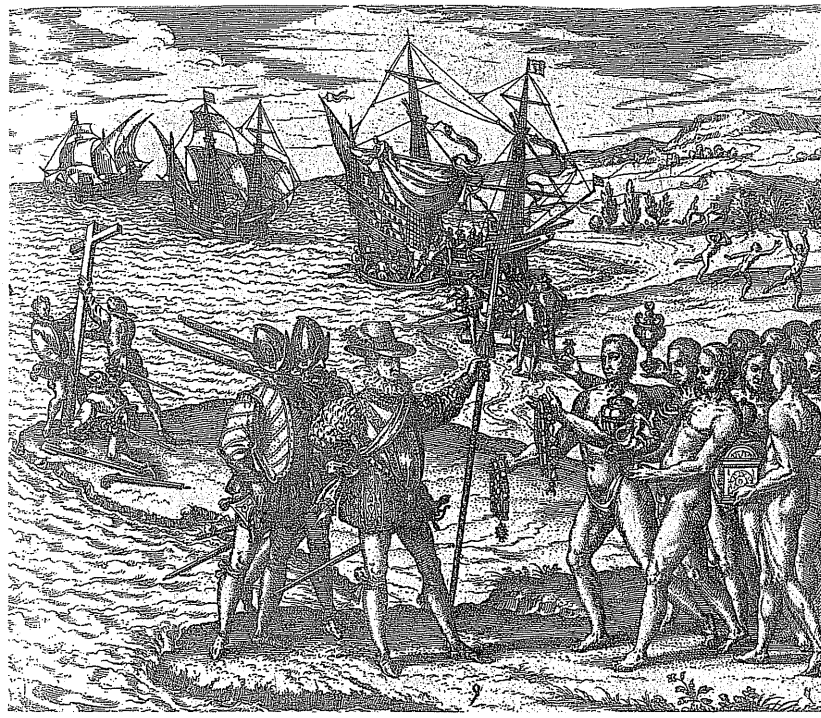

Figure 6.6 Columbus being greeted by the Indians (de Bry, 1590)

us'. 'In fact', he says, disarmingly, 'they very willingly traded everything they had' (Columbus, 1969, p.55). Subsequent illustrations showed the Indians labouring to produce gold and sugar (described by the caption as a 'gift') *for* the Spaniards.

The behaviour of the Europeans was governed by the complex understandings and norms which regulated their own systems of monetary exchange, trade and commerce. Europeans assumed that, since the natives did not have such an economic system, they therefore had no system at all and offered gifts as a friendly and suppliant gesture to visitors whose natural superiority they instantly recognized. The Europeans therefore felt free to organize the continuous supply of such 'gifts' for their own benefit. What the Europeans found difficult to comprehend was that the exchange of gifts was part of a highly complex, but different, set of social practices — the practices of reciprocity — which only had meaning within a certain cultural context. Caribbean practices were different from, though as intricate in their social meaning and effects as, the norms and practices of European exchange and commerce.

ACTIVITY 5 You should now read **Reading D, 'Reciprocity and exchange'**, by Peter Hulme, keeping the following questions in mind as you read the passage:

1 What, according to Hulme and Mauss, does the practice of *reciprocity* mean?

2 How does it differ from modern capitalist exchange, mediated by money?

Write a short paragraph summarizing this difference (250 words).

4.7 RITUALS OF DEGRADATION

The cannibal feast in the corner of the van der Straet engraving (Figure 6.5) was an intrusive detail. It points to a set of themes, evident from the first contact, which were, in fact, the reverse side — the exact opposites — of the themes of innocence, idyllic simplicity and proximity to Nature discussed earlier. It was as if everything which Europeans represented as attractive and enticing about the natives could also be used to represent the exact opposite: their barbarous and depraved character. One account of Vespucci's voyages brought these two sides together in the same passage: 'The people are thus naked ... well-formed in body, their heads, necks, arms, privy part, feet of women and men slightly covered with feathers. No one owns anything but all things are in common. ... The men have as wives those that please them, be they mothers, sisters or friends ... They also fight with each other. They also eat each other.' (Quoted in Honour, 1976, p.8).

There were disturbing reversals being executed in the discourse here. The innocent, friendly people in their hammocks could also be exceedingly unfriendly and hostile. Living close to Nature meant that they had no developed culture — and were therefore 'uncivilized'. Welcoming to visitors, they could also fiercely resist and had war-like rivalries with other tribes. (The New World was no freer of rivalry, competition, conflict, war and violence than the Old.) Beautiful nymphs and naiads — could also be 'warlike and savage'. At a moment's notice, Paradise could turn into 'barbarism'. Both versions of the discourse operated simultaneously. They may seem to negate each other, but it is more accurate to think of them as *mirror-images*. Both were exaggerations, founded on stereotypes, feeding off each other. Each required the other. They were in opposition, but systematically related: part of what Foucault calls a 'system of dispersion'.

From the beginning, *some* people described the natives of the New World as 'lacking both the power of reason and the knowledge of God'; as 'beasts in human form'. It is hard, they said, to believe God had created a race so obstinate in its viciousness and bestiality. The sexuality which fed the fantasies of some, outraged many others. The natives were more addicted, it was said, to incest, sodomy and licentiousness than any other

race. They had no sense of justice, were bestial in their customs, inimical to religion. The characteristic which condensed all this into a single image was their (alleged) consumption of human flesh.

The question of cannibalism represents a puzzle which has never been resolved. Human sacrifice — which may have included cannibalism — was associated with some religious rituals. There may have been ritual sacrifice, involving some cannibalism, of captured enemies. But careful reviews of the relevant literature now suggest that the hard evidence is much sketchier and more ambiguous than has been assumed. The extent of any cannibalism was considerably exaggerated: it was frequently attributed by one tribe to 'other people' — who were rivals or enemies; much of what is offered as having been witnessed first-hand turns out to be second- or third-hand reports; the practice had usually just ended months before the European visitors arrived. The evidence that, as a normal matter of course, outside ritual occasions, New World Indians regularly sat down to an evening meal composed of juicy limbs of their fellow humans is extremely thin. (See, for example, the extensive analysis of the anthropological literature in Arens, 1978.)

Peter Hulme (1986) offers a convincing account of how cannibalism became the prime symbol or signifier of 'barbarism', thus helping to fix certain stereotypes. Columbus reported (13 January 1493) that in Hispaniola he met a warlike group, whom he judged 'must be one of the Caribs who eat men' (Columbus, 1969, p.40). The Spanish divided the natives into two distinct groupings: the 'peaceful' Arawaks and the 'warlike' Caribs. The latter were said to invade Arawak territory, steal their wives, resist conquest and be 'cannibals'. What started as a way of describing a social group turned out to be a way of 'establishing which Amerindians were prepared to accept the Spaniards on the latter's terms, and which were hostile, that is to say prepared to defend their territory and way of life' (Hulme, 1986, p.72).

In fact, so entrenched did the idea become that the 'fierce' Caribs were eaters of human flesh, that their ethnic name (Carib) came to be used to refer to anyone thought guilty of this behaviour. As a result, we today have the word 'cannibal', which is actually derived from the name 'Carib'.

4.8 SUMMARY: STEREOTYPES, DUALISM AND 'SPLITTING'

We can now try to draw together our sketch of the formation and modes of operation of this discourse or 'system of representation' we have called 'the West and the Rest'.

Hugh Honour, who studied European images of America from the period of discovery onwards, has remarked that 'Europeans increasingly tended to see in America an idealized or distorted image of their own countries, on to which they could project their own aspirations and fears, their self-

confidence and...guilty despair' (Honour, 1976, p.3). We have identified some of these **discursive strategies** in this section. They are:

1 idealization;
2 the projection of fantasies of desire and degradation;
3 the failure to recognize and respect difference;
4 the tendency to impose European categories and norms, to see difference through the modes of perception and representation of the West.

These strategies were all underpinned by the process known as **stereotyping.** A stereotype is a one-sided description which results from the collapsing of complex differences into a simple 'cardboard cut-out'. (See *Penguin Dictionary of Sociology*: STEREOTYPES.) Different characteristics are run together or condensed into one. This exaggerated simplification is then attached to a subject or place. Its characteristics become the signs, the 'evidence', by which the subject is known. They define its being, its *essence*. Hulme noted that,

> As always, the stereotype operates principally through a judicious combination of adjectives, which establish [certain] characteristics as [if they were] eternal verities ['truths'], immune from the irrelevancies of the historical moment: [e.g.] 'ferocious', 'warlike', 'hostile', 'truculent and vindictive' — these are present as innate characteristics, irrespective of circumstances; ... [consequently, the Caribs] were locked as 'cannibals' into a realm of 'beingness' that lies beyond question. This stereotypical dualism has proved stubbornly immune to all kinds of contradictory evidence. (Hulme, 1986, pp.49–50)

By **'stereotypical dualism'** Hulme means that the stereotype is split into two opposing elements. These are two key features of the discourse of 'the Other':

1 First, several characteristics are collapsed into one simplified figure which stands for or represents the *essence* of the people; this is stereotyping.
2 Secondly, the stereotype is split into two halves — its 'good' and 'bad' sides; this is 'splitting' or *dualism*.

Far from the discourse of 'the West and the Rest' being unified and monolithic, 'splitting' is a regular feature of it. The world is first divided, symbolically, into good–bad, us–them, attractive–disgusting, civilized–uncivilized, the West–the Rest. All the other, many differences between and within these two halves are collapsed, simplified — i.e. stereotyped. By this strategy, the Rest becomes defined as everything that the West is not — its mirror image. It is represented as absolutely, essentially, different, *other*: the Other. This Other is then itself split into two 'camps': friendly–hostile, Arawak–Carib, innocent–depraved, noble–ignoble.

5 'IN THE BEGINNING ALL THE WORLD WAS AMERICA'

Writing about the use of stereotypes in the discourse of 'the Other', Sander Gilman argues that 'these systems are inherently bi-polar (i.e. polarized into two parts), generating pairs of antithetical signifiers (i.e. words with apparently opposing meanings). This is how the deep structure of the stereotype reflects the social and political ideologies of the time' (Gilman, 1985, p.27). He goes on to say:

> With the split of both the self and the world into 'good' and 'bad' objects, the 'bad' self is distanced and identified with the mental representation of the 'bad' object. This act of projection saves the self from any confrontation with the contradictions present in the necessary integration of 'bad' and 'good' aspects of the self. The deep structure of our own sense of self and the world is built upon the illusionary [*sic*] image of the world divided into two camps, 'us' and 'them'. 'They' are either 'good' or 'bad'.
> (Gilman, 1985, p.17)

The example Gilman gives is that of the 'noble' versus the 'ignoble savage'. In this section, we examine the 'career' of this stereotype. How did it function in the discourse of 'the West and the Rest'? What was its influence on the birth of modern social science?

5.1 ARE THEY 'TRUE MEN'?

The question of how the natives and nations of the New World should be treated in the evolving colonial system was directly linked to the question of what sort of people and societies they were — which in turn depended on the West's knowledge of them, on how they were represented. Where did the Indians stand in the order of the Creation? Where were their nations placed in the order of civilized societies? Were they 'true men' (*sic*)? Were they made in God's image? The point was vital because if they were 'true men' they could not be enslaved. The Greek philosophers argued that man (women rarely figured in these debates) was a special creation, endowed with the divine gift of reason; the Church taught that Man was receptive to divine grace. Did the Indians' way of life, their lack of 'civilization', mean that they were so low on the scale of humanity as to be incapable of reason and faith?

The debate raged for most of the fifteenth century. Ferdinand and Isabella issued decrees saying that 'a certain people called Cannibals' and 'any, whether called cannibals or not, who were not docile' could be enslaved. One view was that 'they probably descended from another Adam ... born after the deluge and ... perhaps have no souls' (see Honour, 1978, p.58). However, Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474–1566), the priest who made himself the champion of the Indians, protested vigorously at the brutality of the Spaniards in putting Indians to work as

forced labour. Indians, he insisted, *did* have their own laws, customs, civilization, religion, and were 'true men' whose cannibalism was much exaggerated. 'All men', Las Casas claimed, 'however barbarous and bestial ... necessarily possess the faculty of Reason ...' (quoted by Honour, 1978, p.59). The issue was formally debated before Emperor Charles X at Vallodolid in 1550.

One paradoxical outcome of Las Casas' campaign was that he got Indian slavery outlawed, but was persuaded to accept the alternative of replacing Indians with African slaves, and so the door opened to the horrendous era of New World African slavery. A debate similar to that about the Indians was held about African slavery prior to Emancipation (1834). The charter of the Royal Africa Company, which organized the English slave trade, defined slaves as 'commodities'. As slavery expanded, a series of codes was constructed for the Spanish, French and English colonies governing the status and conduct of slaves. These codes defined the slave as a *chattel* — literally, 'a thing', not a person. This was a problem for some churches. But in the British colonies the Church of England, which was identified with the planters, accommodated itself to this definition without too much difficulty, and made little effort to convert slaves until the eighteenth century. Later, however, the Dissenters in the anti-slavery movement advocated abolition precisely because every slave *was* 'a man and brother' (see Hall, 1991).

5.2 'NOBLE' VS 'IGNOBLE SAVAGES'

Another variant of the same argument can be found in the debate about the 'noble' versus the 'ignoble savage'. The English poet John Dryden provides one of the famous images of the 'noble savage':

> I am as free as Nature first made man,
> E're the base Laws of Servitude began,
> When wild in woods the noble Savage ran.
> (*The Conquest of Granada*, I.I.i.207–9)

Earlier, the French philosopher Montaigne, in his essay *Des Cannibales* (1580), had placed his noble savage in America. The idea quickly took hold on the European imagination. The famous painting of 'The Different Nations of America' by Le Brun in Louis XIV's (1638–1715) Versailles Palace was dominated by a 'heroic' representation of an American Indian — grave, tall, proud, independent, statuesque, and naked (see Honour, 1978, p.118). Paintings and engravings of American Indians dressed like ancient Greeks or Romans became popular. Many paintings of Cook's death portrayed both Cook and the natives who killed him in 'heroic' mould. As Beaglehole explains, the Pacific voyages gave new life and impetus to the idealization of the 'noble savage', who 'entered the study and drawing room of Europe in naked majesty, to shake the preconceptions of morals and politics' (in Moorhead, 1987, p.62). Idealized 'savages' spoke on stage in ringing

tones and exalted verse. The eponymous hero in Aphra Behn's novel *Oroonoko* (1688), was one of the few 'noble' Africans (as opposed to American Indians) in seventeenth century literature, and was fortunate enough to have 'long hair, a Roman nose and shapely mouth'.

'Heroic savages' have peopled adventure stories, Westerns, and other Hollywood and television films ever since, generating an unending series of images of 'the Noble Other'.

The 'noble savage' also acquired sociological status. In 1749, the French philosopher Rousseau produced an account of his ideal form of society: simple, unsophisticated man living in a state of Nature, unfettered by laws, government, property or social divisions. 'The savages of North America', he later said in *The Social Contract,* 'still retain today this method of government, and they are very well governed' (Rousseau, 1968, p.114). Tahiti was the perfect fulfilment of this preconceived idea — 'one of those unseen stars which eventually came to light after the astronomers have proved that it must exist' (Moorhead, 1987, p.62).

The French Pacific explorer Bougainville (1729–1811) had been captivated by the way of life on Tahiti. Diderot, the philosopher and editor of the *Encyclopédie* (see Chapter 1), wrote a famous *Supplement* about Bougainville's voyage, warning Tahitians against the West's intrusion into their innocent happiness. 'One day', he prophesied correctly, 'they [Europeans] will come, with crucifix in one hand and the dagger in the other to cut your throats or to force you to accept their customs and opinions' (quoted in Moorhead, 1987). Thus the 'noble savage' became the vehicle for a wide-ranging critique of the over-refinement, religious hypocrisy and divisions by social rank that existed in the West.

This was only one side of the story. For, at the same time, the opposite image — that of the 'ignoble savage' — was becoming the vehicle for a profound reflection in European intellectual circles on the nature of social development. Eighteenth century wits, like Horace Walpole, Edmund Burke and Dr Johnson, poured scorn on the idea of the noble savage. Ronald Meek has remarked that contemporary notions of savagery influenced eighteenth century social science by generating a critique of society through the idea of the *noble* savage; 'It is not quite so well known ... that they also stimulated the emergence of a new theory of the development of society through the idea of the *ignoble* savage.' (Meek, 1976, p.2.)

The questions which concerned the social philosophers were: What had led the West to its high point of refinement and civilization? Did the West evolve from the same simple beginnings as 'savage society' or were there different paths to 'civilization'?

Many of the precursors and leading figures of the Enlightenment participated in this debate. Thomas Hobbes, the political philosopher, argued in *Leviathan* (1651) that it was because of their lack of 'industry ... and consequently no culture of the earth, no navigation, nor use of

commodities' that 'the savage people in many places of America ... live at this day in [their] brutish manner' (Hobbes, 1946, pp.82–3). The English satirist Bernard Mandeville, in his *Fable of the Bees* (1723), identified a series of 'steps' or stages in which economic factors like the division of labour, money and the invention of tools played the major part in the progress from 'savagery' to 'civilization'. The philosopher John Locke claimed that the New World provided a prism through which one could see 'a pattern of the first ages in Asia and Europe' — the origins from which Europe had developed. 'In the beginning', Locke said, 'all the World was America' (Locke, 1976, p.26). He meant by this that the world (i.e. the West) had evolved from a stage very much like that discovered in America — untilled, undeveloped and uncivilized. America was the 'childhood of mankind', Locke claimed, and Indians, should be classed with 'children, idiots and illiterates because of their inability to reason in abstract, speculative ... terms' (quoted in Marshall and Williams, 1982, p.192).

5.3 THE HISTORY OF 'RUDE' AND 'REFINED' NATIONS

The 'noble–ignoble' and the 'rude–refined' oppositions belonged to the same discursive formation. This 'West and the Rest' discourse greatly influenced Enlightenment thinking. It provided the framework of images in which Enlightenment social philosophy matured. Enlightenment thinkers believed that there was *one* path to civilization and social development, and that all societies could be ranked or placed early or late, lower or higher, on the same scale. The emerging 'science of society' was the study of the forces which had propelled all societies, by stages, along this single path of development, leaving some, regrettably, at its 'lowest' stage — represented by the American savage — while others advanced to the summit of civilized development — represented by the West.

This idea of a universal criterion of progress modelled on the West became a feature of the new 'social science' to which the Enlightenment gave birth. For example, when Edmund Burke wrote to the Scottish Enlightenment historian William Robertson on the publication of his *History of America* (1777), he said that 'the great map of Mankind is unrolled at once, and there is no state or gradation of barbarism, and no mode of refinement which we have not at the same moment under our view; the very different civility of Europe and China; the barbarism of Persia and of Abyssinia; the erratic manners of Tartary and of Arabia; the savage state of North America and of New Zealand' (quoted by Meek, 1976, p.173). Enlightenment social science reproduced within its own conceptual framework many of the preconceptions and stereotypes of the discourse of 'the West and the Rest'.

The examples are too voluminous to refer to in detail. Meek argues that, 'No one who reads the work of the French and Scottish pioneers [of social science] of the 1750s can fail to notice that all of them, without exception, were very familiar with the contemporary studies of the

Americans; that most of them had evidently pondered deeply about their significance and that some were almost obsessed by them. ... The studies of Americans provided the new social scientists with a plausible working hypothesis about the basic characteristics of the 'first' or 'earliest' stage of socio-economic development.' (Meek, 1976, p.128.) Many of the leading names of the French Enlightenment — Diderot, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Turgot, Rousseau — used the studies of early American Indians in this way.

This is also the case with the Scottish Enlightenment. In Adam Smith's *Theory of the Moral Sentiments* (1759), American Indians are used as the pivot for elaborate contrasts between 'civilized nations' and 'savages and barbarians'. They are also pivotal in Henry Kames's *Sketches of the History of Man* (1774), John Millar's *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1771), and Adam Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767).

The contribution which this debate about 'rude–refined nations' made to social science was not simply descriptive. It formed part of a larger theoretical framework, about which the following should be noted:

1 It represented a decisive movement away from mythological, religious and other 'causes' of social evolution to what are clearly recognizable as material causes — sociological, economic, environmental, etc.

2 It produced the idea that the history of 'mankind' (*sic*) occurred along a single continuum, divided into a series of stages.

3 Writers differed over precisely *which* material or sociological factors they believed played the key role in propelling societies through these stages. But one factor assumed increasing importance — the 'mode of subsistence':

> In its most specific form, the theory was that society had 'naturally' or 'normally' progressed over time through four more or less distinct and consecutive stages, each corresponding to a different mode of subsistence, these stages being defined as hunting, pasturage, agriculture and commerce. To each of these modes of subsistence ... there corresponded different sets of ideas and institutions relating to law, property, and government and also different sets of customs, manners and morals. (Meek, 1976, p.2)

Here, then, is a surprising twist. The Enlightenment aspired to being a 'science of man'. It was the matrix of modern social science. It provided the language in which 'modernity' first came to be defined. In Enlightenment discourse, the West was the model, the prototype and the measure of social progress. It was *western* progress, civilization, rationality and development that were celebrated. And yet, all this depended on the discursive figures of the 'noble vs ignoble savage', and of 'rude and refined nations' which had been formulated in the

discourse of 'the West and the Rest'. So the Rest was critical for the formation of western Enlightenment — and therefore for modern social science. Without the Rest (or its own internal 'others'), the West would not have been able to recognize and represent itself as the summit of human history. The figure of 'the Other', banished to the edge of the conceptual world and constructed as the absolute opposite, the negation, of everything which the West stood for, reappeared at the very centre of the discourse of civilization, refinement, modernity and development in the West. 'The Other' was the 'dark' side — forgotten, repressed and denied; the reverse image of enlightenment and modernity.

6 FROM 'THE WEST AND THE REST' TO MODERN SOCIOLOGY

In response to this argument, you may find yourself saying — 'Yes, perhaps the early stages of the "science of man" *were* influenced by the discourse of "the West and the Rest". But all that was a long time ago. Since then, social science has become more empirical, more "scientific". Sociology today is, surely, free of such "loaded images"?' But this is not necessarily the case. Discourses don't stop abruptly. They go on unfolding, changing shape, as they make sense of new circumstances. They often carry many of the same unconscious premises and unexamined assumptions in their blood-stream.

For example, some of you may have recognized in the Enlightenment concept of 'modes of subsistence' the outline of an idea which Karl Marx (1818–83), a 'founding father' of modern sociology, was subsequently to develop into one of the most powerful sociological tools: his theory that society is propelled forward by the class struggle; that it progresses through a series of stages marked by different modes of production, the critical one for capitalism being the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Of course, there is considerable divergance between the Enlightenment's 'four stages of subsistence' and Marx's 'modes of production'. But there are also some surprising similarities. In his *Grundrisse*, Marx speaks in broad outlines of the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and capitalist or bourgeois modes of production. He argues that each is dominated by a particular social class which expropriates the economic surplus through a specific set of social relations. The Asiatic mode (which is only sketchily developed), is that to which, in Marx's view, countries such as China, India and those of Islam belong. It is characterized by: (a) stagnation, (b) an absence of dynamic class struggle, and (c) the dominance of a swollen state acting as a sort of universal landlord. The conditions for capitalist development are here absent. Marx hated the capitalist system; nevertheless, he saw it, in contrast with the Asiatic mode, as progressive and dynamic, sweeping old structures aside, driving social development forward.

There are some interesting parallels here with Max Weber (1864–1920), another of sociology's founding fathers. Weber used a very dualistic model which contrasted Islam with Western Europe in terms of modern social development. For Weber, the essential conditions for the transition to capitalism and modernity are: (a) ascetic forms of religion, (b) rational forms of law, (c) free labour, and (d) the growth of cities (see Chapter 5 above). All these, in his view, were missing from Islam, which he represented as a 'mosaic' of tribes and groups, never cohering into a proper social system, but existing under a despotic rule which absorbed social conflicts in an endlessly repeating cycle of factional struggles, with Islam as its monolithic religion. Power and privilege, Weber believed, had been kept within, and rotated between, the ruling Islamic families, who merely syphoned off the wealth through taxation. He called this a 'patrimonial' or 'prebendary' form of authority. Unlike feudalism, it did not provide the preconditions for capitalist accumulation and growth.

These are, of course, some of the most complex and sophisticated models in sociology. The question of the causes and preconditions for the development of capitalism in the West have preoccupied historians and social scientists for centuries.

However, it has been argued by some social scientists that *both* Marx's notion of 'Asiatic' mode of production and Weber's 'patrimonial' form of domination contain traces of, or have been deeply penetrated by, 'Orientalist' assumptions. Or, to put it in our terms, both models provide evidence that the discourse of 'the West and the Rest' is still at work in some of the conceptual categories, the stark oppositions and the theoretical dualisms of modern sociology.

In his studies of *Weber and Islam* (1974) and *Marx and the End of Orientalism* (1978), Bryan Turner has argued that both sociology and Marxism have been unduly influenced by 'Orientalist' categories, or, if you lift the argument out of its Middle Eastern and Asian context, by the discourse of 'the West and the Rest':

> This can be seen...in Weber's arguments about the decline of Islam, its despotic political structure and the absence of autonomous cities. ... Weber employs a basic dichotomy between the feudal economies of the West and the prebendal/patrimonial political economies of the East....[He] overlays this discussion...with two additional components which have become the staples of the *internalist* version of development — the 'Islamic ethic' and the absence of an entrepreneurial urban bourgeoisie.
> (Turner, 1978, pp.7, 45–6)

Marx's explanation of the lack of capitalist development in the East is very different from Weber's. But his notion that this was due to the 'Asiatic mode of production' takes a similar path. Turner summarizes Marx's argument thus:

> Societies dominated by the 'Asiatic' mode of production have no internal class conflicts and are consequently trapped within a static social context. The social system lacks a basic ingredient of social change, namely class struggle between landlords and an exploited peasantry ... [For example] 'Indian society has no history at all.' (Turner, 1978, pp.26–7)

ACTIVITY 6

Before reading on, look over the above quotations from Turner and answer the following questions:

1 What are the main differences between Weber's and Marx's arguments, as Turner summarizes them?
2 What are the main similarities?
3 Why does Turner call Weber's explanation 'internalist'?
4 Is Marx's 'Asiatic mode' an 'internalist' explanation too?

Despite their differences, both Weber and Marx organize their arguments in terms of broad, simple, contrasting oppositions which mirror quite closely the West–Rest, civilized–rude, developed–backward oppositions of 'the West and the Rest' discourse. Weber's is an 'internalist' type of explanation because 'he treats the main problems of "backward societies" as a question of certain characteristics *internal* to societies, considered in isolation from any international societal context' (Turner, 1978, p.10). Marx's explanation also looks like an 'internalist' one. But he adds certain 'externalist' features. By 'externalist' we mean 'relating to a theory of development which identifies the main problems facing "developing" societies as external to the society itself, which is treated as a unit located within a structured international context.' (See Turner, 1978, p.11.) In this chapter, we have adopted an 'externalist' or 'global' rather than a purely 'internalist' account of the rise of the idea of the West.

However these additional features of Marx's argument lead his explanation in a very surprising direction. 'Asiatic'-type societies, he argues, cannot develop into modern ones because they lack certain pre-conditions. Therefore, 'only the introduction of dynamic elements of western capitalism' can trigger development. This makes 'capitalist colonialism' a (regrettable) historical necessity for these societies, since it alone can 'destroy the pre-capitalist modes which prevent them from entering a progressive historical path'. Capitalism, Marx argues, must expand to survive, drawing the whole world progressively into its net; and it is this expansion which 'revolutionizes and undermines pre-capitalist modes of production at the periphery of the capitalist world'. (Turner, 1978, p.11.) Many classical marxists have indeed argued that, however stunting and destructive it may have been, the expansion of western capitalism through conquest and colonization was historically inevitable and would have long-term progressive outcomes for 'the Rest'.

Earlier, we discussed some of the forces which pushed a developing western Europe to expand outwards into 'new worlds'. But whether this was inevitable, whether its effects have been socially progressive, and whether this was the only possible path to 'modernity' are subjects increasingly debated in the social sciences today (as is discussed in Book 4 (Hall *et al.*, 1992)). In many parts of the world, the expansion of western colonization has *not* destroyed the pre-capitalist barriers to development. It has conserved and reinforced them. Colonization and imperialism have *not* promoted economic and social development in these societies, most of which remain profoundly under-developed. Where development has taken place, it has often been of the 'dependent' variety.

The destruction of alternative ways of life has *not* ushered in a new social order in these societies. Many remain in the grip of feudal ruling families, religious elites, military cliques and dictators who govern societies beset by endemic poverty. The destruction of indigenous cultural life by western culture is, for most of them, a very mixed blessing. And as the human, cultural and ecological consequences of this form of 'western development' become more obvious, the question of whether there is only one path to modernity is being debated with increasing urgency. The historically inevitable and necessarily progressive character of the West's expansion into the Rest is no longer as obvious as perhaps it once seemed to western scholars.

We must leave these issues as open questions at this stage. However, this is a useful point to summarize the main thrust of the argument of this chapter.

7 CONCLUSION

In the early chapters of this book, we looked at how the distinctive form of society which we call 'modern' emerged, and the major processes which led to its formation. We also looked at the emergence of the distinctive form of knowledge which accompanied that society's formation — at what the Enlightenment called the 'sciences of man', which provided the framework within which modern social science and the idea of 'modernity' were formulated. On the whole, the emphasis in those chapters was 'internalist'. Though the treatment was comparative — acknowledging differences between different societies, histories and tempos of development — the story was largely framed from within western Europe (the West) where these processes of formation first emerged.

This chapter reminds us that this formation was also a 'global' process. It had crucial 'externalist' features — aspects which could not be explained without taking into account the rest of the world, where these processes were not at work and where these kinds of society did not

emerge. This is a huge topic in its own right and we could tell only a small part of the story here. We could have focussed on the economic, political and social consequences of the global expansion of the West; instead, we briefly sketched the outline history of that expansion, up to roughly the eighteenth century. We also wanted to show the *cultural* and *ideological* dimensions of the West's expansion. For if the Rest was necessary for the political, economic and social formation of the West, it was also essential to the West's formation both of its own sense of itself — a 'western identity' — and of western forms of knowledge.

This is where the notion of 'discourse' came in. A discourse is a way of talking about or representing something. It produces knowledge that shapes perceptions and practice. It is part of the way in which power operates. Therefore, it has consequences for both those who employ it and those who are 'subjected' to it. The West produced many different ways of talking about itself and 'the Others'. But what we have called the discourse of 'the West and the Rest' became one of the most powerful and formative of these discourses. It became the dominant way in which, for many decades, the West represented itself and its relation to 'the Other'. In this chapter, we have traced how this discourse was formed and how it worked. We analysed it as a 'system of representation' — a 'regime of truth'. It was as formative for the West and 'modern societies' as the secular state, capitalist economies, the modern class, race and gender systems, and modern, individualist, secular culture — the four main 'processes' of our formation story.

Finally, we suggest that, in transformed and reworked forms, this discourse continues to inflect the language of the West, its image of itself and 'others', its sense of 'us' and 'them', its practices and relations of power towards the Rest. It is especially important for the languages of racial inferiority and ethnic superiority which still operate so powerfully across the globe today. So, far from being a 'formation' of the past, and of only historical interest, the discourse of 'the West and the Rest' is alive and well in the modern world. And one of the surprising places where its effects can still be seen is in the language, theoretical models and hidden assumptions of modern sociology itself.

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READING A EXPLAINING EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT

Michael Mann

The conventional wisdom of our age ... purports to give us a clear answer [about European development] in terms of neoclassical economics. Land, capital and labour interact as factors of production on competitive markets across given ecologies. As Jones (1981) argues, part of 'the European miracle' when compared to Asia resides in its ecological contrasts. This produces a 'dispersed portfolio of resources' whereby bulk ... goods — such as grains, meat, fruit, olives, wine, salt, metals, wood, animal skins and furs — were exchanged right across the continent. The high proportion of coastlines and navigable rivers kept transport costs low. Then, Jones continues, consequences flow from economic rationality: states had no interest in pillaging ['looting'] bulk subsistence goods traded as commodities, only in taxing them; in return, states would provide basic social order. Europe avoided the state 'plunder machine', hence economic development. As a neoclassical economist who believes that markets are 'natural', Jones paraphrases his mentor, Adam Smith — if you have peace, easy taxes and a tolerable administration of justice, then the rest is brought about by 'the natural course of things' (Jones, 1981, pp.90-6, 232-7).

But such a model has essential preconditions whose emergence we must explain. Why is 'Europe' to be regarded as a continent in the first place? This is not an ecological but a social fact. It had not been a continent hitherto: it was now created by the fusion of the Germanic barbarians and the north-western parts of the Roman Empire, and the blocking presence of Islam to the south and east. Its continental identity was primarily Christian, for its name was Christendom more often than it was Europe.

Europe was undoubtedly a place where competition flourished, but why? It is not 'natural'. ... In fact, competition presupposes two further forms of social organization. First, autonomous actors must be empowered to dispose of privately owned resources without hindrance from anyone else. These actors need not be individuals, or even individual households, enjoying what in capitalist societies we call 'private property'. ... But collective institutions also qualify, as long as they have a responsible authority structure empowered to dispose of its resources for economic advantage, without interference from others, or from custom — then the laws of neoclassical economics can begin to operate. ...

Second, competition among actors on a market [basis] requires normative regulation. They must trust one another to honour their word. They must also trust each other's essential rationality. These normative understandings must apply not only in direct interaction but right across complex, continental chains of production, distribution and exchange. ...

Source: Mann, M. (1988) 'European development: approaching a historical explanation', in Baechler, J. *et al.* (eds) *Europe and the Rise of Capitalism*, Oxford, Blackwells, pp.10–15.

European social structure supplied these requirements. The social structure which stabilized in Europe after the ending of the barbarian migrations and invasions (that is, by AD 1000) was a multiple acephalous federation. Europe had no head, no centre, yet it was an entity composed of a number of small, cross-cutting interaction networks. These, based on economic, military and ideological power, each differed in their geographical and social space and none was itself unitary in nature. Consequently no single power agency controlled a clear-cut territory or the people within it. As a result most social relationships were extremely localized, intensely focused upon one or more of a number of cell-like communities — the monastery, the village, the manor, the castle, the town, the guild, the brotherhood and so on. These collectivities has a power autonomy guaranteed by law or custom, an exclusivity of control over 'their' resources. They qualify, therefore, as 'private' property owners.

In agriculture the two main actors were the village community and the manor. Thus monopolistic power organizations rarely existed in the local economy. Formidable as were the powers of the lord, they were usually restrained by the fact that even the serf could find support from the village community and from customary law. The two power networks were also interpenetrating — peasant and lord were partly independent of one another, partly implicated in each other's organization, as the distribution of their strips of land reveals. Interpenetration was most pronounced along the old Roman frontier provinces where the German free village and the Roman estate mixed — in England, the Low Countries, northern and central France, West Germany, and eastern and northern England. But a similar balance between organized collectivities existed in the political, military and religious realms. No one ruled Europe.

Whatever this extraordinary multiple, acephalous federation would achieve, it was unlikely to be organized stagnation. Historians over and over again use the word *restless* to characterize the essence of medieval culture. As McNeill puts it, 'it is not any particular set of institutions, ideas or technologies that mark out the West but its inability to come to a rest. No other civilized society has ever approached such restless instability. ... In this ... lies the true uniqueness of Western civilization' (McNeill, 1963, p.539). But such a spirit need not induce social development. Might it not induce other forms of stagnation: anarchy, the Hobbesian war of all against all, or *anomie* where the absence of social control and direction leads to aimlessness and despair? We can marry the insights of two great sociologists to guess why social development, not anarchy or *anomie*, may have resulted.

First Max Weber, who in noting the peculiar restlessness of Europe, always added another word: *rational*. 'Rational restlessness' was the psychological make-up of Europe, the opposite of what he found in the main religions of Asia ... . Weber located rational restlessness especially in Puritanism. But Puritanism emphasized strands of the Christian psyche which had been traditionally present. ... Christianity encouraged a drive for moral and social improvement even against worldly authority. Though much of medieval Christianity was piously masking brutal repression, its currents

of dissatisfaction always ran strong. We can read an enormous literature of social criticism, visionary, moralistic, satirical, cynical. Some is laboured and repetitious, but its peak includes some of the greatest works of the age — in English: Langland and Chaucer. It is pervaded by the kind of psychological quality identified by Weber.

But to put this rational restlessness in the service of social improvement probably also required a mechanism identified by another sociologist: Emile Durkheim. Not anarchy or *anomie* but normative regulation was provided at first primarily by Christendom. Political and class struggles, economic life and even wars were, to a degree, regulated by an unseen hand, not Adam Smith's but Jesus Christ's. ... The community depended on the general recognition of norms regarding property rights and free exchange. These were guaranteed by a mixture of local customs and privileges, some judicial regulation by weak states, but above all by the common social identity provided by Christendom.

Let us try a little hypothetical reconstruction of the case of England. If we were able to travel back to England around 1150, armed with questionnaires, tape-recorders and the necessary linguistic skills, to ask a sample of the population with all due circumspection to what social group they belonged, we would get rather complex answers. The majority would not be able to give one sole identity. The lords, whom we would interview in Norman French (though we could try Latin), might indicate that they were gentlefolk — Christians, of course; they might elaborate a genealogy indicating also that they were of Norman descent but linked closely to the Angevin king of England and to the English baronage. They would think that, on balance, their interests lay with the lords of the kingdom of England (perhaps including its French possessions, perhaps not) rather than with, say, the lords of the kingdom of France. I am not sure where they would place 'the people' — Christians, but barbarous, unlettered rustics — in their normative map. The merchants, whom we would interview in a diversity of languages, might say that they were English or citizens of towns from the Baltic coast to Lombardy; if they were English they would probably show more anti-foreigner 'nationalism' than anyone else, out of sectional interest; they would naturally say that they were Christians; and their interest lay in a combination of guild autonomy and alliance with the English crown. The higher clergy, whom we would interview in Latin, would say Christians first and foremost. But we would then usually find both a clear, kin-based, class solidarity with the lords, and an overlapping identity with some lords and merchants, but definitely excluding the people, centred on the possession of literacy. The parish priest, with whom we could try Latin — or failing that, Middle English — might say Christian and English. ... The peasants, the vast majority of our sample, we would interview in the various Middle English dialects and amalgams of Saxon, Danish, Celtic and Norman French (of which we only have the vaguest outlines). They were *illiterati* ['illiterates'], an abusive term denoting exclusion, not membership of a community. They would say Christian, and then they might say English, or they might say they were Essex or Northumbrian or Cornish folk. Their allegiances were

mixed: to their local lord (temporal or spiritual), to their local village or other kin network and (if they were freemen) to their king.

The main conclusion is unmistakable. The most powerful and extensive sense of social identity was Christian, though this was both a unifying transcendent identity and an identity divided by the overlapping barriers of class and literacy. Cross-cutting all these were commitments to England, but these were variable and, in any case, included less extensive dynastic connections and obligations. Thus, Christian identity provided both a common humanity and a framework for common divisions among Europeans. ...

I use the term 'transcendence' for this identity quite deliberately, for I wish to suggest that it was capable of conquering geographical distance. Apart from trading activities, the most frequent type of movement around Europe was probably religious in nature. Clerics travelled greatly, but so too did lay people on pilgrimage. Pilgrimage has been called 'the therapy of distance'. ... But Europe was [also] integrated by the scattering [of holy relics], the constant journeying and the carefully cultivated, culminating experience of *praesentia*, the supposed physical presence of Christ or saint at the shrine (Brown, 1981). At the ethical level, the church also preached consideration, decency and charity towards all Christians: basic normative pacification, a substitute for costly coercive pacification normally required in extensive societies. The main sanction the church could provide was not physical force, but exclusion from the community, in the last resort, excommunication. ...

If we wished to eye this community more materialistically or cynically, then we would add two qualifications. First, the *ecumene* was infrastructure as well as superstructure. Until the thirteenth century it monopolized education and written communication and provided the *lingua franca:* Latin. Thus state bureaucracies, manorial estates and trading associations had access to generally useful knowledge through Church infrastructures. The network of churches, abbeys, monasteries and shrines also provided the major staging-posts of extensive communication and many of the most technologically advanced agrarian economies. Second, the church also led the nastier side of medieval society. The darker side of normative pacification was the savage treatment meted out to those outside the *ecumene*, to schismatics, heretics, Jews, Muhammadans or pagans. Indeed, let us not look at this religious community in modern, pious terms at all. It was also bawdy folklore, satirizing the common religion, carried by travelling players and mendicants whose plays and sermons would strike modern church congregations as blasphemous, as in parodies of all the major religious rituals. Preachers drawing audiences of thousands were conscious of their tricks-of-the-trade. ... But in all of this — ritual, ethics, technology, barbarity and the grotesque — the common culture *was* Christianity. ...

The Christian achievement was the creation of a minimal normative society across state, ethnic, class and gender boundaries. It did not in any significant sense include the Eastern Byzantine Church. It did, however,

integrate the two major geographical areas of 'Europe', the Mediterranean lands with their cultural heritage, their historic and predominantly *extensive* power techniques — literacy, coinage, agricultural estates and trading networks — and north-western Europe with its more *intensive* power techniques — deep ploughing, village and kin solidarities and locally organized warfare. If the two could be kept in a single community, then European development was a possible consequence of their creative interchange.

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READING B THE IDEA OF 'EUROPE'

John Roberts

Europeans ... now [took] a new view of themselves and their relation to the other peoples of the globe. Maps are the best clue to this change ... . They are always more than mere factual statements. They are translations of reality into forms we can master; they are fictions and acts of imagination communicating more than scientific data. So they reflect changes in our pictures of reality. The world is not only what exists 'out there'; it is also the picture we have of it in our minds which enables us to take a grip on material actuality. In taking that grip, our apprehension of that actuality changes — and so does a wide range of our assumptions and beliefs.

One crucial mental change was the final emergence of the notion of Europe from the idea of Christendom. Maps show the difference between the two. After the age of discovery, Jerusalem, where the founder of Christianity had taught and died, could no longer be treated as the centre of the world — where it appeared on many medieval maps. Soon it was Europe which stood at the centre of Europeans' maps. The final key to a new mental picture was provided by the discovery of the Americas. Somewhere about 1500 European map-makers had established the broad layout of the world map with which we are familiar. In the fifteenth century, Europe had usually been placed in the top left-hand corner of attempts to lay out the known world, with the large masses of Asia and Africa sprawled across the rest of the surface. The natural centre of such maps might be in any of several places. Then the American discoveries slowly began to effect a shift in the conventional arrangement; more and more

Source: Roberts, J.M. (1985) *The Triumph of the West,* London, British Broadcasting Corporation, pp.194–202.

space had to be given to the land masses of North and South America as their true extent became better known. Juan de la Cosa, who had sailed with Columbus on his second voyage, was the first man to incorporate knowledge of his discoveries (as well as those of John Cabot's voyage of 1497) in a world map he made in 1500 which already shows the shift of Europe towards a world-central position. ...

By the middle of the century the new geographical view of the world had come to be taken for granted. It was given its canonical expression in the work of Mercator ... . Mercator's new 'projection', first used in a map in 1568, ... drove home the idea that the land surface of the globe was naturally grouped about a European centre. So Europe came to stand in some men's minds at the centre of the world. No doubt this led Europeans for centuries to absorb unconsciously from their atlases the idea that this was somehow the natural order of things. It did not often occur to them that you could have centred Mercator's projection in, say, China, or even Hawaii, and that Europeans might then have felt very different. The idea still hangs about, even today. Most people like to think of themselves at the centre of things. ... Mercator helped his own civilisation to take what is now called a 'Eurocentric' view of the world. ...

The ultimate origins of a change in men's minds, though, lie deeper than maps. They can be traced at least to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Hay, 1957, p.58). Even then, to a few people, the European continent was beginning to be clearly identifiable as an area to all intents and purposes identical with Christendom, and so (though no one had the concept to hand) the seat of a distinctive civilisation. ... Meanwhile Christianity had been extended to every corner of Europe. The Christian churches of Asia, though, had been the victims of Muslim response to the crusaders' brutality, and then of the rise of the Ottoman Turks and the destruction of the Byzantine empire. Non-European Christianity had therefore never looked less impressive than at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and that gave even more importance to its Catholic and west European form. Finally, Europe's economic life, growing richer in these centuries, was giving the continent a new sort of homogeneity.

All these facts meant that fifteenth-century Europe was a unity in quite a new way. Some churchmen, statesmen and polemicists began to work out and make suggestions about the implications of this. They were not always fully aware of what they were doing. But 'Europe' slowly became inter-changeable with the concept 'Christendom', and 'European' with 'Christian'. In common parlance, Christendom no longer extended to the Christians under Ottoman rule, who were not regarded as Europeans. Maps, which had begun in the fourteenth century to distinguish symbolically between political authorities in different places, began in the next [century] to mark off a Christendom confined to Europe, from the area dominated by Islam.

With a growing self-consciousness went a growing sense of superiority. New knowledge of other continents seemed to bear this out, and ancient conceptions began to stir and to be given new applications. The old anti-

thesis of civilised and barbarian rooted in Greek origin had never quite disappeared. ... An Englishman, Purchas, writing in 1625, gave a remarkable expression to a new European confidence:

> Europe is taught the way to scale heaven not by mathematical principles, but by divine verity. Jesus Christ is their way, their truth, their life; who hath long been given a bill of divorce to ungrateful Asia, where He was born, and Africa, the place of his flight and refuge, and is become almost wholly and only European. For little do we find of this name in Asia, less in Africa, and nothing at all in America, but later European gleanings.
> (Purchas, 1905–7, p.251)

The sense of identity, of a special nature, derived from religion, was by then no longer new. It was reflected in the transition from the idea of Christendom to that of Europe. What is new in such a statement is the confidence it shows at a moral and mythical level, and its attachment to place and people, to Europe and Europeans. It shows Europeans who are beginning to feel they have little to learn from the rest of the world. ...

The cultivated European's view of universal history at about the same time might be found in the work of a French clergyman, Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, bishop of Meaux, ... [and] tutor to the king's son, the dauphin, [from] 1670. ... During that time, one of he books he wrote for his pupil's instruction was a *Discourse on Universal History* (Bossuet, 1691). ... [Yet] not the least interesting feature of [this] book is the fact that the history of most of the world finds no place in it.

It is focused on the tradition which Europe inherits — the tradition which leads to Bossuet and his master, Louis XIV — the Judaeo-Roman tradition. We learn from Bossuet much of the kings of Israel and the great days of Rome, something, even, of Assyria, Persia and Egypt, whose histories impinge on those of the Jews and Greeks, but nothing, for instance, of China, whose empire was already nearly two thousand years old when he wrote. Yet Bossuet was the dauphin's tutor when Louis XIV solemnly received the first ambassadors to Europe from Siam, a tributary state of the Chinese empire. He must have known of the avidly studied Jesuit missionaries' reports from the Chinese imperial court and may, perhaps, have heard of the concessions in behaviour and dress which some of those Jesuits were making to a civilisation they had learned to admire. Why does he show so little concern for its role in the story of mankind, then? The reasons must be a reflection of the emotional and logical self-sufficiency already achieved by European culture. The essential meaning of history, for Bossuet and his contemporaries, was to be found in the Christian story, which culminated in the Europe of his day and perhaps even in a Catholic monarch who saw himself as the 'Sun King' — *le roi soleil*. Only a little while before this had men learned that they lived in a heliocentric universe, that the planets revolved about the sun, which now stood at the centre of the celestial map in as unquestioned way as Europe stood at the centre of Mercator's. Now a king, the most powerful in Europe, could accept the theory as an image of his own position.

Nowadays, people have come to use a specially minted word to summarise this state of mind — 'Eurocentrism'. It means 'putting Europe at the centre of things' and its usual implication is that to do so is wrong. But, of course, if we are merely talking about facts, about what happened, and not about value we place on them, then it is quite correct to put Europe at the centre of the story in modern times. From the age of discovery onwards, Europe, and those countries which are descended from the European stocks, have been the mainspring of history, and to that extent (and no further) Purchas, Bossuet and others were sensing the truth. It was from Europe that the discoverers, *conquistadores*, settlers and traders had gone *out*: they created a world of which Europe was the centre, the Americas and Asia the periphery. Eurocentrism, nevertheless, at an early date went revealingly beyond the mere facts of power and influence (which, in any case, were only just beginning to show themselves). What Purchas and the rest felt was a qualitative superiority.

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READING C 'ORIENTALISM': REPRESENTING THE OTHER

Edward Said

Orientalism is never far from what Denys Hay has called the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying 'us' Europeans as against all 'those' non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness. ...

In a quite constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand. ... Under the general heading of knowledge of the Orient, and within the umbrella of Western hegemony over the Orient during the period from the end of the eighteenth century, there emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind and the universe, for instances of economic and sociological theories

Source: Said, E.W. (1978) *Orientalism: Western Concepts of the Orient*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, pp.7–8, 20, 41–2, 44–5.

of development, revolution, cultural personality, national or religious character. Additionally, the imaginative examination of things Oriental was based more or less exclusively upon a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an Oriental world emerged, first according to general ideas about who or what was an Oriental, then according to a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections. ...

The period of immense advance in the institutions and content of Orientalism coincides exactly with the period of unparalleled European expansion; from 1815 to 1914 European direct colonial dominion expanded from about 35 percent of the earth's surface to about 85 percent of it. Every continent was affected, none more so than Africa and Asia. The two greatest empires were the British and the French; allies and partners in some things, in others they were hostile rivals. ...

What they shared, however, was not only land or profit or rule; it was the kind of intellectual power I have been calling Orientalism. In a sense Orientalism was a library or archive of information commonly and, in some of its aspects, unanimously held. What bound the archive together was a family of ideas and a unifying set of values proven in various ways to be effective. These ideas explained the behaviour of Orientals; they supplied Orientals with a mentality, a genealogy, an atmosphere; most important, they allowed Europeans to deal with and even to see Orientals as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics. But like any set of durable ideas, Orientalist notions influenced the people who were called Orientals as well as those called Occidental, European, or Western; in short, Orientalism is better grasped as a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought than it is simply as a positive doctrine. If the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority, then we must be prepared to note how in its development and subsequent history Orientalism deepened and even hardened the distinction. ...

Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them'). This vision in a sense created and then served the two worlds thus conceived. Orientals lived in their world, 'we' lived in ours. The vision and material reality propped each other up, kept each other going. A certain freedom of intercourse was always the Westerner's privilege; because his was the stronger culture, he could penetrate, he could wrestle with, he could give shape and meaning to the great Asiatic mystery, as Disraeli once called it.

READING D RECIPROCITY AND EXCHANGE

Peter Hulme

What was the fundamental difference between Algonquian [a New World Indian] and English cultures? Inasmuch as a large and single answer to this question can be risked, it could be claimed that the native American cultures ... acted according to norms of *reciprocity*; and that the European cultures did not. ...

The classic study of reciprocity is Marcel Mauss's *Essai sur le don* (1925), where it denotes the complex system of exchanges between individuals and villages by means of which undivided (i.e. pre-state) societies function: 'The gift is the primitive way of achieving the peace that in civil society is secured by the State' (Sahlins, 1974, p.169). Divided societies are, by definition, no longer reciprocal, although the ideology of reciprocity has a long and continuing history. ... Only under the fetishized social relations of capitalism does reciprocity disappear altogether, however loudly its presence is trumpeted: 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay'.

Reciprocity itself refers to a series of practices distinctly unamenable to breakdown into the economic, social, political and ideological. This is the gist of Mauss's argument:

> In tribal feasts, in ceremonies of rivals clans, allied families or those that assist at each other's initiation, groups visit each other; and with the development of the law of hospitality in more advanced societies, the rules of friendship and contract are present — along with the gods — to ensure the peace of markets and villages; at these times men meet in a curious frame of mind with exaggerated fear and an equally exaggerated generosity which appear stupid in no one's eyes but our own. In these primitive and archaic societies there is no middle path. There is either complete trust or mistrust. ...
>
> But then they had no choice in the matter. When two groups of men meet they may move away or in case of mistrust or defiance they may resort to arms; or else they can come to terms. Business has always been done with foreigners, although these might have been allies ... . It is by opposing reason to emotion and setting up the will for peace against rash follies ... that peoples succeed in substituting alliance, gift and commerce for war, isolation and stagnation.
> (Mauss, 1970, pp.78–80)

This is probably as accurate a brief account as could be given of how the native American societies of the extended Caribbean functioned in the centuries before the arrival of the Europeans. It is particularly useful for the emphasis placed on the vital importance, yet constant tentativeness, of

Source: Hulme, P. (1986) *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797,* London, Methuen, pp.147-52.

that nexus of relationships between selves and others. Without the authority of a state all intercourse would teeter between alliance and hostility. To treat with others was the indispensable requirement for life, yet it entailed a constant risk of death. Mauss's account highlights too the importance of ritual as a way of attempting to control these risky encounters. Boundaries, whether physical or social, are places of danger. Strangers are to be feared. Fear is coped with by ritual. Hospitality dissolves the category of stranger, resolving it into either alliance or hostility.

In stateless societies these categories are a matter of constant lived experience: they make up the very fabric of economic, social, political and cultural life. ...

[In] the Caribbean and Virgins ... strangers were dealt with hospitably, fed and honoured, until their intentions could be assessed. Transients and traders would be welcomed and, if appropriate, alliances entered into. Settlers, rivals for limited resources, would be sent on their way or killed. European transients and traders benefited greatly from this attitude. ... [However,] misunderstanding ... was rife: the English clearly had as little notion of Amerindian ideas of communal property rights as the Algonquians had of English ideas of private property.

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Progress

JOSÉ MARÍA SBERT

With the rise of the modern world, a distinctly modern faith – faith in progress – arose to make sense of, and give ultimate meaning to, the new notions and institutions that were now dominant. Our deep reverence for science and technology was inextricably linked up with this faith in progress. The universal enforcement of the nation-state was carried out under the banner of progress. And increasing conformity with the rule of economics, and intensified belief in its laws, are still shadows of this enlightened faith.

Though today faith in progress is largely unacknowledged, and probably weaker than at any other time in contemporary history, a definite breakdown in the plausibility of this faith – which many people think has already occurred – would confirm a crucial turning point in modern culture, and one pregnant with threats to the spiritual survival of persons.

The gradual obsolescence of the development ideal and sudden implosion of bureaucratic state socialism certainly represent a reduction in the pre-eminence, as well as concrete manifestations, of faith in progress. For it has been 'development' and 'revolution' which were supposed to actually embody progress during the greater part of the twentieth century.

TWO OFFSPRING: REVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT

The term 'progress' had suffered heavily in prestige, along with 'civilization', as a result of the two world wars and the Great Depression. Politicians and experts could no longer brandish it about without some traces of embarrassment, especially in Europe.

But progress retained some messianic force in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, where communism was thought to be 'establishing on earth peace, labour, liberty, equality, fraternity, and happiness for all nations', as the Soviet Party Programme proclaimed in 1961. North Americans, coming out of the Second World War with little damage and less guilt, still found the word 'progress' suitable for describing the achievements of the American way of life, including their own generosity, which at the beginning of the 1960s took the form of the aptly-named Alliance for Progress.

In the United States, assassinations at home and accusations of genocide abroad, however, soon poisoned the optimism of the period. The sacred lamp of progress seemed no longer to illuminate the political scene. It then withdrew to purer and more transcendent spheres: to the conquest of space as the culmination of the glorious power of science, and of disease and death – that other infinite realm – as the culmination of technology's redemptive humanism.

In the late 1960s faith in progress was kept smouldering mostly through its Lady Macbeth-like daughter – revolution. Revolution may not have 'killed the sleep' of modern civilization, but it had certainly turned its dreams of progress into recurrent nightmares. From the beginning, the new faith was fanatical enough to justify not only conquests and foreign adventures, but murder, widespread destruction and civil war. Revolution, in line with progress, was also handily sacralized. So from the nineteenth century onwards, revolution had to be held in check through the promotion of less draconian ideas such as evolution and some early political uses of development.[1]

Revolution as people saw it in the 1960s – perhaps in 1789 as well – was not the ultimate answer to unprecedented despotism or unbearable injustice. Rather, it was the rejection of irrational obstacles to cashing in on the promises of a rational faith. In the 1960s, from both sides – amidst socialist successes and Keynesian prosperity, Marxist messianism and liberal generosity – the hopes of progress appeared ripe and luxuriant, imminent and inevitable, and certainly not to be senselessly surrendered.

For the *contestataire* products of the baby boom, there were only two kinds of people – those few screwed up through having achieved progress themselves and the many screwed up by the progress of others. And the claims, even to power, of underprivileged groups – whether majorities or minorities – were acceptable, for a while at least. There was black power, student power and a war on poverty – until, that is, real power felt it had had enough and shrugged off any feelings of guilt and unnecessary scruples and set out to establish the monopoly of money power, abstaining only from street demonstrations flaunting as placards their mink coats and diamond necklaces.[2] For money power did not have to march in the streets to bring back into line – as it did so effectively – the universities, the media, the political parties and governments.

Apparently, there was something faulty in the simple and irrefutable logic of progress. Intellectual fashion moved away from utopian thinking and plunged into the structural complexities of language, the unconscious and the microphysics of power. Progress flew even further away from the scene. Under 'progress', the 1983 edition of the *Columbia Concise Encyclopaedia* states only: 'See space exploration'.

But, as an export commodity, the moon was not a satisfactory replacement for progress. The pristine credo of faith in progress had been constantly preached to the Third World. As expressed originally by Condorcet, prior to the depths and refinements added by Hegel, Marx and Comte, such a credo promised

> The destruction of inequality between nations, the progress of equality within one and the same nation, and finally, the real perfecting of mankind … We shall find, from past experience … that nature has assigned no limits to our hopes … The time is doubtless approaching when we shall cease to play the role of corrupters and tyrants in the eyes of these people (in Africa and Asia) … Then will the Europeans respect that independence which they have hitherto violated with such audacity … and those thieves' counting houses (established by Europeans) will become colonies of citizens who will propagate, in Africa and in Asia, the principles and the example of freedom, and the reason and learning of Europe.[3]

Integration of progress and national culture in fact followed many different paths throughout the world – among them, the strategy of defensive modernization, first attempted by Peter the Great in Russia and then carried out successfully by the Japanese. But this route was not available to the rest of the world, which had been 'heavily impacted by the Western imperial era'.[4] In most of Asia and Africa, where colonialism lasted only a century or so, Western domination did not entirely submerge the original cultures, while it did effectively transmit to local leaderships a faith in progress 'rendered ambivalent … by its very association with Westernization'.

In the Spanish colonies, established in Latin America as early as the sixteenth century, a very different situation obtained. Indigenous cultures were submerged and, in time, the new local elites adopted the idea of progress without any 'sense of moral ambivalence'. Indeed they 'viewed themselves as culturally European'.[5] The very words that summarized Auguste Comte's ideal, 'order and progress', were written on Brazil's flag and in Mexico they became the slogan of the late-nineteenth-century 'liberal dictatorship' that consolidated the nation-state.

By the middle of the twentieth century, however, what had been called by Europeans uncivilized, uneducated and backward all over the world had a new name: *underdeveloped*. Apparently, while faith in progress had already created great expectations, the term itself had become somewhat tainted and worn-out by both its imperial and its indigenous champions. So the new word 'development' came in handy.

Within this new development scheme of things, the idea of progress remained implicit as a crude dogma, debasing the sublime and fascinating elaborations of its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophers and

ideologues. The development discourse was now the work of 'experts'. Their perspective is well expressed by C.E. Ayres in the 1962 Foreword to his 1944 book which is entitled *The Theory of Economic Progress*, but which is already devoted to development:

> Since the technological revolution is itself irresistible, the arbitrary authority and irrational values of pre-scientific, pre-industrial cultures are doomed. Three alternatives confront the partisans of tribal values and beliefs. Resistance, if sufficiently effective, though it cannot save the tribal values, can bring on total revolution. Or ineffective resistance may lead to sequestration like that of the American Indians. The only remaining alternative is that of intelligent, voluntary acceptance of the industrial way of life and the values that go with it.
>
> We need make no apology for recommending such a course. Industrial society is the most successful way of life mankind has ever known. Not only do our people eat better, sleep better, live in more comfortable dwellings, get around more and in far greater comfort, and … live longer than men have ever done before. In addition to listening to radio and watching television, they read more books, see more pictures, and hear more music than any previous generation of any other people ever has. At the height of the technological revolution we are now living in a golden age of scientific enlightenment and artistic achievement.
>
> For all who achieve economic development, profound cultural change is inevitable. But the rewards are considerable.[6]

What was added later to the premises of development – intelligent and sensitive as they so obviously already were – amounted only to a cosmetic touching up. Nonetheless, in a frequent confusion, critical analysis of development generally reached a point where an unacceptable loss was confronted. To proceed with the critique down to the very core of the concept would have been experienced as the abandonment of faith in progress itself.

With the timely arrival of development, the term 'progress' was subsequently applied only to what the self-designated First World had already achieved and to the infinite potential conquests still to be secured through its economy, science and technology, and not yet available to the rest of the world. The Third World had to develop first – before even thinking about real progress. The term 'development' would be one in a series of words to describe – and rally people to – the ever more elusive path to progress. Only a path, not an arrival – and one, for that matter, that would be proved utterly inadequate.

A THEODICY AND AN IMPERATIVE OF POWER

But progress is more than just a journey or an ideal. It is modern destiny. To modern man, and to those who want to share his identity, rejecting faith in

progress is unbearable. Modern man is defined by progress. His self-esteem is rooted in it and it is his deepest justification for the ruthlessness he displays towards his fellow men and nature.

A portentous faith built on progress is the real spiritual foundation of modern man, the tradition he stands on. The idea has been the most influential and ubiquitous notion in the formation of modern thought, merging the power of the modern world with the spell of a chimerical metamorphosis of Christian faith.

Progress possesses the brightness derived from its close link with the sacred – even when, as here, the sacred is not presented as such. It has the lustre of transcendence. Consequently, it has to be enshrined nowadays in achievements that would seem to confirm that man, the terminator of the gods, is indeed supplanting them through the conquest of the heavens in space and time. But its proper home base on earth remains the First World. There it reveals that man no longer needs a creator, but constantly refashions himself.

Progress, whether because it was forced by historical inertia into 're-occupying positions' established by Christianity – as Hans Blumenberg[7] contends – or because of the advantage obtained from such positions, turned into a quite typical theodicy. Progress explains current phenomena inconsistent with its promise by reference to future perfection. The sufferers will be consoled and the unjust punished, just as in 'the different manifestations of religious messianism, millenarianism, and eschatology'.[8] Progress as theodicy is associated in times of crisis with revolutionary promises, and, when these promises are proved hollow by events, the locus of compensation is transposed to remove scientific conquests, quite similar in fact to the kind of other-worldly explanations and realizations characteristic of conservative theodicies.

Down here on earth, however, progress remains the irresistible imperative of power. It is imperative to the powerless in order to enforce their submission, and just as imperative to the powerful because they wish to retain their positions. Progress is felt to be a matter of survival. Who would dare risk turning his back on progress? As Hobbes understood long ago, freedom can only be guaranteed by the capacity to dominate others, and happiness cannot lie in *having* progressed, but in progressing here and now.

Progress is an imperative that outlasts the failure, no matter how recurrent, of particular strategies. Its model is modified constantly, as well as the path to attain it. But the path will be followed, no matter what the resistance of American Indians, the people of the subcontinent, the Shogun or *mafiosi* politicians. Progress redefines reality through the manifold influence of power. Those who have progressed more, and continue progressing,

are stronger and wealthier and inexorably prevail, no matter whether the instrument be missionary and educational institutions, or the East India Company, or Commodore Perry, or, equally well, simply the spontaneous and overpowering desire to imitate the rich and the famous.

VIRTUES INTO VICES

To disguise inevitable submission and make the new faith accessible, progress has to redefine man, time and the world. It has to present history as following a *vector*, replacing the cyclical conception of time and discarding faith in destiny or providence. It portrays other religions as contemptible schemes for obedience, practised by oligarchical priests who invoke ghosts to humiliate man and who induce him to waste his life on searches far removed from the perfectly feasible construction of a paradise on earth. It offers the world as a *resource* to a unified *humanity* – headed, of course, by those who have already progressed, but open to all races and nations provided they jettison their tribal and traditional bonds, which are but the capricious obstacles to universal redemption.

Progress highlighted hope – a vision of a future of plenty, freedom and justice – and excluded, along with beliefs in powers superior to man, the traditional notions of man's limitations. Humility turned from a saintly virtue into a rare heresy. Condemnations of greed, innate to the Christian religion and to all traditional systems of wisdom and philosophy, were transformed into leniency bordering on approval towards such a sin, which is now perceived as the veritable psychological engine of material progress.

So, greed and arrogance in individuals turn into prosperity and justice for nations and all mankind. Such a miraculous feat does not even require the intervention of divine providence. Supra-individual man – the 'humanity' invented by the Christian Church of Imperial Rome and ultimately consecrated by the Enlightenment – is fed by an invisible hand, a cunning reason that will do him good even if its members indulge in evil.

Thus mortal sins contribute to progress, and famine, plague, war and death are nothing but small accidents along the road – provided the advancement accumulated in history as a whole is considered. And such accumulated capital, which keeps on growing ever faster, will permit those who fail again and again, and even those who move backwards – always the majority – eventually to obtain a share in the promised land, even if only through their descendants.

The creed of progress bloomed exuberantly as an ideological force and seemed destined to prevail over the decadent spiritual power of established religion in eighteenth-century Europe. A new galaxy of social forces and institutions, led by the capitalist or entrepreneurial class and the modern

state – the great binomial of modern political economy – found in religion an obstacle to further advancement. So, waving the flags of progress, the new social forces snatched away the banners of religion.

Likewise, progress championed the fight against the moral power of those traditions representing an obstacle to the expansion of the market, industry and the modern state. Once the causes of the wealth of nations had been properly assigned to the novel Western way of subordinating society to the market and technological innovation, the idea of progress provided the new justification for inequality at home and Western self-assertion abroad. It was progress which had permitted Europeans to 'discover' the whole world, and progress which would explain their growing hegemony over the global horizon.

In European history, and in the history made by Europeans worldwide, the new faith in progress may have been a decisive weapon in the conflict between, on the one hand, the modern economy, modern institutions and the *humanity* they sought to create and, on the other, *men and women* deeply rooted in their respective cultures and places. Progress impelled these people to become their own God and make their own history. It ridiculed their old beliefs, fears and superstitions as well as their reverence for nature, the past and their ancestors. It dismissed vernacular gender – the all embracing division of the person's inner and outer worlds into the asymmetrical complementarity of men and women – as irrational, pigheaded and unjust.

Faith in progress is entrusted with stripping the common man – who as yet has not progressed, but has already been cut off from his common land and deprived of his traditional means for autonomous subsistence – of all the cultural footholds that could give him spiritual autonomy and personal confidence as he faces the market, industry and the nation-state. Disembedded from his community and caring only for himself, free from his elders' beliefs and fears, having learned to look down on his parents and knowing he will find no respect in what they could teach him, he and his fellows can only become *workers* for industry, *consumers* for the market, *citizens* for the nation and *humans* for mankind.

ECLIPSE OF PROVIDENCE AND WISDOM

Western faith in progress is rooted in historical experience as much as in the oft-cited Judaeo-Christian view of time, history and man's place in the world. What got the modern Europeans hooked on the idea of progress was probably their peculiar history, mostly in the quite poor north-western parts of the continent. Between the fall of the Roman Empire in the West and Scottish prosperity in the time of Adam Smith lie more than fifteen centuries of advancement, enough to feel that progress is deeply grounded

in their experience, and to ride out ups and downs of fortune and to scoff at the greater grandeur of more ancient civilizations.

Plagues and wars at home, and mighty enemies on their boundaries, forged their character to be able to face diversity successfully in a never-ending confrontation with all things foreign – beliefs, ideas, weapons, even disease. Fierce competition in the market and constant war on the frontiers contributed to a prodigious rate of technological advancement which eventually made Europeans invincible in every field. As today's fashionable historiography sees it, the arms race combined with the rat race was a mighty formula for the rise of great powers, provided, of course, it was compatible with modern financial wisdom.

Thus, the Western penchant for progress and hegemony has deep roots in historical experience. As Karl Löwith puts it, the big question remains

> whether this tremendous sweep of Western activity has anything to do with the non-secular, religious element in it. Is it perhaps Jewish messianism and Christian eschatology, though in their secular transformations, that have developed those appalling energies of creative activity which changed the Christian Occident into a worldwide civilization? It was certainly not a pagan but a Christian culture which brought about this revolution. The ideal of modern science of mastering the forces of nature, and the idea of progress, emerged neither in the classical world nor in the East, but in the West. But what enabled us to remake the world in the image of man? Is it perhaps that the belief in being created in the image of a Creator God, the hope in a future Kingdom of God, and the Christian command to spread the gospel to all the nations for the sake of salvation, have turned into the secular presumption that we have to transform the world into a better world in the image of man and to save unregenerate nations by Westernization and re-education?[9]

In response to his own question, he formulated the influential thesis that

> The eschatological outlook of the New Testament has opened the perspective toward a future fulfilment – originally beyond, and eventually within, historical existence. In consequence of the Christian consciousness, we have a historical consciousness which is as Christian by derivation as it is non-Christian by consequence.[10]

From this point of view we could add that, ever since the twelfth century, technological innovation in both production and learning combined with a process of Church institutionalization which, by providing services and written records, controlled peoples lives, establishing thus the organizational model of the modern state. The secularization of the world that ensued is the actual history of progress, where *transmogrified religious beliefs*, *rituals and*

institutions undertook a 'reform' of the world through major scientific, economic and political breakthroughs.

What the Christian creed demanded was a *spiritual reform of the believer* which, had it become prevalent, would have led to a serious challenge to the worldly passions for riches and power which, for Christians, headed the incarnations of evil. If Christianity in practice contributed to an opposite orientation on the part of Western civilization, we might conclude, with Jacques Ellul, that it was because it was subverted by its own power, and because the radical nature of Christian faith is so intolerable that, for it to become a dominant cultural force, it had to be transformed into its opposite,

> since it is really intolerable to think that peace, justice, and an end to poverty cannot take place on earth.... However, that is precisely what Jesus himself has said.[11]

But notwithstanding

> Christ has said: 'Do whatever you can to make this world liveable and share with everybody the joy of salvation, but without any illusions about what you can really achieve.' But that is what man cannot hear or accept. If he acts, he wants his doings to work, to succeed, to progress. He wants to achieve by himself. In that context the word of Christ is actually demobilizing, not deriving from the fact of Christ's truth, but from the realities of man's indigence, his pride and his foolishness![12]
>
> The difficulty arises since we cannot say: 'Indeed, our practice is faulty, but look at the beauty, the purity, the truth of Revelation!' *No Revelation can be known outside the life and testimony of those who carry it* ... Not being that which Christ demands, we turn all of the Revelation into something mendacious, delusory, ideological, imaginary.[13]

Free from the radical demands of praxis – which is essential to the very meaning of the principle of faith – Christian revelation was turned instead into a philosophical and cultural instrument of the Western world.

And it was precisely in the link with 'praxis' that characterized 'wisdom' that progress, by eclipsing that central notion, was most revolutionary. Instead progress, as the new Polar Star in the firmament of ideas, became closely associated from its beginnings with the splendour of science, that boast of the Moderns over against the knowledge of the Ancients:

> In the tradition of the great books, the moderns usually assert their superiority in all the arts and sciences. They seldom claim superiority in wisdom. The phrase 'modern science' needs no elucidation, but if anyone were to speak of modern wisdom, he would have to explain his meaning .... A distinctive mark of wisdom is that it cannot be misused ... Rabelais's

> Gargantua admonishes [his son] in the words of Solomon: 'knowledge without conscience is but the ruin of the soul'.[14]

Besides obliterating the ideas of destiny, fortune and providence, the new star of modernity or progress overshadowed the importance of wisdom as existential, cultural experience. Formerly, the practice of virtue and fidelity to sacred principles embraced and gave meaning to intellectual knowledge, which could only be enriched thereby. But faith in progress is faith in a purely intellectual, mathematical, scientific knowledge 'liberated' of all moral constraint and ethical context.

Doctrines of progress, at first, had a difficult time filling the gap left by the flight of wisdom and providence. Quite differently from wisdom, progress no longer trusted in the individual will to virtue – which had probably already been disheartened by the intolerable demands of Christian praxis. Instead the new doctrines seemed to rest their hope for the moral perfection of humans on the exhaustion of greed through the satiation of appetites, or on some prodigious balancing act of egotistical forces. This last presumed that stasis would be worked out by reason, but of a kind which had no known locus since it rested neither on God's providence, nor on individual experience, revealed truth, or moral tradition.

The processes leading to collective good and excellence would be harder to grasp for the devotees of progress than spiritual reform had been, and as inscrutable as providence, despite the efforts of modern thinkers to explain how 'the invisible hand' of the market or 'cunning reason' might automatically attain these ends. Eventually, the job of reason was taken on by the managerial and bureaucratic systems of industrial society. And social reality had to be remodelled to fit the 'laws' of economics and efficient administration.

The subversion of Christianity, well under way in the medieval alliance of feudal and Church power, was thus perfected by a faith in progress that now placed the opportunities it had opened up, its philosophical and cultural synthesis, and its world-view and hopes of the future, so richly nourished for centuries, at the service of the market, industry, the modern state and their agents – the merchants, bankers, princes; politicians, intellectuals, mass leaders; scientists, entrepreneurs and revolutionaries.

In this way the notion of progress came to be used and propagated most patently through the action of the masters of modern history, from Frederick the Great and Queen Victoria to Lenin, Castro and Reagan. It was elaborated and diffused through the writings of brilliant adherents, from Voltaire and Darwin to Sartre, Régis Debray and Vargas Llosa. The register of thinkers who enthusiastically believed in progress is huge and includes the roll

of honour of the last three centuries. Indeed, some historians of progress manage to include almost every eminent thinker in history, although a distinction tends to be made, most explicitly by Bertrand Russell and Robert Nisbet, between those stressing rationality, freedom and the market – such as Turgot, Hume, Smith, Kant, Mill – and those emphasizing feeling, equality, power and the state – Rousseau, Fichte, Hegel. Marx, Nietzsche.

The roots of the ideological quarrels of the twentieth century, however, may be traceable to the fervent hope that all held in common and the related differences about how best to reap the unlimited promises of industrial society. Nevertheless, no matter how great the distinctions or antagonisms among this large majority of modern thinkers may appear, as a group they turn out to be quite homogeneous in their thinking, especially when confronted with the central notions related to the nature of man and history – in contrast to the Ancients and Medievalists. Their world-view is even more radically incompatible with the cultures of those in other parts of the world who have not yet joined industrial society, and the partisans of tribal and indigenous peoples' values and beliefs who question the designs of progress before being ready to bless any further immolation.

STILL A SEARCH FOR THE BEYOND

Progress is a faith that is not recognized as such, but remains the genuine soul of the modern West and whatever comes to resemble it in the present world. Modern man has to believe that his ideas and actions are entirely grounded in what is rational and not supported by revelation, or a vision, or hope. His very identity has been forged in the conquests of progress, and centred on the conviction that he can know reality through science, thus overcoming obscurantist dogmas.

Nonetheless, trust in progress may in truth pertain to the realm of *faith* in a sense similar to the Christian *assurance of things hoped for* in the beyond. Certainly, faith in progress turns in practice mostly into mere 'false consciousness' – into ethnocentric, class-oriented and self-interested self-deception.

Paradoxically, this unacknowledged faith, this false consciousness – often labelled materialistic or even hedonistic – flagrantly contradicts true attachment to the world. It is a desperate search for transcendence that, again and again, *annihilates the world as it is* and substitutes for any real sense of place, rhythm, duration and culture a world of abstractions, a *non-world* – of homogenous space, linear time, science and money.

Originally, progress was a term referring to place, as in the destination of a journey. Later it came to mean an advancement in time, in vectorial measurable time. And as progress evolved further as a result of the need for

calculation in industrial economics, it condemned us to live in a 'worldly' future, to build *there* an always elusive fulfilment 'under the sun' – which turned out to be a quite neurotic overextension of the reality principle, which was apparently already making modern society feel there was something wrong by the time of Freud.

Just as being in the present lost meaning, so did every defined place – we do not, for example, build on a plot or in some town but instead convert it into 'value': a figure in our heads or some record kept on paper or in a computer. And it is there, and only there, *in an abstract record of values*, that most material progress really is, utterly removed from the truly worldly aim set down in *Ecclesiastes* by Kohelet, the voice of a tribal assembly:

> Eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart.… Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity … for that is thy portion in this life.[15]

As for spiritual progress, the accumulation of scientific knowledge and technical achievement seems to ignore its own meaning and direction and is prone to be misused. It is detached from the flesh, the heart and the soul. Man, therefore, cannot be any wiser today, since the knowledge he so massively acquires cannot be integrated into either culture or the person.

What is more, progress can rarely be enjoyed during the lifetime of a person; rather, it is mostly to be hoped for, for his descendants. For the believer in progress falls into a sort of inverted Confucianism – a cult of the descendants, not the ancestors. And now this faith in progress faces a traumatic nemesis. For the glory of sacrifice for the sake of a better world for future generations is in danger of turning into its opposite – fear of not bequeathing them anything but a shambles, and the guilt that goes with that tragic anticipation.

THE BOURGEOIS AND HIS FEEDBACK

Perhaps it was these sorts of paradoxes that inspired Paul Valéry to write: 'The bourgeois has invested his funds in ghosts and gambles with the ruin of common sense.'[16] And today, we would have to add with the ruin of the biosphere, the new mother Goddess of our ecocomputers. Gaia, the suffering planet, must halt the 'strategy of the progress culture' because its 'basic values act as a great complex of positive feedback forces' that are 'self-amplifying, like a fire burning out of control'.[17]

With this new systems management mentality, faith in progress may turn out to be fighting its last round in history. A myriad 'side effects', mutually reinforcing each other in their devastating power, are creating serious doubts about the feasibility of spreading further the Western style throughout

the world. Besides, those who run world models on their computers are repeatedly led to the discovery that programmed progress turns out to be less efficient than the 'cultural strategy' of the bees, or, when it comes to environmental adaptation, far less 'developed' than, say, that of the Australian Aborigines. Thus, nobody admits any more to ever having believed in Utopia. Some even see the future as a time where nothing but incalculable catastrophies loom. The time-arrow, the axis of faith in progress, is in the process of shifting its angle: if anything, it now points downward.

Avoidance of outright planetary disaster may soon top the global agenda. This very different prospect calls for a different conceptualization – hence the resort to systems language which best expresses man's current preoccupation with stability. For it directs attention away from high-flying hopes to the nitty-gritty conditions of systems maintenance here and now. 'Feedback cycles' show on the computer screen the hideous workings of 'side effects', forcing their official recognition by governments, while the search for the conditions of 'equilibrium' aims at identifying the break points. In terms of this perspective, the affairs of people are not at the centre of politics any more, which instead has become preoccupied by the abstract requirements of systems maintenance as defined by the new experts in survival. As for the idea of progress, it will have come a long way and may in the end mean simply avoiding the worst.

Progress was an illusion, but a great illusion. It contained much more than anyone had ever dared to dream – justice, and even immortality on earth, achieved by man himself. As the vital and creative self-assertion responding to the previous overriding emphasis on divine omnipotence',[18] progress was a great path of achievement. Facing both fears of eternal damnation and feelings of impotence in the utter contingency of his existence in the world – both ideas hammered into him by theological absolutism – modern man managed to gain confidence by way of self-realization, a confidence finally felt as the all-powerful free seeker after perfection. Progress was still a dream of persons, not of bees.

Sadly, the utopian ethos of progress lost its chance to come to terms with reality. It became overwhelmed by the undiscerning forces of economics and technology, or led along the political road to totalitarian straitjackets. Along with utopia, progress shed most of the layers that had sculpted its tragic beauty and conceptual richness, and fled instead into the realms of science fiction. Today it merely shields the blind conceit of the post-modern world from serious critical thought and any doubts about sense and meaning. Reduced to the childish fantasies of scientists – pervertedly polymorphous indeed – faith in progress is nothing today but a fortress of contemporary folly which wards off our multiple fears of annihilation from

modern weaponry, economic growth and cultural indigence. It has shrunk to a foolish confidence that the predicaments of modern civilization will be solved through a psychotic delirium of abstractions and technological creations which have been given a life of their own.

The new wisdom of systems theory, now taking charge of reconciling the biosphere and the economy in some impossible balance – having one's cake and eating it – has to accept the humiliating assumption that man is just one among many forms of life. What greater vanity and vexation of the spirit? The harder it is for man to recognize that what he has placed under the sun has not made him much better, the harder it is for him to recognize his basic reality, an always tragic reality. And it is only human, too human, to try to change or forget this reality, as Solomon himself admits:

> And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven … So I was great and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem.[19]

But Solomon did not conclude that his kind could become omnipotent. Modern man, having ventured so deeply into that delusion, finds it ever more difficult to accept his frailty, to live in *this* world and to search for his truth. Jacques Ellul sums it up in a quotation from George Bernanos:

> In order to be ready to hope for what will not deceive, we must first despair of all that already deceives.[20]

There may be much more involved in despairing about progress than we have glimpsed in this essay. As I have suggested, faith in progress has been built into modern man to such an extent that he is not aware of it any more, like a fish is not aware of the water till drawn out of it. And, like fish out of water, we may eventually realize the importance of our faith in progress only after emerging from it, at the point of again dying in awe as persons, or – in a world of systems maintenance – at the point of turning into just another 'life' managed by abstract systems moving towards some 'steady state'.

NOTES

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10. Ibid., p. 197.
11. J. Ellul, *La Subversion du Christianisme*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1984, p. 201.
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14. 'Wisdom', in *The Britannica Great Books: A Syntopicon*, Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952, pp. 1102–3.
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19. Ecclesiastes, 1:3 and 2:9.
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FURTHER READING

As a starting point, the historical review by S. Pollard, *The Idea of Progress: History and Society*, New York: Basic Books, 1968, which contains a separate bibliography, and R. Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, New York: Basic Books, 1980, where the sources are commented on in the text, are the most accessible and useful, as well as the collection of readings by F.J. Teggart, *The Idea of Progress*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949, and the related article and quotations in *Britannica World Books*, which contains also the basic traditional bibliography. To my knowledge, the most recent comprehensive effort on the subject was edited by G.A. Almond, M. Chodorow and R.H. Pearce, *Progress and Its Discontents*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. Divided into five parts related to the historical, scientific, economic, social and humanistic dimensions, it covers twenty-five different themes by as many authors. P. Chaunu, *Histoire, Science Sociale: La Durée, l'Espace et l'Homme à l'Epoque Moderne*, Paris: SEDES, 1974, and G. Duby, *Guerriers et Paysans, VII–XII siècle: Premier Essor de l'Economie Européenne*, Paris: Gallimard, 1973, gave me a rich portrait of the experience of progress in Western Europe, which can be complemented by the strategic outlook of P. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, New York: Random House, 1989.

The closest approximation to ancient wisdom in dealing with substantially the same subject – that is, progress – is contained in the Greek literature about Prometheus and in Ecelesiastes. J. Ellul devotes an entire book to Ecclesiastes, *La Raison d'Être*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987. F. Bickerman, *Four Strange Books of the Bible*, New York: Schocken Books, 1967, and H.I. Leiman, *Koheleth: Life and Its Meaning*, Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim, 1980, also approach this biblical book at length. I. Illich, in a call to put hope above expectation, deals with Prometheus and Pandora in the last chapter, 'Rebirth of Epimethean Man', of *Deschooling Society*, New York: Harper & Row, 1970. Illich's books, among their innumerable facets, prompt a continuous meditation on the concept of progress.

The key book on Christianity, secularization and progress is K. Löwith, *Meaning in History*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949. W.W. Wagar, 'Modern Views of the Origins of the Idea of Progress', *Journal of History of Ideas* 28, 1967, pp. 55–70, gives a panoramic view of various authors on the subject of secularization, among them the less pessimistic outlook of J. Maritain's books. C. Dawson, *Progress and Religion*, New York: Doubleday, 1960, rather celebrates the worldly orientation of Western civilization as fully consistent with its Judaco-Christian religious heritage. The rich outlook and fine thread that G.B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact in Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959, started to weave is regrettably cut short at an early historical period. H. Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, Cambridge. Mass.: MIT Press, 1983, does not succeed in upsetting Löwith's thesis, but glances deeply into the soul of the modern age at its intellectual starting point. E. Castelli, *Hermeneutique de la Secularisation: Actes du colloque organisé par le Centre International d'Études Humanistes et par l'Institut d'Etudes Philosophiques de Rome*, Paris: Aubier, 1976, contains rich and abundant material, including a paper by J. Ellul, whose books constitute a wide-ranging and up-to-date critique of modern progress by a Christian theologian.

Among the classical sociologists, a reflection on progress demands, especially, a review of Weber's work, and of those who followed him as well as his critics.

Read online!

Ben Ehrenreich '*Progress and the demented quest for historical purity*' *Baffler* January 2019. Read online here: https://thebaffler.com/salvos/after-the-storm-ehrenreich

CHAPTER 2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODERN STATE

David Held

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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter has three overall purposes: first, to introduce the diversity of state forms which have existed over time and which constitute the broad historical context for understanding the nature of the modern state; secondly, to explore the question: Why did the nation-state become the supreme form of the modern state?; thirdly, to examine competing conceptions of the modern state — its sovereignty, authority and legitimacy. These objectives are clearly wide-ranging; but by devoting attention to all three I hope to shed some light on the key formative processes of the modern state and the controversies that surround it.

The prime focus of this chapter will be the making of the modern state in Europe. There are a number of important reasons for this geographic restriction. In the first instance, the story of the formation of the modern state is in part the story of the formation of Europe, and vice versa. The development of a distinctive 'European' identity is closely tied to the creation of Europe by states. Moreover, the states system of Europe has had extraordinary influence in the world beyond Europe: European expansion and development has had a decisive role in shaping the political map of the modern world. Furthermore, debates about the nature of the modern state in large part derive from European intellectual traditions, notably the Enlightenment, although to recognize this is by no means to suggest that everything of importance about the state was understood and expressed in Europe alone.

1.1 SOME PRELIMINARY DEFINITIONS

It is intriguing to note that for the greater part of human history states have not existed at all. States are *historical* phenomena, constructed under particular conditions, and far from fixed or 'natural' entities. In hunting-and-gathering communities, in small agrarian cultures, and in the regions wandered by semi-nomadic or nomadic peoples there has been no recognizably separate state or political organization. Today, there are still many communities which anthropologists refer to as 'stateless' — communities such as the Jale people of the New Guinea highlands, the pastoral Nuer of the South Sudan, the M'dendeuili and Arusha of East Africa. 'Stateless', however, should not be taken to mean the absence of any mechanisms of regulation or government through which decisions affecting the community can be made and disputes settled. A diverse array of such mechanisms have existed, from family and kinship structures to the rules and norms of custom or tradition, and to the established powers of a chief (a warrior or priest, or both), often assisted by a council or court.

Table 2.1 provides a useful starting point by juxtaposing stateless and state societies in order to bring the latter's broad characteristics into relief. Table 2.1 offers only rudimentary definitions. One reason for this is that states, like other social phenomena, have changed over time, partly in relation to the transformation of the conditions of the societies

Table 2.1 Features of stateless and state societies

Stateless societies	State societies
informal mechanisms of government	political apparatus or governmental institutions differentiated from other organizations in the community
no clear boundaries to a society	rule takes place over a specific population and territory
disputes and decisions settled by family or kin groups, or by larger tribal structures headed by a chief with the support of a council	legal system, backed by a capacity to use force
relationships and transactions significantly defined by custom	institutional divisions within government (the executive, civil service and army, for example) are formally coordinated

in which they arose. There have been many different state forms which have set down elements of rule in a succession of different ways. Rule or rulership has no single 'essence' or fixed quality. Examples which will be drawn upon to highlight this are empires, feudal political relations and absolutist monarchies.

This chapter distinguishes the characteristics of stateless and state societies from those of the modern state. Several key features of the latter will be elucidated in Section 2.5, but for the present it is sufficient to stress that the concept of the modern state refers to that type of state which emerged in the European states system from the sixteenth 16th century onwards. The concept connotes an impersonal and privileged legal or constitutional order with the capability of administering and controlling a given territory; that is, a distinct form of public power, separate from both ruler and ruled, and forming the supreme political authority within certain defined boundaries (Skinner, 1978, p.353; cf. Neumann, 1964). The 'other side' of the modern state is 'civil society'. Civil society — like nearly all concepts in social and political analysis — has a long and complex history; but by 'civil society' I will here mean those areas of social life — the domestic world, the economic sphere, cultural activities and political interaction — which are organized by private or voluntary arrangements between individuals and groups outside the *direct* control of the state (cf. Bobbio, 1989; Pelczynski, 1985; Keane, 1988). The modern state and civil society were formed, as will be seen, through distinct but interrelated processes.

1.2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter has three main parts which correspond to the aims stated at the outset. The objective of the first part (Section 2) is to provide a brief chronological sketch of the development of the state in Europe, and an account of its chief variants. It is not my intention here to suggest that the variants followed one another according to an evolutionary pattern through which states passed from the 'primitive' to the 'civilized', from the 'simple' to the 'complex', or from 'lower' to 'higher' stages — far from it! My aim is to establish a political map or set of bearings which can become a basis for asking in the next section

(Section 3): What explains the movement and change among state forms, and how can one understand the rise of the nation-state? If Section 2 expounds a *typology* of states, Section 3 seeks to explicate the *underlying processes* or *causal patterns* which might illuminate why particular types of state have taken the form they have, and why one of these types — the modern nation-state — became the dominant form over time.

In the third major part of the chapter (Section 4), the meaning and significance of the development of the modern state is explored via an introduction to the work of some of its leading political interpreters. It will be readily seen that the history of the interpretation of the modern state contains sharp conflicts of view. It will be my aim to explicate these conflicts, rather than to try and resolve the differences among them. However, I hope also to establish a framework which will aid an assessment of the relevance of the various interpretations to an understanding of the modern state, as it was and is.

The particular emphasis of this chapter is on the active role played by the state in the making and shaping of modernity. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries most of the leading perspectives on social change emphasized that the origins of social transformation were to be found in processes *internal* to society and, above all, in *socio-economic* factors. In many of these perspectives, the interrelations *among* states and societies were barely explored. By focusing on the war-making capacity of states, and on the role of the state in domestic *and* international affairs, this chapter sets itself against this neglect. In so doing, it aligns itself with a notable strand of recent scholarship on the history of states (much of it referred to in the pages which follow), which emphasizes the independent and autonomous part played by *political* and *military* factors in the formation of Europe and the modern world. While this story could be told from a number of different starting points, the initial focus will be a sketch of the history and geography of European states, beginning with Rome. This sketch provides a useful background to the diversity of states and their alteration over time.

2 A BRIEF HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY OF EUROPEAN STATES

Sixteen hundred years or so ago 'Europe' was dominated by the Roman Empire, albeit an empire divided and disintegrating. Theodosius I (AD 379–95) was the last 'sole ruler' of the Roman Empire, which, after his death, split into the Western and Eastern Roman Empires. The Western Empire suffered from repeated attacks and grew weak in comparison with the East. In 410, the city of Rome was sacked by the Visigoths, a wandering Germanic people from the North-east. The fall of Rome was completed in 476, when the last Roman emperor of the West was deposed. The Eastern Empire, economically securer than its Western

counterpart owing to spice and other exports, continued as the Byzantine Empire through the Middle Ages until it was successfully challenged and displaced by the Islamic Ottoman Empire in 1453.

In the centuries which succeeded the disintegration of the Roman Empire, 'Europe' did not experience the rise of another imperial society, although it was chronically engaged in war and harassed from outside. A contrast has often been drawn between an essentially civilized Europe and a despotic or barbarous East. There are many reasons for distrusting this contrast (see Bernal, 1987; Springborg, 1991). Some of these reasons will be explored in Chapter 6 of this volume, but two should be emphasized here. First, as recent historical and archaeological research has shown, some of the key political innovations, conceptual and institutional, of the putatively western political tradition can be traced to the East; for example, the 'city-state' or *polis* society can be found in Mesopotamia long before it emerged in the West. Second, 'Europe' was the creation of many complex processes at the intersection of 'internal' and 'external' forces and relations. A thousand years ago Europe as such did not exist. The roughly thirty million people who lived across the European landmass did not conceive of themselves as an interconnected people, bound by a common history, culture and fate (Tilly, 1990, p.38).

The larger power divisions on a map of 'millennial Europe' (c. AD 1000) to some extent mask the area's fragmented and decentred nature. Those who prevailed over territories — emperors, kings, princes, dukes, bishops and others — did so above all as military victors and conquerors, exacting tribute and rent to support their endeavours; they were far from being heads of state governing clearly demarcated territories according to formal law and procedure. As the historian Charles Tilly put it, 'nothing like a centralized national state existed anywhere in Europe' (1990, p.40).

Yet one can talk about the beginnings of a recognizable states system at the millenium. In the Italian peninsula, the Papacy, the Holy Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire claimed most of the territory, even though these claims intermingled and were contested routinely by many localized powers and independent and semi-autonomous city-states. But the political map of Europe was to be shaped and reshaped many times. For example, the European map of the late fifteenth century included some five hundred more or less independent political units, often with ill-defined boundaries. By 1900 the number had dwindled to about twenty-five (Tilly, 1975, p.15). It took a long time for national states to dominate the political map, but the era they ushered in was to change fundamentally the nature and form of political life itself.

ACTIVITY 1 Examine Figures 2.1–2.4 and ask yourself the following questions:

1 Which political boundaries, if any, have persisted over time?
2 Can one recognize modern Europe in the political map of 1478?
3 How would the political map of 1980 have to be redrawn today?

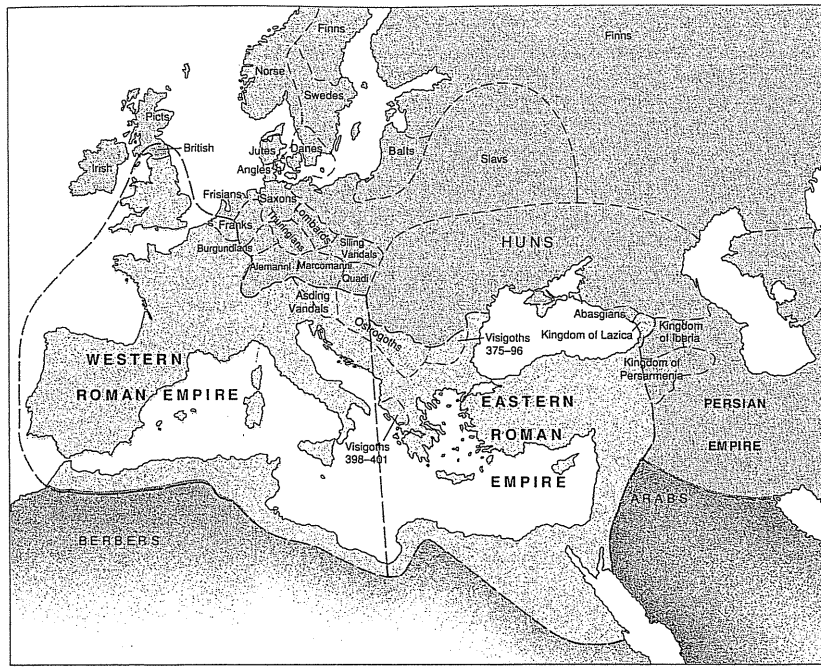


Figure 2.1 Europe in AD 406

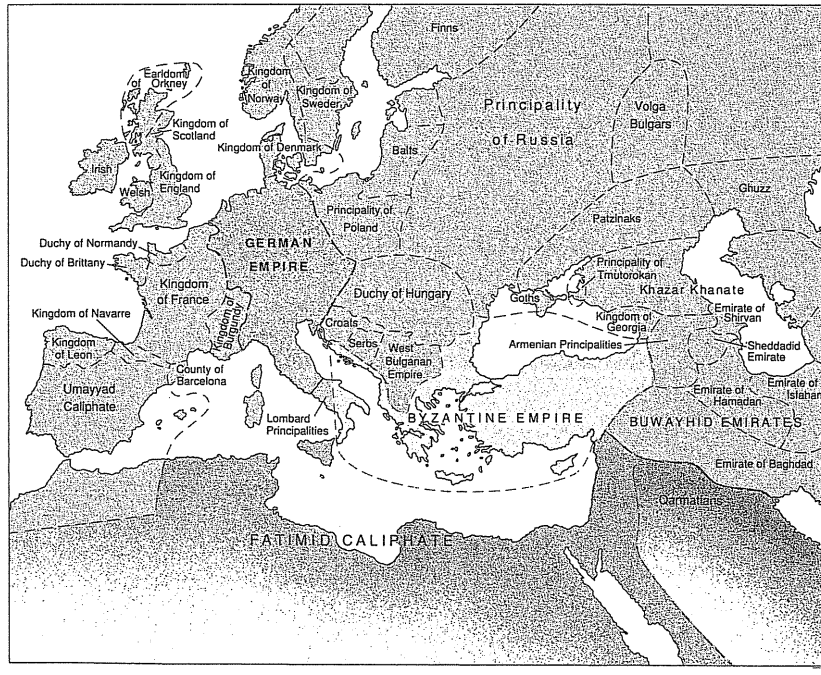


Figure 2.2 Europe in AD 998

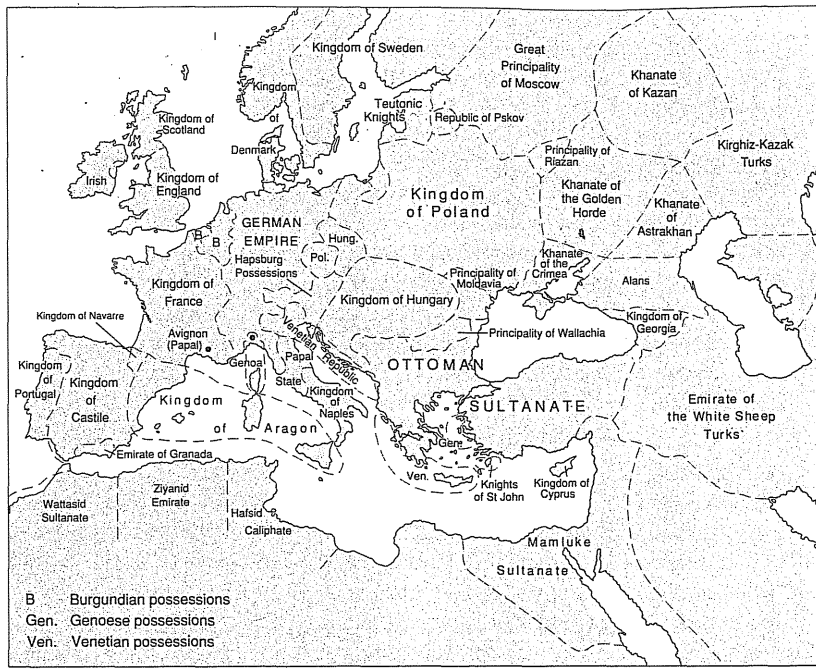


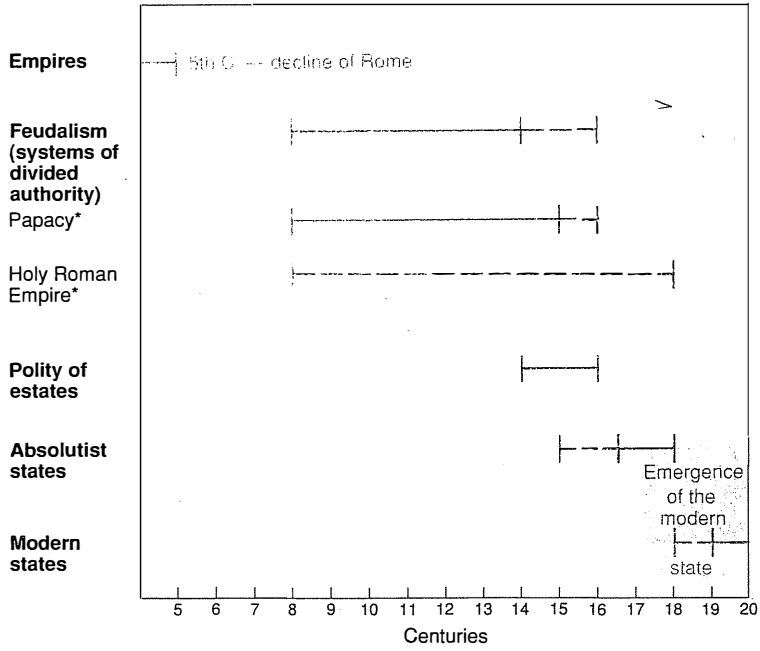
Figure 2.3 Europe in AD 1478

Figure 2.4 Europe in AD 1980

Since the fall of Rome, it is not just the number of states which has altered dramatically, but the forms and types of states as well. There are five main clusters of state systems which can be distinguished:

1 traditional tribute-taking empires;
2 systems of divided authority, characterized by feudal relations, city-states and urban alliances, with the Church (Papacy) playing a leading role;
3 the polity of estates;
4 absolutist states;
5 modern nation-states, with constitutional, liberal democratic or single party polities locked progressively into a system of nation-states.

Figure 2.5 provides an approximate guide to the periods in which each type of state system could be found. For the remainder of this section, I shall examine each type in turn before pursuing the question: What accounts for the eventual dominance of the nation-state?



Broken lines indicate that a political system's influence was not continuous, but rather broken from time to time.

* The Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, while at certain stages essential elements of the feudal system of authority, have been separated out for later reference.

Figure 2.5 State forms and historical periods

2.1 EMPIRES

Empires or imperial systems have dominated the history of states over the centuries, particularly in their size and grandeur. Some, notably Rome (and China in the East), retained identifiable institutional forms over long periods. Empires required an accumulation and concentration of coercive means — above all, of war-making ability — to sustain themselves. When this ability waned, empires disintegrated. All 'traditional' empires developed as a result of expansion from initially more restricted power bases and confined states. Moreover, the deployment of military strength was uppermost in the creation and maintenance of frontiers or territorial boundaries, though the latter were often in flux and shifted according to patterns of rebellion and invasion. Territorial boundaries were by no means yet 'fixed borders' (Giddens, 1985, pp.80–1).

While empires frequently were crossed by long-distance trading routes, and indeed often engaged directly in long-distance trade themselves, their economic requirements were largely met through the exaction of *tribute*, some of which was used to buy off threatened assaults if military power fell short. The tribute system supported the emperor, his administrative apparatus and the military. But however powerful empires might have been relative to contending power centres, they could sustain only limited administrative authority. Empires stretched over a plethora of communities and societies which were culturally diverse and heterogeneous. Empires were *ruled* but they were not *governed;* that is to say, emperors dominated a limited social and geographical space, but lacked the administrative means — the institutions, organizations, information, personnel and so on — to provide regularized administration over the territories they claimed as their own. The polities of empires busied themselves with conflicts and intrigue within dominant groups and classes and within local urban centres; beyond that the resort to military force was the key mechanism for binding and integrating peoples and territories. Although force was frequently effective, its significance should not be exaggerated. For the size, mobility and deployment of armies depended on the availability of water and local harvests to plunder. The military depended on the countryside and could move no more quickly than its men could march in a day, subject to the availability of foodstuffs.

2.2 SYSTEMS OF DIVIDED AUTHORITY IN MEDIAEVAL EUROPE

Feudalism — a political system of overlapping and divided authority — assumed many forms between the eighth and the fourteenth centuries. But it is probably fair to say that it was distinguished in general by a network of interlocking ties and obligations, with systems of rule fragmented into many small, autonomous parts (Poggi, 1978, p.27). Political power became more local and personal in focus, generating a 'social world of overlapping claims and powers' (Anderson, 1974, p.149). Some of these claims and powers conflicted; and no ruler or

state was sovereign in the sense of being supreme over a given territory and population (Bull, 1977, p.254). Within this system of power, tensions were rife and war was frequent.

The early roots of feudalism can be traced to left-overs of the Roman Empire and to the militaristic culture and the institutions of Germanic tribal peoples (Poggi, 1990, pp.35–7). A concern with loyalty in war and effective leadership among these peoples led to a special relationship between a ruler or lord or king (generally acclaimed or 'appointed' by his followers on the basis of his military and strategic skills) and the tribe's leading warriors, called *vassi* ('vassals'; 'servants'). The warriors declared bonds of loyalty and homage to their lord in return for privileges and protection. In the late seventh century, Frankish rulers connected the idea of a vassalic bond not just to military endeavour, but to the governing of territories more generally: rulers endowed vassals with rights of land, later called *feudum* ('fief'), in the hope of securing continued loyalty, military service and flows of income. The result, however, was rarely a simple hierarchy of lord, vassal and peasants; rather, the hierarchy was often characterized by a great chain of relations and obligations as major vassals 'sub-contracted' parts of their lands to others. At the bottom of the hierarchy was, of course, the vast majority of the population: 'the object of rule ... but never the subject of a political relationship' (Poggi, 1978, p.23).

While feudal kings were *primus inter pares* ('first among equals'), they were locked (with certain exceptions, notably in England and northern France) into wide-ranging systems of privileges and duties which often imposed on them a requirement to consult and negotiate with the most powerful lords or barons, when taxes or armies were to be raised. Lords were expected to maintain an autonomous military capability to support their kings; but it was a capability that provided them with an independent power base which they could be tempted to use to further their own interests. With some political forces seeking to centralize power and others seeking local autonomy, the feudal states system contained significant disintegrative tendencies.

Within mediaeval Europe the economy was dominated by agriculture, and any surplus generated was subject to competing claims. A successful claim constituted a basis to create and sustain political power. But the web of kingdoms, principalities, duchies and other power centres which depended on these arrangements was complicated further by the emergence of alternative powers in the towns and cities. Cities and urban federations depended on trade and manufacture and relatively high accumulations of capital. They developed different social and political structures and frequently enjoyed independent systems of rule specified by *charters*. Among the best known were the Italian cities of Florence, Venice and Sienna, but across Europe hundreds of urban centres developed. Nowhere, however, did they (and the web of feudal relations in the countryside) alone determine the pattern of rule or political identity. For in the Middle Ages 'Europe' more accurately meant 'Christendom'. And the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire gave Christendom what overarching unity it had.

The Holy Roman Empire existed in some form from the eighth until the early nineteenth century. For while the Roman imperial title had lapsed in the fifth century, it was revived in 800 by Pope Leo III and conferred on Charlemagne, King of the Franks. Later, the title Holy Roman Emperor was borne by successive dynasties of German kings, although its actual significance, like that of the Empire more generally, varied considerably over time. At its height, the Holy Roman Empire represented an attempt, under the patronage of the Catholic Church, to unite and centralize the fragmented power centres of western Christendom into a politically-unified Christian empire. The countries federated under the Empire spread from Germany to Spain, and from northern France to Italy. However, the actual secular power of the Empire was always limited by the complex power structures of feudal Europe on the one hand, and the Catholic Church on the other.

The chief rival power to the mediaeval feudal and city networks was the Catholic Church itself. Throughout the Middle Ages the Catholic Church sought to place spiritual above secular authority. While it would be quite misleading to suggest that the rise of Christianity effectively banished secular considerations from the lives of rulers and ruled, it unquestionabl shifted the source of authority and wisdom from this-worldly to other-worldly representatives. The Christian world-view transformed the rationale of political action from an earthly to a theological framework; it insisted that the Good lay in submission to God's will.

In mediaeval Europe there was no theoretical alternative — no alternative 'political theory' — to the theocratic positions of Pope and Holy Roman Emperor. The integration of Christian Europe came to depend above all on these authorities. This order has been characterized as the order of 'international Christian society' (Bull, 1977, p.27). International Christian society was conceived as being Christian first and foremost; it looked to God for the authority to resolve disputes and conflicts; its primary political reference point was religious doctrine, and it was overlaid with assumptions about the universal nature of human community.

It was not until western Christendom was under challenge, especially from the conflicts generated by the rise of national states and by the Reformation, that the idea of the modern state was born, and the ground was created for the development of a new form of political identity — national identity.

2.3 THE POLITY OF ESTATES

Some date the crisis of feudalism as early as 1300. But whether or not one accepts this date, the decay of feudalism can be detected over a substantial period as competing claims to more extensive and penetrating political power were fought out. Within this process of transformation, new understandings about political arrangements emerged. Some writers argue that these 'new' concepts and ideas — for example, the claims of various social groups or 'estates' (the nobility, clergy, and leading townsmen or burghers) to political prerogatives,

particularly to rights of representation — were merely extensions of existing feudal relations. However, others emphasize their novel and distinctive qualities.

Those that emphasize the innovative nature of the post-feudal system of rule draw attention to a number of larger territories in which successful rulers created new kinds of political relations with various elements of society. One observer has described the arrangements thus:

> In the first place, in the polity of estates the rulers present themselves primarily not as feudal superiors, but as the holders of higher, public prerogatives of non- and often pre-feudal origins, surrounded by the halo of a higher majesty; often imparted by means of sacred ceremonies (for example, the *sacre du roi* ['consecration of a king']).
>
> In the second place, the counterpart to the ruler is typically represented not by individuals, but by constituted bodies of various kinds: local assemblies of aristocrats, cities, ecclesiastical bodies, corporate associations. Taken singly, each of these bodies — the 'estates' — represents a different collective entity: a region's noblemen of a given rank, the residents of a town, the faithful of a parish or the practitioners of a trade. Taken together, these bodies claim to represent a wider, more abstract, territorial entity — country, *Land, terra, pays* — which, they assert, the ruler is entitled to rule only to the extent that he upholds its distinctive customs and serves its interests.
>
> In turn, however, these interests are largely identified with those of the estates; and even the customs of the country or the region in question have as their major components the different claims of the various estates. Thus, the ruler can rule legitimately only to the extent that periodically he convenes the estates of a given region or of the whole territory into a constituted, public gathering. (Poggi, 1990, pp.40–1)

In these circumstances, rulers had to deal with estates and estates had to deal with rulers. Out of this emerged a variety of estates-based assemblies, parliaments, diets and councils which sought to legitimate and enjoy autonomous faculties of rule. The 'polity of estates' was characterized by a 'power dualism': power was split between rulers and estates.

This 'power dualism' did not endure; it was challenged by the estates seeking greater power and by monarchs hoping to subvert the assemblies in order to centralize power in their own hands. As the grip of feudal traditions and customs was loosened, the nature and limits of political authority, law, rights and obedience emerged as a preoccupation of political thought.

2.4 ABSOLUTIST STATES

The historical changes that contributed to the transformation of mediaeval notions of politics were complicated. Struggles between monarchs and barons over the domain of rightful authority; peasant rebellions against the weight of excess taxation and social obligation; the spread of trade, commerce and market relations; the flourishing of Renaissance culture with its renewed interest in classical political ideas (including Athenian democracy and Roman law); changes in technology particularly military technology; the consolidation of national monarchies (notably in England, France and Spain); religious strife and the challenge to the universal claims of Catholicism; the struggle between Church and State — all played a part. In the sections that follow, I shall return to discuss a number of these developments, but it i important first to clarify the notion of the 'absolutist' state.

From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century two different forms of regim can be distinguished in Europe: the 'absolute' monarchies of France, Prussia, Austria, Spain, Sweden and Russia, among other places, and the 'constitutional' monarchies and republics found principally in England and Holland (Mann, 1986, p.476). There are important conceptual and institutional differences between these regime types, although in terms o the history of state/society relations some of the differences have, as we shall see, been more apparent than real. I shall discuss constitutional states shortly, but will focus in the first instance on absolutism.

Absolutism signalled the emergence of a form of state based upon: the absorption of smaller and weaker political units into larger and stronger political structures; a strengthened ability to rule over a unified territorial area; a tightened system of law and order enforced throughout a territory; the application of a 'more unitary, continuous, calculable, and effective' rule by a single, sovereign head; and the development of a relatively small number of states engaged in an 'open-ended, competitive, and risk-laden power struggle' (Poggi, 1978, pp.60–1). Although the actual power of absolutist rulers has often been exaggerated, these changes marked a substantial increase in 'public authority' from above. Certainly, absolutist rulers claimed that they alone held the legitimate right of decision over state affairs. One of the most remarkable statements of this view has been attributed to Louis XV king of France from 1715 to 1774:

> In my person alone resides the sovereign power, and it is from me alone that the courts hold their existence and their authority. That ... authority can only be exercised in my name ... . For it is to me exclusively that the legislative power belongs ... . The whole publi order emanates from me since I am its supreme guardian. ... The rights and interests of the nation ... are necessarily united with my own and can only rest in my hands.
> (quoted in Schama, 1989, p.104)

The absolutist monarch claimed to be the ultimate source of human law although it is important to note that his broad writ was understood to

derive from the law of God. The king's legitimacy was based on 'divine right'. In this very particular sense, political authorities were regarded as being as much under the law as any other corporate institution (Benn and Peters, 1959, p.256).

In a striking and somewhat (maliciously) humorous account of the public standing of the French monarch, perhaps the supreme example of an absolutist figure, the sociologist Gianfranco Poggi has written:

> [The] King of France was thoroughly, without residue, a 'public' personage. His mother gave birth to him in public, and from that moment his existence, down to its most trivial moments, was acted out before the eyes of attendants who were holders of dignified public offices. He ate in public, went to bed in public, woke up and was clothed and groomed in public, urinated and defecated in public. He did not copulate in public; but near enough, considering the circumstances under which he was expected to deflower his august bride. He did not much bathe in public; but then, neither did he in private. When he died (in public) his body was promptly and messily chopped up in public, and its severed parts ceremoniously handed out to the more exalted among the personages who had been attending him throughout his mortal existence.
> (Poggi, 1978, pp.68–9)

The absolutist monarch was at the apex of a new system of rule which was progressively centralized and anchored on a claim to supreme and indivisible power: *sovereign authority*. All these qualities were manifest in the routines and rituals of courtly life.

However, linked to the court there developed a new administrative apparatus involving the beginnings of a permanent, professional bureaucracy and army (Mann, 1986, p.476). If the French monarchy of the seventeenth century represents the best example of an absolutist court, Prussia under the Hohenzollern dynasty provides the best example of the 'prototypes of ministries' (Poggi, 1990, p.48). These 'prototypes' increased the state's involvement in the promotion and regulation of a hitherto unparalleled diversity of activities. Six ensuing developments were of great significance in the history of the states system:

1. the growing coincidence of territorial boundaries with a uniform system of rule;
2. the creation of new mechanisms of law-making and -enforcement;
3. the centralization of administrative power;
4. the alteration and extension of fiscal management;
5. the formalization of relations among states through the development of diplomacy and diplomatic institutions; and
6. the introduction of a standing army (see Anderson, 1974, pp.15–42; Giddens, 1985, ch. 4).

Absolutism helped set in motion a process of state-making which began to reduce the social, economic and cultural variation *within* states and expand the variation *among* them (Tilly, 1975, p.19).

According to one interpretation of these changes, the expansion of state administrative power was made possible to a significant extent by the extension of the state's capacity for the surveillance of its subjects; that is, the collection and storing of information about members of society, and the related ability to supervise subject populations (Giddens, 1985, pp.14–15). However, as the state's sovereign authority expanded and its administrative centres became more powerful, there was not simply a concentration of power at the apex. For the increase in administrative power via surveillance increased the state's dependence on cooperative forms of social relations; it was no longer possible for the state to manage its affairs and sustain its offices and activities by force alone. As a result, greater reciprocity was created between the governors and the governed, and the more reciprocity was involved, the more opportunities were generated for subordinate groups to influence their rulers (Giddens, 1985, pp.198ff.). Absolutism, in short, created within itself a momentum toward the development of new forms and limits on state power — constitutionalism and (eventually) participation by powerful groups in the process of government itself.

Whatever the other merits of this particular interpretation, it usefully draws attention to the gulf that existed between the claims of the absolutist monarch, on the one hand, and a reality, on the other hand, which imposed on the monarch requirements of negotiation and cooperation if the state was to function effectively. This gulf has been explored further in the recent work of the sociologist Michael Mann, who distinguishes between a 'strong' regime's power to effect its will over civil society, which he calls 'despotism', and its power to coordinate civil society, which he refers to as 'infrastructural strength' (1986, p.477). Comparing a range of absolutist regimes, Mann argues that the absolute monarch was 'no ancient emperor — he was not the sole source of law; of coinages, weights and measures; of economic monopolies ... . He could not impose compulsory cooperation. He owned only his own estates' (Mann, 1986, p.478). Absolutist regimes, Mann concludes, had limited despotic reach; they were weak in relation to powerful groups in society, for example, the nobility, merchants and urban bourgeoisie. But, like their constitutional counterparts, they were engaged increasingly in the coordination of the activities of these groups and in building up the state's infrastructural strength.

By the end of the seventeenth century Europe was no longer a mosaic of states. For the 'consolidated independent sovereignty of each individual state ... was at the same time part of a process of overall inter-state integration' (Giddens, 1985, p.91). A concomitant of each and every state's claim to uncontestable authority was the recognition that such a claim gave other states an equal entitlement to autonomy and respect within their own borders. The development of state sovereignty was part of a process of mutual recognition whereby states granted each other rights of jurisdiction in their respective territories and communities.

In the international context, sovereignty has involved the assertion by the state of independence; that is, of its possession of sole rights to jurisdiction over a particular people and territory. This dimension of sovereignty has, in addition, been associated with the claim that, by virtue of the very argument which establishes the sovereignty of a particular state, that state must accept that it will be one among many states with, in principle, equal rights to self-determination. In the world of relations among states, the principle of the sovereign equality of all states was to become paramount in the formal conduct of states towards one another.

The conception of international law which emerged within the new 'international society of states' has been referred to by international lawyers, notably Richard Falk and Antonio Cassese, as the 'Westphalian model' (after the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, which brought to an end the Eighty Years War between Spain and the Dutch and the German phase of the Thirty Years War). The model covers the period of international law from 1648 to 1945 (although some would say it still holds today). It depicts the emergence of a world community consisting of sovereign states which settle their differences privately and often by force; which engage in diplomatic relations but otherwise minimal cooperation; which seek to place their own national interest above all others; and which accept the logic of the principle of effectiveness, that is, the principle that might eventually makes right in the international world — appropriation becomes legitimation. The model of Westphalia can be summarized by the following seven points (see Cassese, 1986, pp.396–9; Falk, 1969):

The model of Westphalia

1 The world consists of, and is divided by, sovereign states which recognize no superior authority.
2 The processes of law-making, the settlement of disputes and law-enforcement are largely in the hands of individual states subject to the logic of 'the competitive struggle for power'.
3 Differences among states are often settled by force: the principle of effective power holds sway. Virtually no legal fetters exist to curb the resort to force; international legal standards afford minimal protection.
4 Responsibility for cross-border wrongful acts are a private matter concerning only those affected; no collective interest in compliance with international law is recognized.
5 All states are regarded as equal before the law: legal rules do not take account of asymmetries of power.
6 International law is oriented to the establishment of minimal rules of co-existence; the creation of enduring relationships among states and peoples is an aim only to the extent that it allows military objectives to be met.
7 The minimization of impediments on state freedom is the 'collective' priority.

The new international order, ushered in by the era of the absolutist state (and its constitutional counterpart, a discussion of which follows), had a lasting and paradoxical quality rich in implications: an increasingly integrated states system simultaneously endorsed the right of each state to autonomous and independent action. The upshot of this development was, as one commentator has aptly noted, that states were 'not subject to international moral requirements because they represent separate and discrete political orders with no common authority among them' (Beitz, 1979, p.25). According to this model, the world consists of separate political powers pursuing their own interests, and backed ultimately by their organization of coercive power.

2.5 MODERN STATES

The proximate sources of the modern state were absolutism and the interstate system it initiated. In condensing and concentrating political power in its own hands, and in seeking to create a central system of rule, absolutism paved the way for a secular and national system of power. Moreover, in claiming sovereign authority exclusively for itself, it threw down a challenge to all those groups and classes which had had a stake in the old order (the polity of estates), and to all those with a stake in the new developing order based on capital and the market economy. It forced all these collectivities to rethink their relationship to the state, and to re-examine their political resources. In addition, the myriad battles and wars fought out in the interstate system altered fundamentally the boundaries of both absolutist states and the emerging modern states — the whole map of Europe changed as territorial boundaries progressively became fixed borders.

Although the transition from the absolutist to the modern state was marked by dramatic events and processes such as the English (1640–88) and French (1789) Revolutions, an exclusive focus on these hinders an understanding of the way in which the absolutist state itself was crucial in the development of modern political rule. It was the confluence of 'internal' transformations in European states with shifting geopolitical relations and forces which provided a, if not *the*, key impetus to the formation of the modern state. I shall return to elements of these 'macropatterns' in Section 3; in the meantime, what should be understood by the term 'modern state'?

All modern states are nation-states — *political apparatuses, distinct from both ruler and ruled, with supreme jurisdiction over a demarcated territorial area, backed by a claim to a monopoly of coercive power, and enjoying a minimum level of support or loyalty from their citizens* (cf. Skinner, 1978, pp.349–58; Giddens, 1985, pp.17–31, 116–21). Like all definitions in the social sciences, this one is controversial; and Section 4 of this chapter will, as previously noted, focus directly on the controversy about how the modern state should be understood. But for my purposes here, this particular definition is useful because it underscores a number of the crucial innovations of the modern states system; these are:

1 *Territoriality.* While all states have made claims to territories, it is only with the modern states system that exact borders have been fixed.

2 *Control of the means of violence.* The claim to hold a monopoly on force and the means of coercion (sustained by a standing army and the police) became possible only with the 'pacification' of peoples — the breaking down of rival centres of power and authority — in the nation-state. This element of the modern state was not fully present until the nineteenth century.

3 *Impersonal structure of power.* The idea of an impersonal and sovereign political order — i.e. a legally circumscribed structure of power with supreme jurisdiction over a territory — could not predominate while political rights, obligations and duties were conceived as closely tied to property rights, religion and the claims of traditionally privileged groups such as the nobility. This matter was still in contention in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

4 *Legitimacy.* It was only when claims to 'divine right' or 'state right' were challenged and eroded that it became possible for human beings as 'individuals' and as 'peoples' to be active citizens of a new order — not merely dutiful subjects of a monarch or emperor. The loyalty of citizens became something that had to be *won* by modern states: invariably this involved a claim by the state to be legitimate because it reflected and/or represented the needs and interests of its citizens.

There is a further clarification which should be made at this juncture. The concept of the nation-state, or national state, as some prefer, ought not to be taken to imply that a state's people necessarily 'share a strong linguistic, religious, and symbolic identity' (Tilly, 1990, pp.2–3). Although some nation-states approximate to this state of affairs, many do not (for example, in the United Kingdom there are significant differences in national tradition). It is therefore important to separate out the concepts of 'nation-state' and 'nationalism'. Anthony Giddens has made the point succinctly: '... what makes the 'nation' integral to the nation-state ... is not the existence of sentiments of nationalism but the unification of an administrative apparatus over precisely defined territorial boundaries (in a complex of other nation-states)' (Giddens, 1987, p.172). The concept of 'nationalism' — denoting the existence of symbols and beliefs which create patterns of ethnic, or religious, or linguistic commonality and political ambition — should be reserved for highlighting particular types of configuration of peoples and states.

It has been argued that the difference between absolute and modern states is not as great as conventionally thought, for two reasons (see Mann, 1986, pp.450–99). First, absolutist states, as already noted, had less power over civil society than is frequently claimed. Second, modern states are rarely 'bounded' by their constitutions and borders and, hence, have often behaved like arrogant 'absolutist' states, especially in their dealings with peoples and cultures overseas. Both points carry weight and need to be borne in mind in what follows. However, neither point negates fully the conceptual and institutional innovations introduced by the modern state. In order to highlight these,

it is useful to draw attention to a number of forms of the modern state itself. These are the *constitutional state*, the *liberal state*, the *liberal-democratic state*, and the *single-party polity*.

Forms of the modern state

1 *Constitutionalism* or the *constitutional state* refers to implicit and/or explicit limits on political or state decision-making, limits which can be either procedural or substantive; that is, specifying how decisions and changes can be made (proceduralism), or blocking certain kinds of changes altogether (substantivism) (see Elster, 1988). Constitutionalism defines the proper forms and limits of state action, and its elaboration over time as a set of doctrines and practices helped inaugurate one of the central tenets of European liberalism: that the state exists to safeguard the rights and liberties of citizens who are ultimately the best judges of their own interests; and, accordingly, that the state must be restricted in scope and constrained in practice in order to ensure the maximum possible freedom of every citizen.

2 The *liberal state* became defined in large part by the attempt to create a private sphere independent of the state, and by a concern to re-shape the state itself, i.e. by freeing civil society — personal, family and business life — from unnecessary political interference, and simultaneously delimiting the state's authority (Held, 1987, chs 2–3). The building blocks of the liberal state became constitutionalism, private property, the competitive market economy and the distinctively patriarchal family (see Chapter 4 of this volume). But while liberalism celebrated the rights of individuals to 'life, liberty and property' (John Locke), it should be noted from the outset that it was generally the male property-owning individual who was the focus of so much attention; and the new freedoms were first and foremost for the men of the new middle classes or the bourgeoisie. The western world was liberal first, and only later, after extensive conflicts, liberal democratic; that is, only later was a universal franchise won which in principle allowed all mature adults the chance to express their judgement about the performance of those who govern them (Macpherson, 1966, p.6).

3 The third variant of the modern state is *liberal* or *representative democracy* itself, a system of rule embracing elected 'officers' who undertake to 'represent' the interests or views of citizens within the framework of the 'rule of law'. Representative democracy means that decisions affecting a community are not taken by its members as a whole, but by a sub-group of representatives whom 'the people' have elected for this purpose. In the arena of national politics, representative democracy takes the form of elections to congresses, parliaments or similar national bodies, and is now associated with the system of government in countries as far afield as the United States, Britain, Germany, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

4 Finally, there is the form of the modern state known as the *one-party* or *single-party polity*. Until recently, the Soviet Union, many East European societies and some Third World countries have been governed

by this system. The principle underlying one-party polities is that a single party can be the legitimate expression of the overall will of the community. Voters have the opportunity to affirm the party's choice of candidate, or occasionally to choose from among different party candidates (although some may doubt whether this constitutes an opportunity for the exercise of choice at all).

Little further will be said about the single-party polity in this chapter. (For further discussion of this state form, see Book 2 (Allen *et al.*, 1992), Chapter 1, and Book 4 (Hall *et al.*, 1992), Chapter 1.) This chapter will instead attend to those elements of the first three state forms listed above which require elaboration and examination. But before turning to this task, it is important to respond to the question: What accounts for the emergence of the modern nation-state? In other words, why did national states come to predominate in the political world?

3 WHY DID NATION-STATES BECOME SUPREME?

In order to address the above question, this section will examine a number of key factors, or causal patterns, in the development of the states system and of the modern state in particular. The prime focus will be on war and militarism and on the relationship between states and capitalism, although other significant factors will be touched on. Once again, it will be useful to examine deeply structured processes of change taking place over long periods. It should be noted that the stress is on *processes, factors* and *causal patterns*; that is to say, this section is guided by the assumption that there is no mono-causal explanation — no single phenomenon or set of phenomena — which fully explains the rise of the modern state. States, like other collectivities and institutions, depend for their existence on broad experiences and diverse conditions. It is in a combination of factors that the beginnings of an explanation for the rise of the modern state can be found.

3.1 WAR AND MILITARISM

It has already been suggested that the nature and form of the states system crystallized at the intersection of 'international' and 'national' conditions and processes (the terms in inverted commas are so expressed because they did not take on their contemporary meaning until the era of fixed borders, i.e. the era of the nation-state). In fact, it is at this intersection that the 'shape' of the state was largely determined — its size, external configuration, organizational structure, ethnic composition, material infrastructure and so on (Hintze, 1975, chs 4–6, 11). At the heart of the processes involved was the ability of states to secure and strengthen their power bases and, thereby, to order their affairs, internally and externally. What was at issue, in short, was the capacity of states to organize the means of coercion (armies, navies and

other forms of military might) and to deploy them when necessary. How important this element of state power has been to the history of states can be gleaned by examining the case of England/Britain.

From an analysis of state finances (how the state raised and spent what money it had) over several centuries, Michael Mann has shown that 'the functions of the state appear overwhelmingly military and overwhelmingly geopolitical rather than economic and domestic' (Mann, 1986, p.511; see also Mitchell and Deane, 1962; Mitchell and Jones, 1971). Mann calculates that from about the twelfth to the nineteenth century, between 70 and 90 per cent of the English state's financial resources were continuously devoted to the acquisition and use of the instruments of military force, especially in international wars. For most of this period the state grew slowly and fitfully (although when it did grow it was due to warfare and related developments), and its size, measured in relation to the resources of the economy and its impact on the daily life of most people, was small. But in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the state's real finances grew rapidly, largely in response to the escalating costs of the means of 'coercive power'; in this case, the growing professional, standing armies and navies. Expenditures on non-military civil functions remained minor.

Reliable annual sets of accounts are available for central government expenditure in Britain for the period after 1688. These are presented in Figure 2.6 and Table 2.3, both taken from Mann (1986).

ACTIVITY 2 Turn to Figure 2.6 and Table 2.3 (overleaf) now. Consider how military and total expenditure fluctuated together.

Mann's comments on Figure 2.6 and Table 2.3 are telling:

> Note first the upward trend in the financial size of the British state: Between 1700 and 1815 real expenditures rise fifteenfold (and the increase at current prices is thirty-fivefold!). This is easily the fastest rate of increase we have seen for any century ... . But the upward trend is not steady. The total rockets suddenly six times. It will come as no surprise that all but one of these are at the beginning of a war, and all six are due primarily to a large rise in military expenditures. Furthermore debt repayment, used exclusively to finance military needs, rises toward the end of each war and is maintained in the first years of peace. The pattern is beautifully regular ... .
>
> These figures confirm every hypothesis made for previous centuries on the basis of sketchier data. State finances were dominated by foreign wars. As warfare developed more professional and permanent forces, so the state grew both in overall size and (probably) in terms of its size in relation to its 'civil society'.
> (Mann, 1986, pp.485–6)

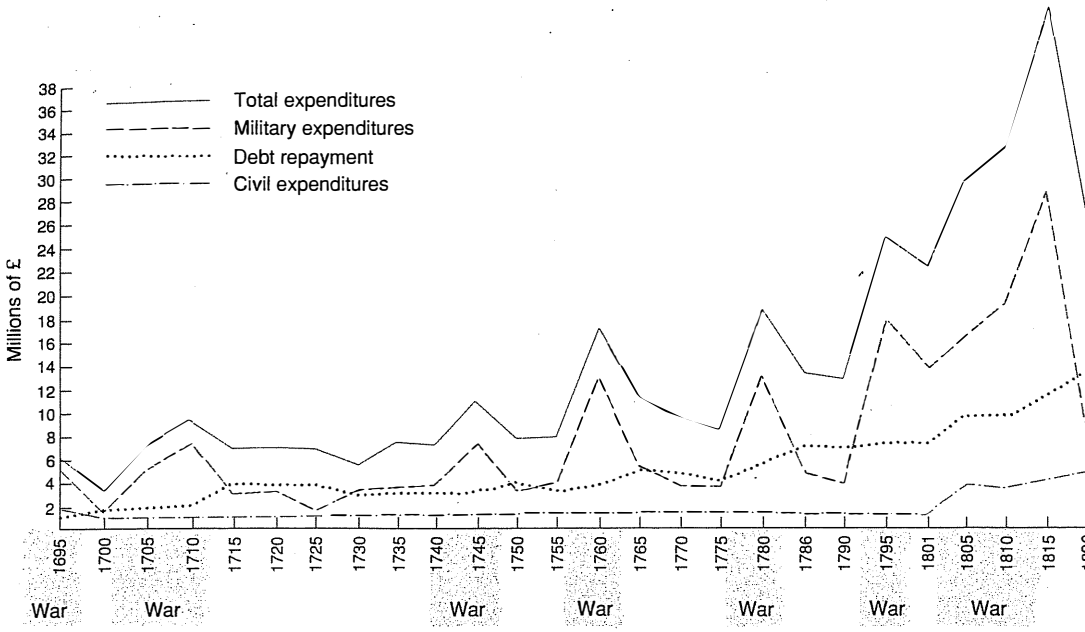


Figure 2.6 British state expenditure, 1695–1820 (at constant prices: 1690–9 = 100)
Source: Mann, 1986, p.484

The significance of these remarks is highlighted further if it is recalled that they bear on the activities and functions of a constitutional state. In fact, over the whole period in question, broadly the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, whether a state was 'constitutional' or 'absolutist' made little difference to the proportion of its expenditure on the military. This can be seen by comparing Table 2.3 with Table 2.2, which shows Austrian state expenditure for part of the same period.

Table 2.2 Austrian state expenditure, 1795–1817 (in percent)

Year	Military	Debt repayment	Civil	Total expenditure at current prices (in millions of guldern)
1795	71	12	17	133.3
1800	67	22	11	143.9
1805	63	25	12	102.7
1810	69	20	11	76.1
1815	75	4	21	121.2
1817	53	8	38	98.8

Source: Mann, 1986, p.487

Sketchier evidence appears to confirm a similar pattern of income and costs for France, Prussia and Russia, although each had its peculiarities.

The above material is not an argument for 'military determinism'; that is, for a view which asserts that changes in war and the military are the

Table 2.3 State expenditure for Great Britain, 1695–1820 (in millions of pounds at current and constant prices: 1690–9 = 100)*

		Military expenditure		Debt repayment		Civil expenditure		Total expenditure	
Year	Price index	Current	Constant	Current	Constant	Current	Constant	Current	Constant
1695	102	4.9	4.8	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.8	6.2	6.1
1700	114	1.3	1.1	1.3	1.1	0.7	0.6	3.2	2.8
1705	87	4.1	4.7	1.0	1.2	0.7	0.8	5.9	6.8
1710	106	7.2	6.8	1.8	1.7	0.9	0.8	9.8	9.2
1715	97	2.2	2.3	3.3	3.4	0.7	0.8	6.2	6.4
1720	94	2.3	2.4	2.8	3.0	1.0	1.0	6.0	6.4
1725	89	1.5	1.7	2.8	3.1	1.3	1.5	5.5	6.2
1730	99	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.3	0.9	0.9	5.6	5.6
1735	82	2.7	3.3	2.2	2.7	0.9	1.1	5.9	7.1
1740	90	3.2	3.6	2.1	2.3	0.8	0.9	6.2	6.8
1745	84	5.8	6.9	2.3	2.7	0.8	1.0	8.9	10.6
1750	93	3.0	3.2	3.2	3.5	1.0	1.1	7.2	7.7
1755	92	3.4	3.7	2.7	2.9	1.0	1.1	7.1	7.7
1760	105	13.5	12.8	3.4	3.2	1.2	1.1	18.0	17.1
1765	109	6.1	5.6	4.8	4.4	1.1	1.0	12.0	11.0
1770[a]	114	3.9	3.4	4.8	4.2	1.2	1.1	10.5	9.2
1775	130	3.9	3.0	4.7	3.6	1.2	0.9	10.4	8.0
1780	119	14.9	12.5	6.0	5.0	1.3	1.1	22.6	19.0
1786[b]	131	5.5	4.2	9.5	7.2	1.5	1.2	17.0	13.0
1790	134	5.2	3.9	9.4	7.0	1.7	1.3	16.8	12.5
1795	153	26.3	17.2	10.5	6.8	1.8	1.2	39.0	25.5
1801[c]	230	31.7	13.8	16.8	7.3	2.1	0.9	51.0	22.2
1805	211	34.1	16.2	20.7	9.8	7.8	3.7	62.8	30.0
1810	245	48.3	19.7	24.2	9.9	8.8	3.6	81.5	33.3
1815	257	72.4	28.2	30.0	11.7	10.4	4.0	112.9	44.0
1820	225	16.7	7.4	31.1	13.8	9.8	4.4	57.5	25.6

* NB: *Constant* prices are prices controlled for inflation; i.e. they compensate for the existence of inflation. *Current* prices are the real prices paid at the time of purchase; i.e. they include inflation.
[a] Between 1770 and 1801 the detailed items fall short of the total given by about £500,000. No reason for this is given in the source.
[b] 1785 figures follow an idiosyncratic budgeting system.
[c] 1800 figures are incomplete.
Source: Mann, 1986, p.485.

exclusive source of change in the state and the states system. However, it does indicate that the development and maintenance of a coercive capability was central to the development of the state: if states wished to survive they had to fund this capability and ensure its effectiveness. Precisely what this involved can be analysed further by means of Figure 2.7. (Note that the discussion which follows concentrates initially on the central and left-hand columns of Figure 2.7.)

The process of state-making, and the formation of the modern states system, was to a large degree the result, as Poggi has observed, 'of the

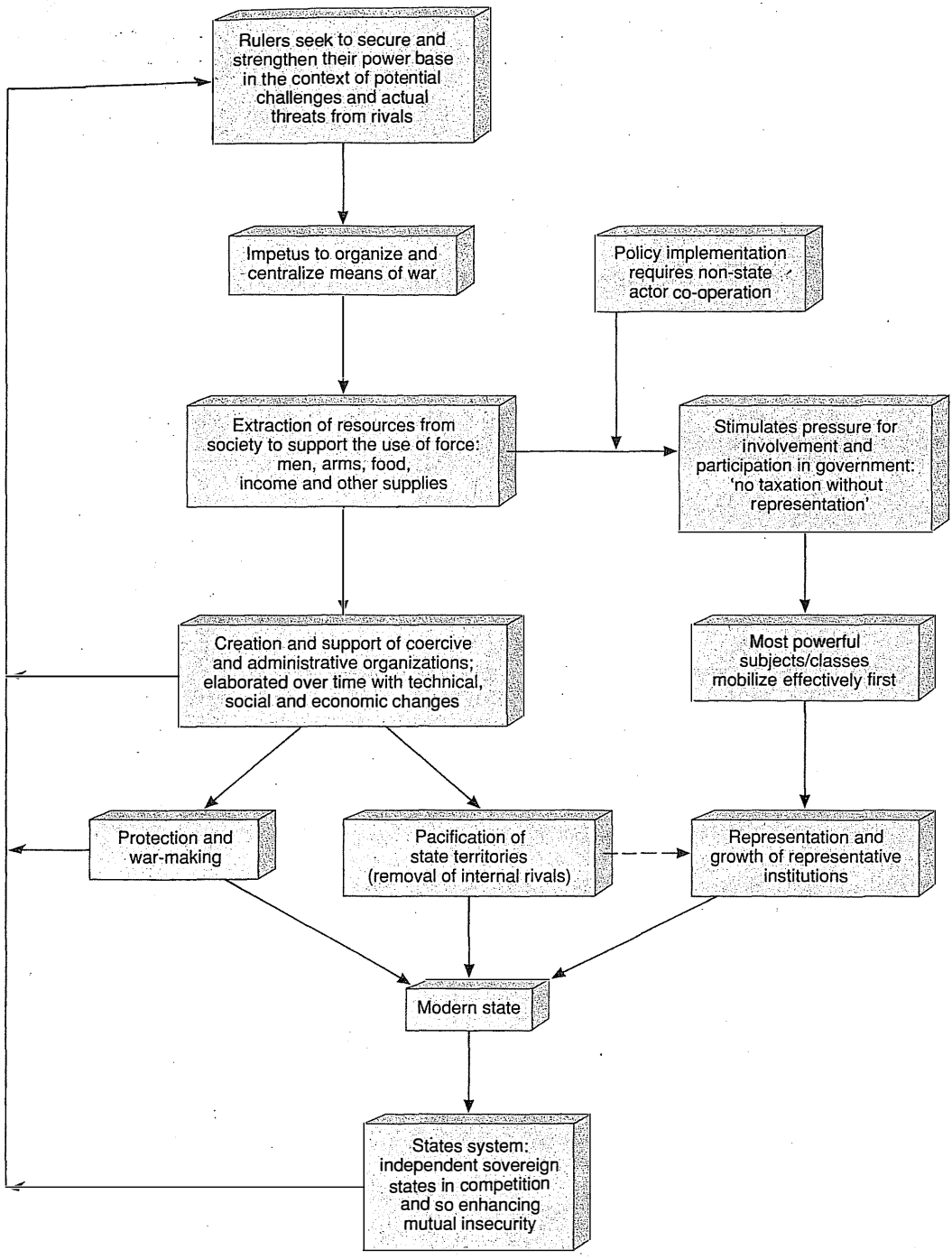


Figure 2.7 War and the modern state

strenuous efforts made by rulers, each by means of his/her apparatus of rule, to widen and secure their power base and to increase their own effectiveness and discretion in managing and mobilizing societal resources' (1990, p.101). State-makers were locked into an open-ended and ruthless competition in which, as Tilly put it, 'most contenders lost' (1975, p.15). The successful cases of state-making such as England, France and Spain were the 'survivors'.

The competition among states was driven not just by the ambitions of rulers and internal or domestic considerations, but also by the very *structure* of the international system: individual states, pursuing their own security, had to be prepared for war, a process which itself generated insecurity in other states which sought to respond in kind. In short, states armed and became militaristic partly to ensure their own safety and, in so doing, they ensured the insecurity of others who armed in turn — thus making all states less secure. (This vicious circle of mutual insecurity is often referred to as the 'security dilemma' of the state.)

The ability to wage war was dependent on a successful process of *extraction*; that is, on a state's capacity to extract resources — whether these be men, weapons, foodstuffs, taxes or income substitutes — in support of its endeavours. Few subjects, however, were willing to sacrifice their resources or lives without a struggle for some kind of return or recognition, and conflicts and rebellions against economic and political demands were rife. In response, state rulers built state structures — administrative, bureaucratic and coercive — in order to aid the coordination and control of their subject populations. In short, direct connections can be traced between a growth in the requirement for the means of waging war, an expansion in processes of extraction, and a concomitant formation of state executive and administrative offices to organize and control these changes. The development of some of the key organizations of the modern state emerged at the intersection of warfare and the attempt to pay for it. War and its financial burdens promoted 'territorial consolidation, centralization, differentiation of the instruments of government and monopolization of the means of coercion ...' (Tilly, 1975, p.42).

It has already been noted (in Section 2) that different state forms prevailed in Europe in different eras and regions. The organizational form of the state varied too. In his most recent work, Tilly has sought to examine this variation with reference to the ways state development was mediated by, or filtered through, the social structure of particular societies — that is, the particular constellation of social classes and groups which existed within the terrain of the state and which were either cooperative with or resistant to state-makers (Tilly, 1990, pp.15, 27–8, 57, 117ff.). The shape of each such constellation was significantly affected by the different kinds of resource base which could be drawn upon by the various groups and classes comprising it, and the options they had for involvement (or otherwise) in state politics. As Tilly explains:

> The organization of major social classes, and their relations to the state, varied significantly from Europe's coercion-intensive regions (areas of few cities and agricultural predominance, where direct coercion played a major part in production), to its capital-intensive regions (areas of many cities and commercial predominance, where markets, exchange, and market-oriented production prevailed). The demands major classes made on the state, and their influence over the state, varied correspondingly.
> (Tilly, 1990, p.15)

For example, in 'capital-intensive' regions, like those found in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century, city-based merchants and capitalists favoured, and sometimes achieved, state structures which extended representation to include their interests. By contrast, in 'coercion-intensive' areas such as the Russian Empire, landlords gained greater control of the state and were able to hinder or block the development of representative councils or assemblies.

Over time it was the increasing scale of war, and particularly its growing reliance on technological change, industrialization and specialization which, in combination with the growth of commercial, legal and diplomatic interaction among states, gave the modern centralized nation-state its distinctive edge over other state forms. States that could mobilize and sustain standing armies and/or navies gained a war-making advantage. To quote Tilly again: '... states having access to a combination of large rural populations, capitalists, and relatively commercialized economies won out. They set the terms of war, and their form of state became the predominant one in Europe. Eventually European states converged on that form: the national state' (Tilly, 1990, p.15).

The above discussion has concentrated on the relationship between warfare, state-building and the modern state. However, the relationship between warfare, state-building and democratic representation — i.e. the relationship set out on the right-hand side of Figure 2.7 — needs further specification. Yet, here too the role and changing form of war was important. It has been argued by a number of scholars that the more military superiority depended on the ability of a state to mobilize large numbers of soldiers, particularly large numbers of lightly-armed foot soldiers, the greater have been the prospects for representative or popular government (Dahl, 1989, p.245; Andreski, 1968). The subject–soldier has often become, and struggled to become, a citizen–soldier (Janowitz, 1978, pp.178–9; cf. Dahl, 1989, p.247). As the political scientist Robert Dahl put it:

> ... to see oneself as a member of a nation, a privilege for which one was expected to make sacrifices, could also justify one in making a more expansive claim, including a right to a fair share in governing ... or at any rate [as] entitled to the franchise. Countries with mass armies now found that they had ushered in the Age of Democratic Revolutions. It was under these historical conditions in which

> military organisation and technology were more favourable to democratisation than they had been for many centuries that ... the institutions of polyarchy ['representative government'] took root in one country after another.
> (Dahl, 1989, p.247)

The more costly and demanding war became, the more rulers had to bargain for and win the support of their subjects. And the more people were drawn into preparations for war and war-making, the more they became aware of their membership in a political community and of the rights and obligations such membership might confer. While the nature of this emergent identity was often initially vague, it grew more definite and precise over time. The conditions for the development of citizenship varied across countries and regions (see Therborn, 1977; Mann, 1987; Turner, 1986). But the expansion of citizenship, or membership of an overall political community, was undoubtedly bound up with the military and administrative requirements of the modern state and the 'politicization' of social relations and day-to-day activities which followed in its wake (cf. Giddens, 1985, ch. 8). In fact, it has been argued that the democratization of the modern nation-state was largely 'a martial accomplishment' (Therborn, 1977). Whether or not this statement is fully justified, it usefully highlights the impetus received by institutions of representation and democracy from the conditions of mass mobilization and the political demands created by the modern state, although it is also important to stress that while some democracies were stimulated by processes of mass mobilization (Britain, Canada), others became democracies by defeat (Austria, Germany, Italy and Japan; see Therborn, 1977). It would be misleading to suggest that war created any one single pattern of causation in the building of democratic institutions.

There is not scope here to focus on nationalism as such, but it is useful to add that nationalism was a critical force in the development of the democratic nation-state. The conditions involved in the creation of the modern state were also often the conditions which generated nationalism. Nationalism has been closely linked to the administrative unification of the state. For the process by which national identities were formed was often the result of both a struggle for membership in the new political communities, and a struggle by elites and governments to create a new identity to legitimize the actions of the state. In other words, the construction of national identity has been part of an attempt to bind people together within the framework of a delimited territory in order to gain or enhance state power. The requirements of political action have led to the deployment of national identity as a means of ensuring the coordination of policy, mobilization and legitimacy (Breuilly, 1982, pp.365ff.). However, the conditions of 'state-making' and nationalism or 'nation-building' never fully overlapped — and nationalism itself, especially in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, became a force frequently deployed to challenge existing nation-state boundaries (e.g. Northern Ireland; see Poggi, 1990, pp.26–7).

It is a paradoxical result of the waging of war that it stimulated the formation of representative and democratic institutions. But to note this is not to claim that democracy is fully explained by the pursuit of war. The historical conditions surrounding the rise of democracy have been complex and varied (Dahl, 1989; Held, 1991). It is one thing to suggest that there is a direct connection in certain countries between, for example, the extension of the universal franchise and the emergence of modern infantry armies, but it is quite another to argue that democracy is thereby fully explained. Furthermore, if war gave democracy an impetus within particular nation-states, the rights and principles of democracy were often explicitly denied to those who were conquered, colonized and exploited by powerful nation-states. While the expansion of Europe became the basis of the political unification of the world into a system of nation-states, the main purpose of this expansion was to further European commerce and trade; the rights of colonial subjects were a secondary matter, if a matter of concern at all.

3.2 STATES AND CAPITALISM

In the interpretation that has been offered so far about the development of the modern state, little has been said about the *economic motives* or *economic interests* of political and social actors, and about the economic conditions and limits of state action, other than to examine the issue of extraction of men, arms, income etc. (see Section 3.1). The main emphasis has been on the non-economic features of the modern state; that is, on the independent and autonomous capacities of its organizations and agencies. Does the introduction of an account of economic relations, and of the impact of the development of capitalism especially, alter the view set out so far of states as competing geopolitical institutions, above all else? Did the modern state system shape and constrain the modern capitalist economy as the latter developed after AD 1500? Or was the formation of the capitalist economy on a progressively more international basis a, if not the, prime determinant of the scope or limits of state power? As state boundaries became more fixed, did the formal state rulers 'rule the roost', or was the 'roost' impinged upon more and more by the rising economic classes? In short, what was the effect upon the nation-state of the development of the modern economic system; and who exactly rules the nation-state? As with previous sections, it is useful to take several steps back in time before seeking to discriminate among, and weigh up, the multifarious factors which were at play.

At about AD 1000 the nearest approximation to a worldwide order of politics and trade was the Moslem world. Its dominance, however, was slowly challenged: faced with Mongol invasions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, on the one hand, and later outflanked by European naval expeditions, on the other, the vitality of the Islamic world declined (Modelski, 1972). Europe was to 'explode outward upon the world' (Mann, 1986, p.500). The growth of interconnections between states and societies — that is, of *globalization* — became progressively

shaped by the expansion of Europe. Globalization meant western globalization. Key features of the modern states system — the centralization of political power, the expansion of administrative rule, the emergence of massed standing armies, the deployment of force — which existed in Europe in embryo in the sixteenth century were to become prevalent features of the entire global system. The chief vehicle for this was, to begin with, the European states' capacity for overseas operations by means of naval and military force capable of long-range navigation.

Among the early leaders in exploration were the Spanish and Portuguese (see Chapter 6, Section 2.3). If the Iberian monarchies led the first two centuries of 'European globalization', their position was eroded in the seventeenth century by the Dutch and then by the English. English influence was markedly in the ascendant in the eighteenth century and quite dominant in the nineteenth. British naval and military power conjoined with London as the centre of world trade and finance. However, it is doubtful whether any one single power was dominant until the nineteenth century. At least two powerful states were always contending for hegemony in Europe, and the expansion of world commerce drew in non-state actors as well (Tilly, 1990, p.189).

The expansion of Europe across the globe enhanced the demand, as one observer has noted, 'for organizations that would be capable of operating on such a scale. All the basic organization types of modern society — the modern state, modern corporate enterprise, modern science — were shaped by it and benefited greatly from it' (Modelski, 1972, p.37). In particular, globalization itself became a major source of expansion of state activity and efficiency. Governments organized and reaped some of the fruits of the 'discovery' and exploitation of non-European lands as it became essential to equip, plan and finance exploration and manage newly acquired posts and territories. In turn, state bureaucracies and executive powers were better resourced and this enhanced their autonomy in the face of local assemblies and parliaments. Once again, those states which were able to call upon an administrative infrastructure, substantial manpower and a wide tax base, alongside arms and shipbuilding industries, gained an advantage. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries this advantage was enjoyed by absolutist and constitutional governments; in the nineteenth century by the emergent leading nation-states.

If the consolidation of the modern European state was aided by globalization, this process involved great social costs: the progressive collapse of non-European civilizations, among them the Moslem, Indian and Chinese; the disorganizing effects of western rule on a large number of small societies; and the interlinked degradation of the non-European and European worlds caused by the slave trade. The benefits and costs were not, however, just the result of the expansion of the European states system: the picture was more complicated.

The diffusion of European power occurred mainly through the medium of sea-going military and commercial endeavours; and in the process

Europe became connected to a global system of trade and production relationships. At the centre of the latter were newly expanding capitalistic economic mechanisms which had their origins in the sixteenth century, or in what is sometimes called the 'long sixteenth century' running from about 1450 to 1640 (Braudel, 1973). One of the foremost analysts of this period is the sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein. As Wallerstein points out, 'capitalism was from the beginning an affair of the world economy and not of nation-states ... . Capital has never allowed its aspirations to be determined by national boundaries' (1979, p.19). The emergence of capitalism ushered in a quite fundamental change in the world order: for the first time genuinely global interconnections were achieved among states and societies. Capitalism has been able to penetrate the distant corners of the world.

Wallerstein makes a fundamental distinction between two types of *world-system* which have existed historically: world-empires and world-economies. Whereas world-empires were political units characterized by imperial bureaucracies, with substantial armies to exact tax and tribute from territorially dispersed populations, their capacity for success depended upon political and military achievements. World empires were not as flexible and, ultimately, as adaptable as the emerging world-economy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and they were finally displaced by the European world-economy as it expanded globally. They were displaced, Wallerstein argues, because the new world economic system was based on a process of endless accumulation of wealth. This world-economy was an economic unit which transcended the boundaries of any given political structure. If it constrained anything it was states, not the process of economic expansion.

According to this view, the modern world-system is divided into three components: the core (initially located in north-west and central Europe); the semi-periphery (the Mediterranean zone after its decline from earlier prominence); and the periphery (colonized and captured territories), although where each of these three components is located has varied over time. Each zone of the world-economy is characterized, Wallerstein maintains, by a particular type of economic activity, state structure, class formation and mechanism of labour control. The world capitalist economy created a new world-wide division of labour. And while in the late twentieth century colonialism in its original form has practically disappeared, the world capitalist economy creates and reproduces massive imbalances of economic and political power among different component areas.

The development of the world capitalist economy initially took the form of the expansion of market relations, driven by a growing need for raw materials and other factors of production. Capitalism stimulated this drive and was stimulated by it. It is useful to make a distinction (which Wallerstein fails to do) between the expansion of capitalist market relations based on the desire to buy, sell and accumulate mobile resources or capital, and the formation of industrial capitalism

involving highly distinctive class relations — based on those who own and control the means of production and those who have only their labouring capacity to sell. 'Capitalists', under the latter conditions, own factories and technology, while wage-labourers, or 'wage-workers', are without ownership in the means of production (see Chapter 4 for a further discussion of these issues). It is only with the development of capitalism in Europe after 1500, and in particular with the formation of the capitalist organization of production from the middle of the eighteenth century, that the activities of capitalists and the capitalist system began to converge (Tilly, 1990, pp.17, 189; Giddens, 1985, pp.122–47).

The development of capitalism itself can be explained as partly the result of long drawn-out changes in 'European' agriculture from as early as the twelfth century: changes resulting in part from the drainage and utilization of wet soils, which increased agricultural yields and created a sustainable surplus for trade. Linked to this was the establishment of long-distance trade routes in which the northern shores of the Mediterranean were initially prominent (Mann, 1986, p.504). Economic networks created 'north-south corridors' across the European landmass, with those networks in the North-west becoming progressively more dynamic over time. It was a combination of agricultural and navigational opportunities which helped stimulate the European economic dynamic, and the continuous competition for resources, territory and trade. Accordingly, the objectives of war gradually became more economic: military endeavour and conquest became more closely connected to the pursuit of economic advantage (Mann, 1986, p.511). The success of military conquest and the successful pursuit of economic gain were more directly associated.

The state slowly became more embroiled with the interests of civil society in part *for its own sake*. If state rulers and personnel wished to pursue and implement policy of their own choosing then they would require the financial wherewithall to do so; and the more successful the economic activity in their territories, the more — through customs, taxes, investments and other revenue-generating activity — they could sustain their own strategies and interests. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries absolutist and constitutional states were drawn steadily into a coordinating role with respect to the activities of civil society. The trigger for this growing responsibility almost always emanated from military commitments. But beneath this lay a general and growing requirement to regulate the developing capitalist economy and the spread of competing claims to property rights, if the economic basis of the state itself was to be properly protected (Mann, 1986, p.512). The other side of this process was, of course, the growing enmeshment of civil society with the state; for the latter's capacity in principle to stabilize and enforce law, contracts and currencies — to provide a coordinating framework for the new emerging capitalist economy — made it a growing object of attention for the powerful groups and classes of civil society who hoped to shape state action to suit their own interests.

What was the relationship between 'states' and 'classes' in the era of formation of the modern state? Any full answer to this question is likely to be controversial, and would have to be qualified in important details from one country to another. However, having said this, a pattern, first depicted by the sociologist Max Weber, can be uncovered between political rulers and the rising capitalist classes. Weber spoke of an 'alliance' between modern capitalism and the emergent modern state (Weber, 1923). Analysing the nature of this alliance further, Poggi has usefully drawn a distinction between two autonomous forces whose interests converged for a distinctive period (Poggi, 1990, pp.95–7). The forces consisted, on the one hand, of political rulers seeking to centralize political power and fiscal arrangements by disrupting and eradicating vestiges of power held by the nobility, the Church and various estate bodies, and, on the other hand, of the rising bourgeois classes seeking to remove impediments to the expansion of market relations based upon the trading arrangements established by powerful social networks, both country (aristocratic and landed power bases) and urban (the estate and guild systems). How the 'alliance' changed and crystallized over time into different constellations of class and state power is beyond the scope of this chapter. Nevertheless, it can be noted that the alliance appears to have endured up to the industrial revolution and aided both the expansion of commerce and the industrialization of the economy (Poggi, 1990, p.96).

If there was an alliance between the interests of powerful political and economic groupings during the formative phase of the modern state it was not without conflicts. For the new capitalist classes sought to struggle not only against the remnants of feudal privilege, but also to ensure the progressive separation of the economy from the state so that the economy was free from any risk of arbitrary political interference. It is at this juncture that the emerging economic classes often became the reforming classes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, seeking to conjoin the struggle for an independent economic sphere with the struggle for representative government. The chief connecting mechanism was the attempt to establish civil and political rights (Marshall, 1973; Giddens, 1981; and see Book 2 (Allen *et al.*, 1992), Chapter 4). For what was at issue in the establishment of these rights was the attempt to uphold 'freedom of choice' in areas as diverse as personal, family, business and political affairs. The pursuit of civil and political rights over time reconstituted the nature of both the state and the economy — driving the former toward a liberal democratic polity and the latter toward the capitalist market system. But the meaning of membership in the modern state, that is, of citizenship, remained contested — by political rulers, anxious to preserve their traditional privileges, by powerful social groups and classes, hoping to inscribe their interests into the polity, and by all those who remained excluded from political participation until well into the twentieth century: the working classes, women and many minority groups (see Book 2 (Allen *et al.*, 1992), Chapters 1 and 4 for an account of the complex development of these conflicts). Moreover, as the coordinating role of

the state expanded, and it became more involved in determining the conditions of civil society, the state became more intensely contested. The risk of unwanted political interference in economic affairs, and the requirement for a regulatory framework for trade and business, gave the emerging classes of capitalist society a double incentive for involvement in setting the direction of state action.

The process and outcome of the new social struggles, it should be stressed, cannot simply be understood in their own terms; for their form and dynamic were shaped and re-shaped by the states system itself. Mann has put the point sharply:

> ... by the time of the Industrial Revolution, capitalism was already contained within a civilization of competing geopolitical states ... [while] economic interaction was largely confined within national boundaries, supported by imperial dominions. Each leading state approximated a self-contained economic network. International economic relations were authoritatively mediated by states. Class regulation and organization thus developed in each of a series of geographical areas shaped by existing geopolitical units. (Mann, 1986, p.513)

Class conflicts were, in other words, framed in large measure by the nature and interrelations of states (cf. Tilly, 1981, pp.44–52, 109–44).

3.3 SUMMARY: THE STORY SO FAR

The formation of the modern state has to be related to at least two overarching phenomena: the structures of political and social groups and classes, and the relations among states — 'their position relative to each other, and their overall position in the world', as Hintze put it (1975, p.183). Struggles among social collectivities at home and conflicts among states abroad have had a dramatic impact on the nature, organization and dynamics of individual states. The modern state has a dual anchorage 'in class-divided socio-economic structures and an international system of states' (Skocpol, 1979, p.32). If this is the context in which the rise of the modern state must be understood, it remains to draw together the grounds for why it was that the modern state came to be a national or nation-state. Briefly put, this chapter has argued that nation-states became supreme because they won at war, were economically successful and, subsequently, achieved a significant degree of legitimacy in the eyes of their populations and other states.

They won at war because as warfare became more extended in scale and cost, it was larger national states which were best able to organize and fund military power; and as these states expanded overseas this ability increased (Tilly, 1990, pp.65–6, 190). They were economically successful because the rapid growth of their economies from the late sixteenth century, and particularly after the mid-eighteenth century, sustained the process of capital accumulation: as the economic basis of the centralized state expanded, it significantly reduced the war-making

New Keywords

A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the text:

BCE	Before Common Era (before the period dating from the birth of Christ)
C	Followed by numeral, century (C16: sixteenth century)
CE	Common Era (the period dating from the birth of Christ)
Ch	Chinese
eC	First period (third) of a century (eC16: early sixteenth century)
F	French
fw	Immediate forerunner of a word, in the same or another language
G	German
Gk	Classical Greek
It	Italian
L	Latin
lC	Last period (third) of a century (lC16: late sixteenth century)
lL	Late Latin
mC	Middle period (third) of a century (mC16: mid-sixteenth century)
mE	Middle English (c.1100–1500)
mF	Medieval French
mL	Medieval Latin
oE	Old English (to c.1100)
OED	*Oxford English dictionary: New dictionary on historical principles*, 2nd edn. Eds. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
oF	Old French
rw	Ultimate traceable word, from which "root" meanings are derived
Sp	Spanish

State

When Friedrich Nietzsche (1969b [1883–91]: 75) describes the **state** as ''the coldest of all cold monsters'' he has no existing state in mind: he refers, rather, to a ''new idol,'' an influential modern ideal in which the state appears as an apparatus of government that is impersonal in two fundamental respects. First, the state is expected to be a rational bureaucracy, in which the rights and duties of any office, even the most elevated, are clearly separated from those of the person who occupies that office; the office continues when its holder dies or is replaced, and people are expected to respect the office even if they cannot bring themselves to respect its current occupant. Second, the state is expected to be an entity distinct from the population it governs: unlike the Greek *polis*, which Aristotle describes as a body of citizens, the state is an apparatus which rules over its citizens. The **ideal state** is a cold monster, then, precisely because of its doubly impersonal character; its identification and pursuit of the general interest are intended to be entirely dispassionate.

This ideal presents a normative standard against which the conduct of actual states can be measured. Moreover, if even the most effective of **modern states** fails to live up to its requirements, the ideal itself suggests a ready explanation: namely, that the impersonal workings of the state's machinery have been corrupted, either by the private interests of its officials or by the influence of powerful interests within the broader population. Skeptics, ranging from public-choice theorists on the right to Marxists on the left, have inverted this suggestion, arguing that the state invariably operates in the service of sectional interests and that the image of the state as the disinterested agent of the general interest functions merely to obscure this reality.

The term ''state'' itself derives from the Latin *status*, meaning ''manner of standing'' or ''condition,'' and it still carries this sense in such phrases as ''state of siege'' or ''state of mind.'' More colloquially, ''state'' may refer to a condition that is particularly disturbing or unusual. Quentin Skinner (1989) has traced the emergence of the more specific, political, usage during the early modern period, showing how the meaning of the term gradually shifted from the condition or the status of something else (of the prince's estate or of the republic) to a substantial apparatus of government clearly separate from the person of the ruler. The appearance of this new concept thus coincided with the emergence of a new field of government, which now referred to the work of regulating the conduct of the **state apparatus** itself, as well as that of the population over which it claims to rule. From this point onward, political discourse placed the state and relations between states at the center of its concerns.

But the establishment of this new concept also required the consolidation of the political and bureaucratic relationships which it invoked, and to understand what this involves we must turn to a different line of development. The 1648 Treaty of Westphalia and other agreements which brought the Thirty Years War to an end are conventionally taken to

mark the emergence of a new European order of independent **sovereign states**. While acknowledging the problems posed by the presence of powerful religious differences between Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists within territorial units, the Treaty nevertheless granted supreme political authority to territorial rulers within their domains while guaranteeing toleration to the three main confessions no matter what the religion of the ruling house. The principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state served as part of this regime of pacification by restricting the rights of supporters of one religion from intervening in the religious affairs of other participating states. These political arrangements had the novel effect of transforming a condition in which populations were subject to a variety of overlapping and often conflicting sources of authority into one in which rulers were acknowledged as having the primary responsibility for the government of the populations within their territories. Complementing the idea of the state as an impersonal apparatus of rule, we now find that of the state as a sovereign or independent member of the **system of states**.

This last development created an ecological niche in which rudimentary versions of Nietzsche's cold monster were able to establish themselves; the sovereignty which the European system of states secured for its members allowed participating states a degree of freedom from outside interference without which they would not have been able to develop and refine the formidable administrative apparatuses with which Western populations are now familiar. Even so, it was not until the IC19 that the more successful of these monsters were finally able to make the claim – which Max Weber (1978: 54–6) identifies as the most distinctive feature of the modern state – to an effective monopoly of the legitimate use of force within their respective territories.

The formation of a system of states also provided conditions in which international arrangements to regulate the conduct of states themselves could be further refined and developed. This system began as an arrangement of treaties and understandings covering territories and populations in parts of Europe; it therefore imposed few constraints on states' interference in the affairs of those who inhabited territories not covered by these agreements and in which no truly sovereign states were thought to exist. Thus, while states may have found their European activities constrained by the Westphalian system, they were not so restricted in other parts of the world. Indeed, they experienced little difficulty in adapting the doctrine of natural law to provide what they could regard as lawful grounds for territorial expansion elsewhere.

This last feature of the **European states system** allows us to identify two fundamental stages in the spread of that system to other parts of the world. First, the effect of colonial acquisitions outside Europe was to bring new territories and populations into the remit of the Westphalian system. European colonial expansion and the use by **Western states** of a discriminatory "standard of civilization" (Gong, 1984) in their dealings with political unities (among them China, Japan, Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and Thailand) that were not themselves accepted as part of the system of states eventually resulted in the subor-

dination of the greater part of humanity to direct or indirect rule by Western states. This arrangement was formalized through the imposition, on many of those found wanting, of unequal treaties and capitulations granting extra-territorial status to the civil law of Britain and other Western powers. Western colonialism was clearly a matter of subjecting non-European populations to rule by European states, but it was also a matter of incorporating those populations into the European states' system; it was the form in which the European states' system first became global in scope.

Second, the widespread achievement or imposition of political independence dismantled one aspect of colonial rule while leaving the other firmly in place. To be an independent, **postcolonial state** is not to be subject to the rule of another state, but it is still to be a member of the states' system and subject to the regulatory regimes which operate within that system. Thus, independence both expanded the membership of the system of states and set in place a radically new way of bringing non-Western populations under the rule of the states' system. As a result, these populations found themselves governed both by modern states of their own and by the overarching system of states within which their own states had been incorporated. Citizenship, of a kind, was now a universal human condition.

To say that an **independent state** is not ruled directly by another state is not to say that members of the modern system of states engage with each other as equals; on the contrary, the overarching system of states has a clear hierarchical structure, with stronger and weaker states and a number of more or less exclusive inner circles. Few of the recently established states bear much resemblance to the cold monsters of Nietzsche's aphorism, having inherited poorly developed infrastructures and educational systems, and administrative apparatuses designed to serve a system of rule by outsiders. Those that are furthest from its doubly impersonal ideal are for that reason sometimes regarded as **failed states** or **quasi-states** (Jackson, 1990).

Moreover, like many states whose territories were never in fact colonized, they have yet to be admitted to the more exclusive inner circles of the international system of states and they find themselves subject to updated versions of the earlier "standard of civilization." In some respects this condition is reminiscent of the old system of capitulations, since it requires **subordinate states** to conform to legal frameworks already established by Western states if they are to participate in various international arrangements (the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs [GATT], and its successor, the World Trade Organization [WTO], providing the most obvious examples). It also enables various rogue or failed states to be identified as potential targets of military or humanitarian intervention.

Barry Hindess

See: ***BUREAUCRACY, CITIZENSHIP, COLONIALISM, GOVERNMENT, POSTCOLONIALISM.***

the state expanded, and it became more involved in determining the conditions of civil society, the state became more intensely contested. The risk of unwanted political interference in economic affairs, and the requirement for a regulatory framework for trade and business, gave the emerging classes of capitalist society a double incentive for involvement in setting the direction of state action.

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Class conflicts were, in other words, framed in large measure by the nature and interrelations of states (cf. Tilly, 1981, pp.44–52, 109–44).

3.3 SUMMARY: THE STORY SO FAR

The formation of the modern state has to be related to at least two overarching phenomena: the structures of political and social groups and classes, and the relations among states — 'their position relative to each other, and their overall position in the world', as Hintze put it (1975, p.183). Struggles among social collectivities at home and conflicts among states abroad have had a dramatic impact on the nature, organization and dynamics of individual states. The modern state has a dual anchorage 'in class-divided socio-economic structures and an international system of states' (Skocpol, 1979, p.32). If this is the context in which the rise of the modern state must be understood, it remains to draw together the grounds for why it was that the modern state came to be a national or nation-state. Briefly put, this chapter has argued that nation-states became supreme because they won at war, were economically successful and, subsequently, achieved a significant degree of legitimacy in the eyes of their populations and other states.

They won at war because as warfare became more extended in scale and cost, it was larger national states which were best able to organize and fund military power; and as these states expanded overseas this ability increased (Tilly, 1990, pp.65–6, 190). They were economically successful because the rapid growth of their economies from the late sixteenth century, and particularly after the mid-eighteenth century, sustained the process of capital accumulation: as the economic basis of the centralized state expanded, it significantly reduced the war-making

ability of smaller states (often with fragmented power structures) and traditional empires (which depended above all on coercive power for their success). And they gained in legitimacy because as they extended their military, organizational and coordinating activities, they came to depend more and more on the active cooperation, collaboration and support of their peoples, especially well-organized civil groups. In the wake of the erosion of the authority of the Church, the legitimacy of claims to political power came to depend on the view that such claims were justified and appropriate if popular or democratic. Calls for democratic government or democratic legitimacy became irresistible in the face of the expansion of state administrative power and the growth of new political identities — nationalism, citizenship and 'public' life.

However, the rise of Europe, of the European nation-state and of the modern states system is not fully explained by these factors and processes. There was, as there always is in politics, a fair degree of 'luck', 'uncertainty' or 'contingency'. The Mongol invasions (1206–60) could have penetrated further west with significant implications for the formation of Christian Europe; the Reformation could have drawn Europe into an endless vicious circle of religious war which might have undermined future European expansion; Napoleon Bonaparte might have conquered Russia and created a more durable empire; capitalism could have taken a firm hold in the East. The point of these and dozens of other 'what-ifs' is to remind one that history doesn't unfold according to one pattern, one logic, or one evolutionary scheme. History, if the above account is useful, is rather the result of the interplay of a number of causal patterns or processes which combine to produce particular trends and developmental trajectories. Moreover, these are never set in stone; they are always affected by and open to alteration by changing circumstances, and by the outcome of key historical events. In the case of the history of states these events have been wars, first and foremost, and the development of military power to back up negotiations on pressing issues.

4 SOVEREIGNTY AND THE MODERN NATION-STATE: COMPETING CONCEPTIONS

The focus of the ensuing section is a number of accounts of the modern state and the interrelated notion of sovereignty. The ideas of some of the key contributors to modern political thought are presented, and some of their major texts are introduced. While the previous sections of this chapter have offered, in broad terms, a *descriptive-explanatory* account of the development of the modern state, what follows is more directly concerned with the *normative problems* of political theory. However, before turning to the latter, it is useful to ask: What kind of distinction is being made here between types of political inquiry?

A contrast is often drawn between normative political theory or political philosophy, on the one hand, and descriptive-explanatory or analytical theories of the social sciences, on the other. The former refers to theories about the proper form of political institutions and includes accounts of such notions as sovereignty, authority and liberty. The latter refers to attempts to characterize actual phenomena and events and is marked by a strong empirical element. The distinction, thus, is between theories which focus on what is desirable — what should or ought to be the case — and those that focus on what has been or is the case. But it should be borne in mind that, while this distinction is helpful as an initial point of orientation, it is hard to use it as a precise classificatory device for theories of the modern state. For many political philosophers see what they think the state ought to be like in the state as it is. Social scientists, on the other hand, cannot escape the problem that facts do not simply 'speak for themselves'; they are, and they have to be, interpreted; and the framework we bring to the process of interpretation determines what we 'see' — what we notice and register as important.

The distinction between 'empirical analysis' and 'normative theory' is further complicated if one reflects on the interaction between 'ideas' and 'reality'. The process of analysing aspects of the political world contributes to an understanding of how people can, might or should act in the world; it can be reflexively applied to the transformation of the conditions of existence. Political enquiry, in fact, has often had a practical impact in the modern era, just as political, social and economic developments have had an influence on the nature and objects of enquiry. The debate in political theory about the modern state became a constitutive component of the concepts and theories which were utilized and applied in the formation and construction of the modern state itself (see Skinner, 1978). In what follows some of the leading contributions to this interchange are set out. It is an interchange which has had, and is likely to continue to have, significant political implications.

4.1 WHAT IS THE PROPER NATURE OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY?

The idea of the modern state is intimately linked to the idea of sovereignty: for its origin and history are closely connected to the origin and development of the concept of sovereignty itself. While the idea of sovereignty can be traced to the Roman Empire, it was not until the end of the sixteenth century, when the nature and limits of political authority emerged as a preoccupation of European political thought, that sovereignty became a major theme in political analysis. The theocratic concepts of authority which dominated mediaeval Europe were challenged both by the rise of centralized states, absolutist and constitutional, and by the Protestant Reformation.

The Reformation did more than just challenge Papal jurisdiction and authority across Europe; it raised questions about political obligation and obedience in a stark manner. The issue of whether allegiance was

owed to the Catholic Church, a Protestant ruler, or particular religious sects did not easily resolve itself. Very gradually it became apparent, moreover, that the powers of the state would have to be separated from the duty of rulers to uphold any particular faith (Skinner, 1978, p.352). This conclusion alone offered a way forward through the dilemmas of rule created by competing religions, all seeking to secure for themselves the kind of privileges enjoyed by the mediaeval church.

In this context sovereignty became a new way of thinking about an old problem: the nature of power and rule. When established forms of authority could no longer be taken for granted it was the idea of sovereignty which provided a fresh link between political power and rulership. In the struggle between church, state and society, sovereignty offered an alternative way of conceiving the legitimacy of claims to power. In the debate about sovereignty which ensued, there was little initial agreement about its meaning; differing accounts were offered of the proper locus of 'supreme power' in society, the source of authority for that power, limitations upon that power (if any), and the ends to which that power might or should be directed. As the theory of sovereignty developed, however, it became a theory about the possibility of, and the conditions for, the rightful exercise of political power. It became the theory of legitimate power or authority. In examining the theory, we examine some of the most fundamental conceptions of the modern state; for the theory of sovereignty largely set down the terms of reference of political discussion.

While tension between the principles of rulership and self-government, between power and society, led to discrepant conceptions of the nature of sovereign power and of the criteria of legitimate government, two poles became clearly established in the emergent debate: state sovereignty and popular sovereignty. Where advocates of the former tended to grant the state ultimate authority to define public right, advocates of the latter tended to see the state as a mere 'commission' for the enactment of the people's will and, therefore, as open to direct determination by 'the public' (cf. Berlin, 1969, pp.164ff.). Traditionally, these positions are thought to have been articulated best by, respectively, Hobbes's classic statement about state sovereignty (*Leviathan*, 1651) and Rousseau's powerful account of the doctrine of popular sovereignty (*The Social Contract*, 1762).

4.2 HOBBES

In his great work *Leviathan,* Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) provided one of the most elegant rationales for the primacy of the state, for the necessary unity of the state as the representative of the body politic, and for the necessity of the state as the creator and maintainer of positive law. Hobbes wrote against the background of social disorder and political instability — the English Civil War — and sought to establish the necessity of an all-powerful sovereign capable of securing the conditions of 'peaceful and commodious living'. His position was that

individuals ought willingly to surrender their rights to a powerful single authority — thereafter authorized to act on their behalf — because, if all individuals were to do this simultaneously, the condition would be created for effective political rule. A unique relation of authority would be created — the relation of sovereign to subject — and a unique political power would be established: sovereign power or sovereignty — the authorized, hence rightful, use of power by the person (or assembly) established as sovereign.

The sovereign has to have sufficient power to ensure that the laws governing political and economic life are upheld. Since, in Hobbes's view, 'men's ambitions, avarice, anger and other passions' are strong, and the 'bonds of words are too weak to bridle them ... without some fear of coercive power', he concluded that, 'covenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all' (Hobbes, 1968, p.223). Beyond the sovereign state's sphere of influence there will always be the chaos of constant warfare; but within the territory controlled by the state, with 'fear of some coercive power', social order can be sustained.

It is important to stress that, in Hobbes's opinion, sovereignty must be self-perpetuating, undivided and ultimately absolute (Hobbes, 1968, pp.227–8). The justification for this is 'the safety of the people'. By 'safety' is meant not merely minimum physical preservation. The sovereign must ensure the protection of all things held in property: 'Those that are dearest to a man are his own life, and limbs; and in the next degree, (in most men) those that concern conjugal affection; and after them riches and means of living' (Hobbes, 1968, pp.376, 382–3). Although Hobbes acknowledges certain limits to the legitimate range of the sovereign's actions, the state is regarded by him as pre-eminent in all spheres (see Hobbes, 1968, ch. 21). For the state is authorized to represent all individuals and, accordingly, absorbs all popular or public right. State sovereignty embraces, in principle, all elements of the body politic.

ACTIVITY 3

You should now read **Reading A, 'Leviathan'**, by Thomas Hobbes, which you will find at the end of this chapter. As you read, note the reasons why Hobbes thinks:

1. people require a 'common power' or state — what he calls a 'mortal God' — in order to live securely and prosperously;
2. people must live in fear of some 'coercive power'.

Additionally, consider:

3. on what basis Hobbes thinks a 'common power' can be established; and
4. what, in his view, is the nature of the relationship that ought to be created between ruler and ruled — sovereign and subject?

With Hobbes, the justification of state power received its fullest expression and became a central theme in European political thought. But his position was controversial and challenged on at least two grounds (see Hinsley, 1986, pp.144ff.). The first objection raised the fundamental question of where sovereign authority properly lay — with the ruler, the monarch, the state or (as was increasingly to be argued) with the people? The second objection was concerned with the proper form and limits, the legitimate scope, of state action.

4.3 ROUSSEAU

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) did not reject the concept of sovereignty, but insisted on retaining for the people the sovereignty which Hobbes had transferred to the state and its rulers. In Rousseau's view, sovereignty originates in the people and ought to stay there (Rousseau, 1968, p.141). For Rousseau, the very essence of sovereignty is the creation, authorization and enactment of law according to the standards and requirements of the common good. And the nature of the common good can only be known through public discourse and public agreement. Only citizens themselves can articulate 'the supreme direction of the general will' — which is the sum of their publicly generated judgements of the common good (Rousseau, 1968, pp.60–1). Moreover, Rousseau argued, citizens can only be obligated to a system of laws and regulations they have prescribed for themselves with the general good in mind (Rousseau, 1968, p.65; cf. p.82).

Taking arguments about sovereignty in a new direction, Rousseau held that, ideally, individuals should be involved directly in the creation of the laws by which their lives are regulated. The sovereign authority is the people making the rules by which they live. All citizens should meet together to decide what is best for the community and enact the appropriate laws. The ruled should be the rulers: the affairs of the state should be integrated into the affairs of ordinary citizens (see Rousseau, 1968, pp.82, 114; and for a general account, ibid., pp.101–16). Rousseau was critical of the classical Athenian conception of direct democracy because it failed to incorporate a division between legislative and executive functions and, consequently, became prone to instability, internecine strife and indecision in crisis (Rousseau, 1968, pp.112–14, 136ff.). But while he wished to defend the importance of dividing and limiting 'governmental power', the executive or government in his scheme was legitimate only to the extent to which it fulfilled 'the instructions of the general will'. In so arguing, Rousseau undermined the distinction between the state and the community, the government and 'the people', but in the opposite direction to that proposed by Hobbes. Government was reduced to a 'commission'; public right, in principle, absorbed the state.

ACTIVITY 4 You should now read **Reading B, 'The social contract'**, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

As you read, try to note the reasons Rousseau gives for holding that:

1 a 'social contract' must be established;

2 sovereignty originates in the people — and ought to stay there.

Reflect also on why Rousseau thinks:

3 citizens can legitimately be 'forced to be free'.

Finally, consider:

4 Rousseau's conception of the limits, if any, of popular 'sovereign power'.

Hobbes and Rousseau may be portrayed as representing opposing sides in the debate about the locus of sovereignty. However, both cast their arguments in such a way as to face a common objection: that they projected models of political power with potentially tyrannical implications. For if Hobbes placed the state in an all-powerful position with respect to community, Rousseau placed the community (or a majority thereof) in a position to wholly dominate individual citizens: the community is all-powerful and, therefore, the sovereignty of the people could easily destroy the liberty of individuals (Berlin, 1969, p.163). The problem is that just as Hobbes failed to articulate either the principles or institutions necessary to delimit state action, Rousseau assumed that minorities ought to consent to the decisions of majorities, and posited no limits to the reach of the decisions of a democratic majority, and therefore to political intervention. Such conceptions of sovereignty, which fail to demarcate the limits or legitimate scope of political action, need to be treated with caution.

An alternative to the contending theses of the sovereignty of the state and the sovereignty of the people is implicit in Locke's conception of an independent political community, and is essential to the traditions of political analysis which neither locate sovereignty in, nor reduce it to, either state or society. This tradition — above all, of constitutional thinking — sought to provide ways of mediating, balancing and checking the relationship between state and society such that some protection existed for both public and private right. The motivation for such a position lay precisely in doubts about unaccountable state power and in the necessity to provide limits to the legitimate scope of political action. Views such as these were given lasting expression in the constitutional arguments of John Locke (1632–1704).

4.4 LOCKE

Locke held that the institution of 'government' can and should be conceived as an instrument for the defence of the 'life, liberty and estate' of its citizens; that is, government's *raison d'être* is the protection of individuals' rights as laid down by God's will and as enshrined in law (see Dunn, 1969, part 3). He believed that the integrity and ultimate ends of society require a constitutional state in which 'public power' is legally circumscribed and divided. He argued on behalf of a constitutional monarchy holding executive power and a parliamentary assembly holding the rights of legislation, although he did not think this was the only form government might take. However, in Locke's view, the formation of the state does not signal the final transfer of all subjects' rights to the state (Locke, 1963, pp.402–3, para. II.135; pp.412–13, para. II.149). The rights of law-making and law-enforcement (legislative and executive rights) are transferred, but the whole process is conditional upon the state adhering to its essential purpose: the preservation of 'life, liberty and estate'.

It is important to emphasize that, in Locke's account, political authority is bestowed by individuals on government for the purpose of pursuing the ends of the governed; and should these ends fail to be represented adequately, the final judges are the people — the citizens of the state — who can dispense both with their deputies and, if need be, with the existing form of government itself. According to Locke, in the face of a series of tyrannical political acts, popular rebellion to form a new government might not only be unavoidable but justified. One commentator has summarized Locke's position thus:

> Rulers ... hold their authority under law; and entitlement to the obedience of their subjects derives from the impartial administration of this law. Where they act against or outside this law to the harm of their subjects, they become tyrants. Wherever law ends, tyranny begins [Locke, 1963, p.448, para. II.202]. For a ruler in authority to use force against the interests of his subjects and outside the law is to destroy his own authority. He puts himself into a state of war with his injured subjects, and each of these has the same right to resist him as they would have to resist any other unjust aggressor [Locke, 1963, p.448, para. II.202; p.467, para. II.232].
> (Dunn, 1984, p.54)

With these arguments Locke fashioned a doctrine which had an enduring impact on Western political thought. For it affirmed that supreme power was the inalienable right of the people; that governmental supremacy was a *delegated* supremacy held on trust; that government enjoyed full political authority so long as this trust was sustained; and that a government's legitimacy or right to rule could be withdrawn if the people judged this necessary and appropriate; that is, if the rights of individuals and 'ends of society' were systematically flouted.

ACTIVITY 5 Locke concludes his *Two Treatises of Government* with the following passage. Note especially the conditions under which 'supreme power' can legitimately revert to the people:

> To conclude, The *Power that every individual gave the Society*, when he entered into it, can never revert to the Individuals again, as long as the Society lasts, but will always remain in the Community; because without this, there can be no Community, no Common-wealth ... : So also when the Society hath placed the Legislative in any Assembly of Men, to continue in them and their Successors, with Direction and Authority for providing such Successors, *the Legislative can never revert to the People* whilst that Government lasts: Because having provided a Legislative with Power to continue for ever, they have given up their Political Power to the Legislative, and cannot resume it. But if they have set Limits to the Duration of their Legislative, and made this Supreme Power in any Person, or Assembly, only temporary: Or else when by the Miscarriages of those in Authority, it is forfeited: upon the Forfeiture of their Rulers, or at the Determination of the Time set, *it reverts to the Society*, and the People have a Right to act as Supreme, and continue the Legislative in themselves, or erect a new Form, or under the old form place it in new hands, as they think good.
> (Locke, 1963, p.477, para. II.243)

However, with these arguments Locke also ran into distinct difficulties. He did not explore systematically how possible tensions might be resolved between the sovereignty of the people — the idea of the people as an active sovereign body with the capacity to make or break governments — and the government as the trustee of the people with the right to make and enforce the law. At the root of this lies a failure to draw an effective contrast between the power of the people and the powers of the state (Skinner, 1989, p.115). As Locke put it, 'the community perpetually retains a supreme power' over its prince or legislative (quoted in ibid.). Accordingly, what constitutes the precise autonomy or independence of state powers remains unspecified. While Locke's attempt to transcend the dualism between ruler and people, state and community, became highly influential, as did his attempt to enshrine this new political understanding in the notion of constitutional government — a legal and institutional mechanism to protect both the 'sovereign people' and 'the sovereign state' — his solution was far from complete.

Modern liberal and liberal-democratic theory has constantly sought to justify the sovereign power of the state while at the same time justifying limits upon that power. The history of this attempt is the history of arguments to balance might and right, power and law, duties and rights.

On the one hand, states must have a monopoly of coercive power in order to provide a secure basis upon which trade, commerce and family life can prosper. On the other hand, by granting the state a regulatory and coercive capability, political theorists were aware that they had accepted a force which could, and frequently did, deprive citizens of political and social freedoms.

It was the liberal democrats who provided the key institutional innovation to try to overcome this dilemma — representative democracy. The liberal concern with reason, law and freedom of choice could only be upheld properly by recognizing the political equality of all mature individuals. Such equality would ensure not only a secure social environment in which people would be free to pursue their private activities and interests, but also that the state's personnel would do what was best in the general and public interest; for example, pursue the greatest satisfaction of the greatest number. Thus, the democratic state, linked to other key institutional mechanisms, above all the free market, resolved, the liberal democrats argued, the problems of ensuring both authority and liberty.

4.5 MILL

A classical statement of the new position can be found in the philosophy of John Stuart Mill (1806–73). In his hands the theory of liberal democracy received a most important elaboration: the governors must be held accountable to the governed through political mechanisms (regular voting, competition between potential representatives, the struggle among free opinion) which alone can give citizens the satisfactory means for choosing, authorizing and controlling political decisions. And with these means, he further contended, a balance could finally be obtained between might and right, authority and liberty. But who exactly was to count as a 'citizen' or an 'individual', and what their exact role was to be, remained unfortunately either unclear or unsettled: the idea that *all* citizens should have equal weight in the political system remained outside Mill's actual doctrine.

The idea of the modern democratic state remains complex and contested. The liberal democratic tradition itself comprises a most heterogeneous body of thought. However, the whole liberal democratic tradition stands apart from an alternative perspective — the Marxist tradition. It is worth briefly dwelling on this, since it remains the key counterpoint to liberal democracy.

ACTIVITY 6 Before reading further you should note down some of the key features of liberal democracy in order that the contrast with Marxism is brought more sharply into view.

4.6 MARX AND ENGELS

The struggle of liberalism against tyranny and the struggle by liberal democrats for political equality represented, according to Karl Marx (1818–83) and Frederick Engels (1820–95), a major step forward in the history of human emancipation. But for them, and the Marxist tradition more broadly, the great universal ideals of 'liberty, equality and justice' could not be realized simply by the 'free' struggle for votes in the political system and by the 'free' struggle for profit in the market place. The advocates of the democratic state and the market economy present them as the only institutions under which liberty can be sustained and inequalities minimized. However, by virtue of its internal dynamics the capitalist economy inevitably produces, Marxists aver, systematic inequality and massive restrictions on real freedom. While each step towards formal political equality is an advance, its liberating potential is severely curtailed by inequalities of class, wealth and opportunity.

In class societies the state cannot become the vehicle for the pursuit of the common good or public interest. Far from playing the role of emancipator, protective knight, umpire or judge in the face or disorder, the agencies of the liberal representative state are meshed in the struggles of civil society. Marxists conceive of the state as an extension of civil society, reinforcing the social order for the enhancement of particular interests — in capitalist society, the long-term interests of the capitalist class. Marx and Engels' argument is that political emancipation is only a step towards human emancipation: that is, the complete democratization of society as well as the state. In their view, liberal democratic society fails when judged by its own principles; and to take these seriously is to become a communist. Marx himself envisaged the replacement of the 'machinery' of the liberal democratic state by a 'commune structure': the smallest communities would administer their own affairs, elect delegates to larger administrative units (districts, towns) and these would, in turn, elect candidates to still larger areas of administration (the national delegation). This arrangement is known as the 'pyramid' structure of direct democracy: all delegates are revocable, bound by the instructions of their constituency and organized into a 'pyramid' of directly elected committees.

ACTIVITY 7 Note Marx and Engels' emphasis on the interconnections between social power, class and state. Consider the stress they place on these interconnections. How convinced are you by their view that the state is an extension of civil society — that is, a political apparatus structured and shaped by class relations?

4.7 WEBER

One of the toughest (yet not wholly unsympathetic) critics of the Marxist tradition was the sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920). Weber believed that Marxists' political ambitions were premised on a deficient understanding of the nature of the modern state and of the complexity of political life. In Weber's account, the history of the state and the history of political struggle could not in any way be reduced to class relations: the origins and tasks of the modern state suggested it was far more than a 'superstructure' on an economic 'base'. Moreover, even if class relations were transformed, institutions of direct democracy could not replace the state; for there would be a massive problem of coordination and regulation which would inevitably be 'resolved' by bureaucracy, and by bureaucracy alone, unless other institutions were created to check its power. The problems posed by the liberal pursuit of a balance between might and right, power and law, are, Weber thought, inescapable elements of modernity.

Weber developed one of the most significant definitions of the modern state, placing emphasis upon two distinctive elements of its history: territoriality and violence. The modern state, unlike its predecessors which were troubled by constantly warring factions, has the capability of monopolizing the legitimate use of violence within a given territory; it is a nation-state in embattled relations with other nation-states rather than with armed segments of its own population. 'Of course', Weber emphasized, 'force is certainly not the normal or only means of the state — nobody says that — but force is a means specific to the state ... . The state is a relation of men dominating men, a relation supported by means of legitimate (i.e. considered to be legitimate) violence' (Weber, 1972, p.178). The state maintains compliance or order within a given territory; in individual capitalist societies this involves crucially the defence of property and the enhancement of domestic economic interests overseas, although by no means all the problems of order can be reduced to these. The state's web of agencies and institutions finds its ultimate sanction in the claim to the monopoly of coercion, and a political order is only, in the last instance, vulnerable to crises when this monopoly erodes.

However, there is also a third key element in Weber's definition of the state: legitimacy. The state is based on a monopoly of physical coercion which is legitimized (that is, sustained) by a belief in the justifiability and/or legality of this monopoly. Today, Weber argued, people no longer comply with the authority claimed by the powers-that-be merely on the grounds, as was common once, of habit and tradition or the charisma and personal appeal of individual leaders. Rather, there is general obedience by 'virtue of "legality", by virtue of the belief in the validity of legal statute and functional "competence" based on rationally created rules' (Weber, 1972, p.79). The legitimacy of the modern state is founded predominantly on 'legal authority', that is, commitment to a 'code of legal regulations'.

Foremost among the state's institutions are, Weber held, the administrative apparatuses — a vast network of organizations run by appointed officials. Weber feared that political life in West and East would be ever more ensnared by a rationalized, bureaucratic system of administration — a 'steel-hard cage', as he wrote. Against this he championed the countervailing power of private capital, the competitive party system and strong political leadership to secure national power and prestige — all of which could prevent the domination of politics by state officials. Two-hundred-and-fifty years after Hobbes wrote *Leviathan*, the conception of the state as a potentially omnipotent and all-embracing entity remained a deep concern.

ACTIVITY 8

Before reading further, you should note down the key differences between the Marxist and Weberian accounts of the modern state. Which position do you find the more plausible, and why? Consider your response in relation to the historical material presented in the earlier parts of the chapter, especially Section 3.

5 CONCLUSION

What should be made of these various conceptions of sovereignty, state power and democracy today? The difficulties of coming to a judgement about the modern state are acute, especially if one examines it in relation to the history both of the states system and of the interconnections of the world economy. (For a discussion of these points, see Book 4 (Hall *et al.*, 1992), especially Chapter 1.) By way of a conclusion, however, a number of points from the chapter as a whole can be usefully brought together, and left for you to reflect upon. These can be put briefly:

1 To understand the formation of the state it is necessary to grasp the intersection of national and international conditions and processes. The state faces inwards toward its subjects and citizens, and outwards toward the states system and international economy. It has an anchorage in both the organizations and relations of socio-economic groups and in the international order.

2 The modern state became the supreme form of the state because it most successfully marshalled the means of waging war, economic resources and claims to legitimacy. Modern states mobilized effectively for war, for the enhancement of economic activity (capitalist expansion) and for their own legitimation. It is at the intersection of these particular formative processes that the distinctive organization and form of the modern state emerged.

3 The democratization of the modern state, that is, the establishment of the universal franchise, can be related directly to the state's search for loyalty and resources when it has been most pressed (before, during and after wars), and to its claim to a distinct form of legitimacy. Unlike its predecessors, the modern state heralds its separateness from both ruler and ruled. At the centre of the self-image and representation of the modern state lies its claim to be an 'independent authority' or 'circumscribed impartial power' accountable to its citizens. To the extent that this claim has been redeemed, the modern state has been able to enjoy an advantage against rival political forces in the battle for legitimacy in the modern world. However, the nature and meaning of this claim have been contested from the outset of the modern state to the present day. The legitimacy of the modern state remains controversial.

4 The modern state has been neither simply a detached 'judge' of the affairs of civil society, nor merely an epiphenomenon. Rather, it is best understood as a system of organizations and relations which can make and shape social, political and economic change. The state apparatus has sufficient primacy over social classes and collectivities that discrete political outcomes — constitutional forms, coalitional arrangements, particular exercises of state coercion, and so on — cannot be inferred directly from the movements and activities of those in civil society. Political life, and state action in particular, are by no means wholly determined by socio-economic life.

5 The modern state, like its predecessors, is a system of power in its own right; it has to be understood as a set of organizations and collectivities concerned with the institutionalization of political power. While the independent and autonomous capacities of state organizations and agencies have been stressed, so have the latter as sites of contestation and conflict. The history of the modern state is also the history of the way in which social struggle has been 'inscribed' into, that is, embedded in, the organization, administration and policies of the state. As states came to depend on their citizens for support and resources, their structures and policies became subject, some would say ever more subject, to political negotiation and compromise.

6 The proper locus and form of the sovereignty of the modern state have been in dispute from Hobbes to Rousseau to Marx and Weber. Conceptions of sovereignty which neither locate sovereignty exclusively in, nor reduce sovereignty to, either state or society seem compelling; yet, these are far from secure. What is meant by the rightful exercise of political authority remains open to dispute. Further, the operation of states in the complex international system of economics and politics raises questions about the role of sovereignty — its possible nature and extent — in a world in which powerful non-state actors, like international companies, have significant influence, and in which the fate of peoples are interconnected. Sovereignty is moulded and re-moulded in the international world of states and societies.

7 The processes and conflicts which have centred on and crystallized around the modern state have been the result of complex interactions between political, economic, military and social factors, among other things. These factors cannot simply be ranked in a fixed order of importance in the explanation of the rise and development of the modern state. For it is in a combination of factors that a satisfactory explanation can be found for the major trends and developments of the modern political world. While this amounts to a rejection of arguments for economic determinism, or cultural determinism, or military determinism (and other positions which advocate focusing on one set of causal factors), it allows that one or more of these factors could have causal primacy under particular conditions and circumstances. The modern state escapes the categories of deterministic theories; but economic relations, political forces and military might have all been fundamental to elements of its form and dynamics.

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READING A LEVIATHAN

Thomas Hobbes

Nature hath made men so equal, in the faculties of the body, and mind; as that though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body, or of quicker mind than another; yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable; as that one man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he. For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others, that are in the same danger with himself. ...

Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man. For WAR, consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known. ...

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. ...

It may peradventure be thought, there was never such a time, nor condition of war as this; and I believe it was never generally so, over all the world: but there are many places, where they live so now. For the savage people in many places of America, except the government of small families, the concord whereof dependeth on natural lust ['inclination'], have no government at all; and live at this day in that brutish manner, as I said before. Howsoever, it may be perceived what manner of life there would be, where there were no common power to fear, by the manner of life, which men that have formerly lived under a peaceful government, use to degenerate into, in a civil war. ...

The final cause, end, or design of men, who naturally love liberty, and dominion over others, in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves, in which we see them live in commonwealths, is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby; that is to say, of getting themselves out from that miserable condition of war, which is necessarily consequent ... to the natural passions of men, when there is no visible power to keep them in awe, and tie them by fear of punishment to

Source: Hobbes, T. (1651) *Leviathan*; reproduced from Held, D. *et al.* (eds) (1983) *States and Societies*, Oxford, Martin Robertson, pp.68–71.

the performance of their covenants, and observation of those laws of nature ... .

For the laws of nature, as *justice, equity, modesty, mercy,* and, in sum, *doing to others, as we would be done to,* of themselves, without the terror of some power, to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our natural passions, that carry us to partiality, pride, revenge, and the like. And covenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all. Therefore notwithstanding the laws of nature, which every one hath then kept, when he has the will to keep them, when he can do it safely, if there be no power erected, or not great enough for our security; every man will, and may lawfully rely on his own strength and art, for caution against all other men. And in all places, where men have lived by small families, to rob and spoil one another, has been a trade, and so far from being reputed against the law of nature, that the greater spoils they gained, the greater was their honour; and men observed no other laws therein, but the laws of honour; that is, to abstain from cruelty, leaving to men their lives, and instruments of husbandry. And as small families did then; so now do cities and kingdoms which are but greater families, for their own security, enlarge their dominions, upon all pretences of danger, and fear of invasion, or assistance that may be given to invaders, and endeavour as much as they can, to subdue, or weaken their neighbours, by open force, and secret arts, for want of other caution, justly; and are remembered for it in after ages with honour.

Nor is it the joining together of a small number of men, that gives them this security; because in small numbers, small additions on the one side or the other, make the advantage of strength so great, as is sufficient to carry the victory; and therefore gives encouragement to an invasion. The multitude sufficient to confide in for our security, is not determined by any certain number, but by comparison with the enemy we fear; and is then sufficient, when the odds of the enemy is not of so visible and conspicuous moment, to determine the event of war, as to move him to attempt. ...

The only way to erect such a common power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort, as that by their own industry, and by the fruits of the earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly; is, to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will: which is as much as to say, to appoint one man, or assembly of men, to bear their person; and every one to own, and acknowledge himself to be author of whatsoever he that so beareth their person, shall act, or cause to be acted, in those things which concern the common peace and safety; and therein to submit their wills, every one to his will, and their judgements, to his judgment. This is more than consent, or concord; it is a real unity of them all, in one and the same person, made by covenant of every man with every man, in such manner, as if every man should say to every man, *I authorize and give up my right of governing myself, to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner.* This done, the

multitude so united in one person, is called a COMMONWEALTH, in Latin CIVITAS. This is the generation of the great LEVIATHAN, or rather, to speak more reverently, of that *mortal god,* to which we owe under the *immortal God*, our peace and defence. ... And in him consisteth the essence of the commonwealth; which, to define it, is *one person, of whose acts a great multitude, by mutual covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all, as he shall think expedient, for their peace and common defence.*

And he that carrieth this person is called SOVEREIGN, and said to have *sovereign power;* and every one besides, his SUBJECT.

The attaining to this sovereign power, is by two ways. One, by natural force; as when a man maketh his children, to submit themselves, and their children to his government, as being able to destroy them if they refuse; or by war subdueth his enemies to his will, giving them their lives on that condition. The other, is when men agree amongst themselves, to submit to some man, or assembly of men, voluntarily, on confidence to be protected by him against all others. This latter may be called a political commonwealth, or commonwealth by *institution*; and the former, a commonwealth by *acquisition.*

READING B THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains. Those who think themselves the masters of others are indeed greater slaves than they. How did this transformation come about? I do not know. How can it be made legitimate? That question I believe I can answer. ... The social order is a sacred right which serves as a basis for all other rights. And as it is not a natural right, it must be one founded on covenants. The problem is to determine what those covenants are. ...

The social pact

I assume that men reach a point where the obstacles to their preservation in a state of nature prove greater than the strength that each man has to preserve himself in that state. Beyond this point, the primitive condition cannot endure, for then the human race will perish if it does not change its mode of existence. ...

'How to find a form of association which will defend the person and goods of each member with the collective force of all, and under which each individual, while uniting himself with the others, obeys no one but himself, and remains as free as before.' This is the fundamental problem to which the social contract holds the solution. ...

Source: Rousseau, J.-J. (1762) *The Social Contract;* reproduced from Held, D. *et al.* (eds) (1983) *States and Societies*, Oxford, Martin Robertson, pp.71–5.

[The] articles of association, rightly understood, are reducible to a single one, namely the total alienation by each associate of himself and all his rights to the whole community. Thus, in the first place, as every individual gives himself absolutely, the conditions are the same for all, and precisely because they are the same for all, it is in no one's interest to make the conditions onerous for others.

Secondly, since the alienation is unconditional, the union is as perfect as it could be, and no individual associate has any longer any rights to claim; for if rights were left to individuals, in the absence of any higher authority to judge between them and the public, each individual, being his own judge in some causes, would soon demand to be his own judge in all; and in this way the state of nature would be kept in being, and the association inevitably become either tyrannical or void.

Finally, since each man gives himself to all, he gives himself to no one; and since there is no associate over whom he does not gain the same rights as others gain over him, each man recovers the equivalent of everything he loses, and in the bargain he acquires more power to preserve what he has.

If, then, we eliminate from the social pact everything that is not essential to it, we find it comes down to this: 'Each one of us puts into the community his person and all his powers under the supreme direction of the general will; and as a body, we incorporate every member as an indivisible part of the whole.'

Immediately, in place of the individual person of each contracting party, this act of association creates an artificial and collective body composed of as many members as there are voters in the assembly, and by this same act that body acquires its unity, its common *ego*, its life and its will. The public person thus formed by the union of all other persons was once called the *city*, and is now known as the *republic* or the *body politic*. In its passive role it is called the *state*, when it plays an active role it is the *sovereign*; and when it is compared to others of its own kind, it is a *power*. Those who are associated in it take collectively the name of a *people*, and call themselves individually *citizens*, in so far as they share in the sovereign power, and *subjects*, in so far as they put themselves under the laws of the state. ...

The sovereign

Now, as the sovereign is formed entirely of the individuals who compose it, it has not, nor could it have, any interest contrary to theirs; and so the sovereign has no need to give guarantees to the subjects, because it is impossible for a body to wish to hurt all of its members, and, as we shall see, it cannot hurt any particular member. The sovereign by the mere fact that it is, is always all that it ought to be. ... Every individual as a man may have a private will contrary to, or different from, the general will that he has as a citizen. His private interest may speak with a very different voice from that of the public interest. ...

Hence, in order that the social pact shall not be an empty formula, it is tacitly implied in the commitment — which alone can give force to all others — that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the whole body, which means nothing other than that he shall be forced to be free; for this is the condition which, by giving each citizen to the nation, secures him against all personal dependence, it is the condition which shapes both the design and the working of the political machine, and which alone bestows justice on civil contracts — without it, such contracts would be absurd, tyrannical and liable to the grossest abuse. ...

Whether the general will can err

The people is never corrupted, but it is often misled; and only then does it seem to will what is bad.

There is often a great difference between the will of all [what all individuals want] and the general will; the general will studies only the common interest while the will of all studies private interest, and is indeed no more than the sum of individual desires. But if we take away from these same wills, the pluses and minuses which cancel each other out, the sum of the difference is the general will. ...

But if groups, sectional associations are formed at the expense of the larger association, the will of each of these groups will become general in relation to its own members and private in relation to the state; we might then say that there are no longer as many votes as there are men but only as many votes as there are groups. The differences become less numerous and yield a result less general. ...

The limits of the sovereign power

How should it be that the general will is always rightful and that all men constantly wish the happiness of each but for the fact that there is no one who does not take that word 'each' to pertain to himself and in voting for all think of himself? This proves that the equality of rights and the notion of justice which it produces derive from the predilection which each man has for himself and hence from human nature as such. It also proves that the general will, to be truly what it is, must be general in its purpose as well as in its nature; that it should spring from all and apply to all; and that it loses its natural rectitude when it is directed towards any particular and circumscribed object — for in judging what is foreign to us, we have no sound principle of equity to guide us. ...

Whichever way we look at it, we always return to the same conclusion: namely that the social pact establishes equality among the citizens in that they all pledge themselves under the same conditions and must all enjoy the same rights. Hence by the nature of the compact, every act of sovereignty, that is, every authentic act of the general will, binds or favours all the citizens equally, so that the sovereign recognizes only the whole body of the nation and makes no distinction between any of the members who compose it. ...

When the people as a whole makes rules for the people as a whole, it is dealing only with itself; and if any relationship emerges, it is between the entire body seen from one perspective and the same entire body seen from another, without any division whatever. Here the matter concerning which a rule is made is as general as the will which makes it. And *this* is the kind of act which I call a law. ...

The public force thus needs its own agent to call it together and put it into action in accordance with the instructions of the general will, to serve also as a means of communication between the state and the sovereign, and in a sense to do for the public person what is done for the individual by the union of soul and body. This is the reason why the state needs a government, something often unhappily confused with the sovereign, but of which it is really only the minister.

What, then, is the government? An intermediary body established between the subjects and the sovereign for their mutual communication, a body charged with the execution of the laws and the maintenance of freedom, both civil and political. ...

Just as the particular will acts unceasingly against the general will, so does the government continually exert itself against the sovereign. And the more this exertion increases, the more the constitution becomes corrupt, and, as in this case there is no distinct corporate will to resist the will of the prince and so to balance it, sooner or later it is inevitable that the prince will oppress the sovereign and break the social treaty. This is the inherent and inescapable defect which, from the birth of the political body, tends relentlessly to destroy it, just as old age and death destroy the body of a man. ...

The principle of political life dwells in the sovereign authority. The legislative power is the heart of the state, the executive power is the brain, which sets all the parts in motion. The brain may become paralysed and the individual still live. A man can be an imbecile and survive, but as soon as his heart stops functioning, the creature is dead.

Late Victorian Holocausts

El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World

MIKE DAVIS

For Alok & Rajat
With love
Nomi

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The Origins of the Third World

> Emaciated people, disease, ribs showing, shriveled bellies, corpses, children with fly-encircled eyes, with swollen stomachs, children dying in the streets, rivers choked with bodies, people; living, sleeping, lying, dying on the streets in misery, beggary, squalor, wretchedness, a mass of aboriginal humanity...
>
> – Harold Isaacs

What historians, then, have so often dismissed as "climatic accidents" turn out to be not so accidental after all.[1] Although its syncopations are complex and quasi-periodic, ENSO has a coherent spatial and temporal logic. And, contrary to Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's famous (Eurocentric?) conclusion in *Times of Feast, Times of Famine* that climate change is a "slight, perhaps negligible" shaper of human affairs, ENSO is an episodically potent force in the history of tropical humanity.[2] If, as Raymond Williams once observed, "Nature contains, though often unnoticed, an extraordinary amount of human history," we are now learning that the inverse is equally true: there is an extraordinary amount of hitherto unnoticed environmental instability in modern history.[3] The power of ENSO events indeed seems so overwhelming in some instances that it is tempting to assert that great famines, like those of the 1870s and 1890s (or, more recently,

the Sahelian disaster of the 1970s), were "caused" by El Niño, or by El Niño acting upon traditional agrarian misery. This interpretation, of course, inadvertently echoes the official line of the British in Victorian India as recapitulated in every famine commission report and viceregal allocution: millions were killed by extreme weather, not imperialism.[4] Was this true?

'Bad Climate' versus 'Bad System'

At this point it would be immensely useful to have some strategy for sorting out what the Chinese pithily contrast as "bad climate" versus "bad system." Y. Kueh, as we have seen, has attempted to parameterize the respective influences of drought and policy upon agricultural output during the Great Leap Forward famine of 1958–61. The derivation of his "weather index," however, involved fifteen years of arduous research and the resolution of "a series of complicated methodological and technical problems" including a necessary comparative regression to the 1930s. Although his work is methodologically rich, his crucial indices depend upon comprehensive meteorological and econometric data that are simply not available for the nineteenth century. A direct statistical assault on the tangled causal web of the 1876–77 and 1896–1902 famines thus seems precluded.[5]

An alternative is to construct a "natural experiment." As Jared Diamond has advocated in a recent sermon to historians, such an experiment should compare systems "differing in the presence or absence (or in the strong or weak effect) of some putative causative factor."[6] We ideally need, in other words, an analogue for the late Victorian famines in which the natural parameters are constant but the social variables significantly differ. An excellent candidate for which we possess unusually detailed documentation is the El Niño event of 1743–44 (described as "exceptional" by Whetton and Rutherfurd) in its impact on the north China plain.[7] Although not as geographically far-reaching as the great ENSO droughts of 1876–78 or 1899–1900, it otherwise prefigured their intensities. The spring monsoon failed two years in a row, devastating winter wheat in Hebei (Zhili) and northern Shandong. Scorching winds withered crops and farmers dropped dead in their fields from sunstroke. Provincial grain supplies were utterly inadequate to the scale of need. Yet unlike the late nineteenth century, there was no mass mortality from either starvation or disease. Why not?

Pierre-Etienne Will has carefully reconstructed the fascinating history of the 1743–44 relief campaign from contemporary records. Under the skilled Confucian administration of Fang Guancheng, the agricultural and hydraulic expert who directed relief operations in Zhili, the renowned "ever-normal granaries" in each county immediately began to issue rations (without any labor test) to peasants in the officially designated disaster counties.[8] (Local gentry had already organized soup kitchens to ensure the survival of the poorest residents until state distributions began.) When local supplies proved insufficient, Guancheng shifted millet and rice from the great store of tribute grain at Tongcang at the terminus of the Grand Canal, then used the Canal to move vast quantities of rice from the south. Two million peasants were maintained for eight months, until the return of the monsoon made agriculture again possible. Ultimately 85 percent of the relief grain was borrowed from tribute depots or granaries outside the radius of the drought.[9]

As Will emphasizes, this was famine defense in depth, the "last word in technology at the time." No contemporary European society guaranteed subsistence as a human right to its peasantry (*ming-sheng* is the Chinese term), nor, as the Physiocrats later marveled, could any emulate "the perfect timing of [Guancheng's] operations: the action taken always kept up with developments and even anticipated them."[10] Indeed, while the Qing were honoring their social contract with the peasantry, contemporary Europeans were dying in the millions from famine and hunger-related diseases following arctic winters and summer droughts in 1740–43. "The mortality peak of the early 1740s," emphasizes an authority, "is an outstanding fact of European demographic history."[11] In Europe's Age of Reason, in other words, the "starving masses" were French, Irish and Calabrian, not Chinese.

Moreover "the intervention carried out in Zhili in 1743 and 1744 was not the only one of its kind in the eighteenth century, nor even the most extensive."[12] Indeed, as Table 9.1 indicates, the Yellow River flooding of the previous year (1742/43) involved much larger expenditures over a much broader region. (In addition to the ENSO-correlated droughts and floods shown in the table, Will has also documented seven other flood disasters that involved massive relief mobilization.) Although comparable figures are unavailable, Beijing also acted aggressively to aid Shandong officials in preventing famine during the series of El Niño

Table 9.1
ENSO Disasters Relieved by the Qing

	Quinn Intensity	Provinces	Amount of Relief
1720/21	Very strong	Shaanxi	Unknown
1742/43	(Flooding)	Jiangsu/Anhui	17 million taels; 2.3 million shi
1743/44	Moderate+	Hebei	.87 million taels; 1 million shi
1778	Strong	Henan	1.6 million taels; .3 million shi
1779/80	La Niña	Henan	same
1785	?	Henan	2.8 million taels

Source: Constructed from Table VII, Whetton and Rutherfurd, p. 244; Table 20, Will, *Bureaucracy and Famine*, pp. 298–9.

droughts that afflicted that province (and much of the tropics) between 1778 and 1787.[13] The contrast with the chaotic late-Qing relief efforts in 1877 and 1899 (or, for that matter, Mao's monstrous mishandling of the 1958–61 drought) could not be more striking. State capacity in eighteenth-century China, as Will and his collaborators emphasize, was deeply impressive: a cadre of skilled administrators and trouble-shooters, a unique national system of grain price stabilization, large crop surpluses, well-managed granaries storing more than a million bushels of grain in each of twelve provinces, and incomparable hydraulic infrastructures.[14]

The capstone of Golden Age food security was the invigilation of grain prices and supply trends by the emperor himself. Although ever-normal granaries were an ancient tradition, price monitoring was a chief innovation of the Qing. "Great care was exercised by the eighteenth-century Emperors in looking over the memorials and price lists in search of inconsistencies." On the fifth of every month *hsien* magistrates forwarded detailed price reports to the prefectures, who summarized them for the provincial governors who, in turn, reported their content in memorials to the central government.[15] Carefully studied and annotated by the emperors, these "vermillion rescripts" testify to an extraordinary engagement with the administration of food security and rural well-being. "In the 1720s and 1730s," R. Bin Wong writes, "the Yongzheng emperor personally scrutinized granary operations, as he did all other bureaucratic behavior; his intense interest in official efforts and his readiness to berate officials for what he considered failures partially explain the development of granary operations beyond the levels achieved in the late Kangxi period."[16] Yongzheng also severely sanctioned specu-

lation by the "rich households [who] in their quest for profit habitually remove grain by the full thousand or full myriad bushels."[17]

His successor, Qianlong, ordered the prefects to send the county-level price reports directly to the Bureau of Revenue in Beijing so he could study them firsthand. The emperors' intense personal involvement ensured a high standard of accuracy in price reporting and, as Endymion Wilkinson demonstrates, frequently led to significant reform.[18] This was another *differentia specifica* of Qing absolutism. It is hard to imagine a Louis XVI spending his evenings scrupulously poring over the minutiae of grain prices from Limoges or the Auvergne, although the effort might have ultimately saved his head from the guillotine.

Nor can we easily picture a European monarch intimately involved in the esoteria of public works to the same degree that the Qing routinely immersed themselves in the details of the Grand Canal grain transport system. "The Manchu emperors," Jane Leonard points out, " had since the early reigns involved themselves deeply in Canal management, not just in broad questions of policy, but in the control and supervision of lower-level administrative tasks." When, for example, flooding in 1824 destroyed sections of the Grand Canal at the critical Huai–Yellow River junction, the Tao-kuang emperor personally assumed command of reconstruction efforts.[19]

In contrast, moreover, to later Western stereotypes of a passive Chinese state, government during the high Qing era was proactively involved in famine prevention through a broad program of investment in agricultural improvement, irrigation and waterborne transportation. As in other things, Joseph Needham points out, the eighteenth century was a golden age for theoretical and historical work on flood control and canal construction. Civil engineers were canonized and had temples erected in their honor.[20] Confucian activists like Guancheng, with a deep commitment to agricultural intensification, "tended to give top priority to investments in infrastructure and to consider the organization of food relief merely a makeshift." Guancheng also wrote a famous manual (the source of much of Will's account) that codified historically tested principles of disaster planning and relief managment: something else that has little precedent in backward European tradition.[21]

Finally, there is plentiful evidence that the northern China peasantry during the high Qing was more nutritionally self-reliant and less vulnerable to climate

stress than their descendants a century later. In the eighteenth century, after the Kangxi emperor permanently froze land revenue at the 1712 level, China experienced "the mildest agrarian taxation it had ever known in the whole of its history."[22] Dwight Perkins estimates that the formal land tax was a mere 5 to 6 percent of the harvest and that a large portion was expended locally by hsien and provincial governments.[23] Likewise, the exchange ratio between silver and copper coinage, which turned so disastrously against the poor peasantry in the nineteenth century, was stabilized by the booming output of the Yunnan copper mines (replacing Japanese imports) and the great inflow of Mexican bullion earned by China's huge trade surplus.[24] Unlike their contemporary French counterparts, the farmers of the Yellow River plain (the vast majority of whom owned their land) were neither crushed by exorbitant taxes nor ground down by feudal rents. North China, in particular, was unprecedentedly prosperous by historical standards, and Will estimates that the percentage of the rural population ordinarily living near the edge of starvation – depending, for example, on husks and wild vegetables for a substantial part of their diet – was less than 2 percent.[25] As a result, epidemic disease, unlike in Europe, was held in check for most of the "Golden Age."[26]

Still, could even Fang Guancheng have coped with drought disasters engulfing the larger part of north China on the scale of 1876 or even 1899? It is important to weigh this question carefully, since drought-famines were more localized in the eighteenth century, and because the 1876 drought, as we have seen, may have been a 200-year or even 500-year frequency event. Moreover, the late Victorian droughts reached particular intensity in the loess highlands of Shanxi and Shaanxi, where transport costs were highest and bottlenecks unavoidable. It is reasonable, therefore, to concede that a drought of 1876 magnitude in 1743 would inevitably have involved tens, perhaps even hundreds, of thousands of deaths in more remote villages.

Such a drought, however, would have been unlikely, as in the late nineteenth century, to grow into a veritable holocaust that consumed the greater part of the populations of whole prefectures and counties. In contrast to the situation in 1876–77, when granaries were depleted or looted and prices soared out of control, eighteenth-century administrators could count on a large imperial budget surplus and well-stocked local granaries backed up by a huge surplus of rice in

the south. Large stockpiles of tribute grain at strategic transportation nodes in Henan and along the Shanxi–Shaanxi border were specially designated for the relief of the loess provinces, and an abundance of water sources guaranteed the Grand Canal's navigability year-round.[27] Whereas in 1876 the Chinese state – enfeebled and demoralized after the failure of the Tongzhi Restoration's domestic reforms – was reduced to desultory cash relief augmented by private donations and humiliating foreign charity, in the eighteenth century it had both the technology and political will to shift grain massively between regions and, thus, relieve hunger on a larger scale than any previous polity in world history.[28]

'Laws of Leather' versus 'Laws of Iron'

What about famine in pre-British India? Again, there is little evidence that rural India had ever experienced subsistence crises on the scale of the Bengal catastrophe of 1770 under East India Company rule or the long siege by disease and hunger between 1875 and 1920 that slowed population growth almost to a standstill. The Moguls, to be sure, did not dispose of anything like the resources of the centralized Qing state at its eighteenth-century zenith, nor was their administrative history as well documented. As Sanjay Sharma has pointed out, "The problems of intervening in the complex network of caste-based local markets and transport bottlenecks rendered an effective state intervention quite difficult."[29]

On the other hand, benefiting perhaps from a milder ENSO cycle, Mogul India was generally free of famine until the 1770s. There is considerable evidence, moreover, that in pre-British India before the creation of a railroad-girded national market in grain, village-level food reserves were larger, patrimonial welfare more widespread, and grain prices in surplus areas better insulated against speculation.[30] (As we have seen, the perverse consequence of a unitary market was to export famine, via price inflation, to the rural poor in grain-surplus districts.) The British, of course, had a vested interest in claiming that they had liberated the populace from a dark age of Mogul despotism: "One of the foundations of Crown Rule was the belief that ... India's past was full of depravity."[31] But, as Bose and Jalal point out, "The picture of an emaciated and oppressed peasantry, mercilessly exploited by the emperor and his nobility, is being seriously altered in the light of new interpretations of the evidence."[32] Recent research by Ashok Desai indicates that "the mean standard of food consumption in Akbar's empire

was appreciably higher than in the India of the early 1960s."[33]

The Mogul state, moreover, "regarded the protection of the peasant as an essential obligation," and there are numerous examples of humane if sporadic relief operations.[34] Like their Chinese contemporaries, the Mogul rulers Akbar, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb relied on a quartet of fundamental policies – embargos on food exports, antispeculative price regulation, tax relief and distribution of free food without a forced-labor counterpart – that were an anathema to later British Utilitarians.[35] They also zealously policed the grain trade in the public interest. As one horrified British writer discovered, these "oriental despots" punished traders who shortchanged peasants during famines by amputating an equivalent weight of merchant flesh.[36]

In contrast to the Raj's punitive taxation of irrigation and its neglect of traditional wells and reservoirs, the Moguls used tax subsidies to promote water conservation. As David Hardiman explains in the case of Gujarat: "Local officials had considerable discretion over tax assessment, and it seems to have been their practice to encourage well-construction by granting tax concessions. In the Ahmedabad region, for example, it was common to waive the tax on a 'rabi' crop raised through irrigation from a recently constructed well. The concession continued until the tax exemptions were held to have equalled the cost of construction."[37]

Occasionally, the British paid appropriate tribute to the policies of their "despotic" predecessors. The first Famine Commission Report in 1880, for example, cited Aurangzeb's extraordinary relief campaign during the (El Niño?) drought-famine of 1661: "The Emperor opened his treasury and granted money without stint. He gave every encouragement to the importation of corn and either sold it at reduced prices, or distributed it gratuitously amongst those who were too poor to pay. He also promptly acknowledged the necessity of remitting the rents of the cultivators and relieved them for the time being of other taxes. The vernacular chronicles of the period attribute the salvation of millions of lives and the preservation of many provinces to his strenuous exertions."[38]

Food security was also probably better in the Deccan during the period of Maratha rule. As Mountstuart Elphinstone admitted retrospectively after the British conquest, "The Mahratta country flourished, and the people seem to have been exempt from some of the evils which exist under our more perfect Government."[39] His contemporary, Sir John Malcolm, "claimed that between 1770 and

1820 there had been only three very bad seasons in the Maratha lands and, though some years had been 'indifferent,' none had been as 'bad as to occasion any particular distress.'"[40] D. E. U. Baker cites a later British administrative report from the Central Provinces that contrasted the desultory relief efforts of the East India Company during the droughts of the 1820s and 1830s ("a few thousand rupees") with the earlier and highly effective Maratha policy of forcing local elites to feed the poor ("enforced charity of hundreds of rich men").[41] Indeed the resilient Maratha social order was founded on a militarized free peasantry and "very few landless laborers existed." In contrast to the British-imposed *raiyatwari* system, occupancy rights in the Maratha Deccan were not tied to revenue payment, taxes varied according to the actual harvest, common lands and resources were accessible to the poor, and the rulers subsidized local irrigation improvements with cheap *taqavi* (or *tagai)* loans.[42] In addition, Elphinstone observed, the "sober, frugal, industrious" Maratha farmers lived in generally tolerant coexistence with the Bhils and other tribal peoples. Ecological and economic synergies balanced the diverse claims of plains agriculture, pastoralism and foothill swidden.[43]

In contrast to the rigidity and dogmatism of British land-and-revenue settlements, both the Moguls and Marathas flexibly tailored their rule to take account of the crucial ecological relationships and unpredictable climate fluctuations of the subcontinent's drought-prone regions. The Moguls had "laws of leather," wrote journalist Vaughan Nash during the famine of 1899, in contrast to the British "laws of iron."[44] Moreover, traditional Indian elites, like the great Bengali *zamindars*, seldom shared Utilitarian obsessions with welfare cheating and labor discipline. "Requiring the poor to work for relief, a practice begun in 1866 in Bengal under the influence of the Victorian Poor Law, was in flat contradiction to the Bengali premise that food should be given ungrudgingly, as a father gives food to his children."[45] Although the British insisted that they had rescued India from "timeless hunger," more than one official was jolted when Indian nationalists quoted from an 1878 study published in the prestigious *Journal of the Statistical Society* that contrasted thirty-one serious famines in 120 years of British rule against only seventeen recorded famines in the entire previous two millennia.[46]

India and China, in other words, did not enter modern history as the helpless "lands of famine" so universally enshrined in the Western imagination. Certainly the intensity of the ENSO cycle in the late nineteenth century, perhaps only

equaled on three or four other occasions in the last millennium, must loom large in any explanation of the catastrophes of the 1870s and 1890s. But it is scarcely the only independent variable. Equal causal weight, or more, must be accorded to the growing social vulnerability to climate variability that became so evident in south Asia, north China, northeast Brazil and southern Africa in late Victorian times. As Michael Watts has eloquently argued in his history of the "silent violence" of drought-famine in colonial Nigeria: "Climate risk ... is not given by nature but ... by 'negotiated settlement' since each society has institutional, social, and technical means for coping with risk.... Famines [thus] are social crises that represent the failures of particular economic and political systems."[47]

Perspectives on Vulnerability

Over the last generation, scholars have produced a bumper-crop of revealing social and economic histories of the regions teleconnected to ENSO's episodic disturbances. The thrust of this research has been to further demolish orientalist stereotypes of immutable poverty and overpopulation as the natural preconditions of the major nineteenth-century famines. There is persuasive evidence that peasants and farm laborers became dramatically more pregnable to natural disaster after 1850 as their local economies were violently incorporated into the world market. What colonial administrators and missionaries – even sometimes creole elites, as in Brazil – perceived as the persistence of ancient cycles of backwardness were typically modern structures of formal or informal imperialism.

From the perspective of political ecology, the vulnerability of tropical agriculturalists to extreme climate events after 1870 was magnified by simultaneous restructurings of household and village linkages to regional production systems, world commodity markets and the colonial (or dependent) state. "It is, of course, the constellation of these social relations," writes Watts, "which binds households together and project them into the marketplace, that determines the precise form of the household vulnerability. It is also these same social relations that have failed to stimulate or have actually prevented the development of the productive forces that might have lessened this vulnerability." Indeed, new social relations of production, in tandem with the New Imperialism, "not only altered the extent of hunger in a statistical sense but changed its very etiology."[48] Three points of articulation with larger socio-economic structures were especially deci-

sive for rural subsistence in the late Victorian "proto-third world."

First, the forcible incorporation of smallholder production into commodity and financial circuits controlled from overseas tended to undermine traditional food security. Recent scholarship confirms that it was *subsistence adversity* (high taxes, chronic indebtedness, inadequate acreage, loss of subsidiary employment opportunities, enclosure of common resources, dissolution of patrimonial obligations, and so on), not entrepreneurial opportunity, that typically promoted the turn to cash-crop cultivation. Rural capital, in turn, tended to be parasitic rather than productivist as rich landowners redeployed fortunes that they built during export booms into usury, rack-renting and crop brokerage. "Marginal subsistence producers," Hans Medick points out, " ... did not benefit from the market under these circumstances; they were devoured by it."[49] Medick, writing about the analogous predicament of marginal smallholders in "proto-industrial" Europe, provides an exemplary description of the dilemma of millions of Indian and Chinese poor peasants in the late nineteenth century:

> For them [even] rising agrarian prices did not necessarily mean increasing incomes. Since their marginal productivity was low and production fluctuated, rising agrarian prices tended to be a source of indebtedness rather than affording them the opportunity to accumulate surpluses. The "anomaly of the agrarian markets" forced the marginal subsistence producers into an unequal exchange relationship through the market.... Instead of profiting from exchange, they were forced by the market into the progressive deterioration of their conditions of production, i.e. the loss of their property titles. Especially in years of bad harvests, and high prices, the petty producers were compelled to buy additional grain, and, worse, to go into debt. Then, in good harvest years when cereal prices were low, they found it hard to extricate themselves from the previously accumulated debts; owing to the low productivity of their holdings they could not produce sufficient quantities for sale.[50]

As a result, the position of small rural producers in the international economic hierarchy equated with downward mobility, or, at best, stagnation. There is consistent evidence from north China as well as India and northeast Brazil of falling household wealth and increased fragmentation or alienation of land. Whether farmers were directly engaged by foreign capital, like the Berari *khatedars* and Cearan *parceiros* who fed the mills of Lancashire during the Cotton Famine, or were simply producing for domestic markets subject to international competition

like the cotton-spinning peasants of the Boxer hsiens in western Shandong, commercialization went hand in hand with pauperization without any silver lining of technical change or agrarian capitalism.

Second, the integration of millions of tropical cultivators into the world market during the late nineteenth century was accompanied by a dramatic deterioration in their terms of trade. Peasants' lack of market power vis-à-vis crop merchants and creditors was redoubled by their commodities' falling international purchasing power. The famous Kondratief downswing of 1873–1897 made dramatic geographical discriminations. As W. Arthur Lewis suggests, comparative productivity or transport costs alone cannot explain an emergent structure of global unequal exchange that valued the products of tropical agriculture so differently from those of temperate farming. "With the exception of sugar, all the commodities whose price was lower in 1913 than in 1883 were commodities produced almost wholly in the tropics. All the commodities whose prices rose over this thirty-year period were commodities in which the temperate countries produced a substantial part of total supplies. The fall in ocean freight rates affected tropical more than temperate prices, but this should not make a difference of more than five percentage points."[51]

Third, formal and informal Victorian imperialism, backed up by the supernational automatism of the Gold Standard, confiscated local fiscal autonomy and impeded state-level developmental responses – especially investments in water conservancy and irrigation – that might have reduced vulnerability to climate shocks. As Curzon once famously complained to the House of Lords, tariffs "were decided in London, not in India; in England's interests, not in India's."[52] Moreover, as we shall see in the next chapter, any grassroots benefit from British railroad and canal construction was largely canceled by official neglect of local irrigation and the brutal enclosures of forest and pasture resources. Export earnings, in other words, not only failed to return to smallholders as increments in household income, but also as usable social capital or state investment.

In China, the "normalization" of grain prices and the ecological stabilization of agriculture in the Yellow River plain were undermined by an interaction of endogenous crises and the loss of sovereignty over foreign trade in the aftermath of the two Opium Wars. As disconnected from world market perturbations as the starving loess provinces might have seemed in 1877, the catastrophic fate of their

populations was indirectly determined by Western intervention and the consequent decline in state capacity to ensure traditional welfare. Similarly the depletion of "ever-normal" granaries may have resulted from a vicious circle of multiple interacting causes over a fifty-year span, but the coup de grace was certainly the structural recession and permanent fiscal crisis engineered by Palmerston's aggressions against China in the 1850s. As foreign pressure intensified in later decades, the embattled Qing, as Kenneth Pomeranz has shown, were forced to abandon both their traditional mandates: abandoning both hydraulic control and grain stockpiling in the Yellow River provinces in order to concentrate on defending their endangered commercial littoral.[53]

British control over Brazil's foreign debt and thus its fiscal capacity likewise helps explain the failure of either the empire or its successor republic to launch any antidrought developmental effort in the sertão. The zero-sum economic conflicts between Brazil's rising and declining regions took place in a structural context where London banks, above all the Rothschilds, ultimately owned the money-supply. In common with the India and China, the inability to politically regulate interaction with the world market at the very time when mass subsistence increasingly depended upon food entitlements acquired in international trade became a sinister syllogism for famine. Moreover in the three cases of the Deccan, the Yellow River basin and the Nordeste, former "core" regions of eighteenth-century subcontinental power systems were successively transformed into famished peripheries of a London-centered world economy.

The elaboration of these theses, as always in geo-historical explanation, invites closer analysis at different magnifications. Before considering case-studies of rural immiseration in key regions devastated by the 1870s and 1890s El Niño events or looking at the relationships among imperialism, state capacity and ecological crisis at the village level, it is necessary to briefly discuss how the structural positions of Indians and Chinese (the big battalions of the future Third World) in the world economy changed over the course of the nineteenth century. Understanding how tropical humanity lost so much economic ground to western Europeans after 1850 goes a long way toward explaining why famine was able to reap such hecatombs in El Niño years. As a baseline for understanding the origins of modern global inequality (and that is the key question), the herculean statistical labors of Paul Bairoch and Angus Maddison over the last thirty years have been

complemented by recent comparative case-studies of European and Asian standards of living.

The Defeat of Asia

Bairoch's famous claim, corroborated by Maddison, is that differences in income and wealth between the great civilizations of the eighteenth century were relatively slight: "It is very likely that, in the middle of the eighteenth century, the average standard of living in Europe was a little bit lower than that of the rest of the world."[54] When the *sans culottes* stormed the Bastille, the largest manufacturing districts in the world were still the Yangzi Delta and Bengal, with Lingan (modern Guangdong and Guangxi) and coastal Madras not far behind.[55] India alone produced one-quarter of world manufactures, and while its "pre-capitalist agrarian labour productivity was probably less than the Japanese-Chinese level, its commercial capital surpassed that of the Chinese."[56]

As Prasannan Parthasarathi has recently shown, the stereotype of the Indian laborer as a half-starved wretch in a loincloth collapses in the face of new data about comparative standards of living. "Indeed, there is compelling evidence that South Indian labourers had higher earnings than their British counterparts in the eighteenth century and lived lives of greater financial security." Because the productivity of land was higher in South India, weavers and other artisans enjoyed better diets than average Europeans. More importantly, their unemployment rates tended to be lower because they possessed superior rights of contract and exercised more economic power. But even outcaste agricultural labourers in Madras earned more in real terms than English farm laborers.[57] (By 1900, in contrast, Romesh Chunder Dutt estimated that the average British household income was 21 times higher.)[58]

New research by Chinese historians also challenges traditional conceptions of comparative economic growth. Referring to the pathbreaking work of Li Bozhong, Philip Huang notes that "the outstanding representative of this new academic tendency has even argued the overall economic development of the Yangzi Delta in the Qing exceeded that of 'early modern' England."[59] Similarly, Bin Wong has recently emphasized that the "specific conditions associated with European proto-industrialization – expansion of seasonal crafts, shrinking farm size, and good marketing systems – may have been even more widespread in

Table 9.2
Shares of World GDP
(Percent)

	1700	1820	1890	1952
China	23.1	32.4	13.2	5.2
India	22.6	15.7	11.0	3.8
Europe	23.3	26.6	40.3	29.7

Source: Angus Maddison, *Chinese Economic Performance in the Long Run*, Paris 1998, p. 40.

China [and India] than in Europe."[60] "Basic functional literacy," adds F. Mote, "was more widespread than in Western countries at that time, including among women at all social levels."[61]

Moreover, in the recent forum "Re-thinking 18th Century China," Kenneth Pomeranz points to evidence that ordinary Chinese enjoyed a higher standard of consumption than eighteenth-century Europeans:

> Chinese life expectancy (and thus nutrition) was at roughly English levels (and so above Continental ones) even in the late 1700s. (Chinese fertility was actually lower than Europe's between 1550 and 1850, while its population grew faster; thus mortality must have been low.) Moreover, my estimates of "non-essential" consumption come out surprisingly high. Sugar consumption works out to between 4.3 and 5.0 pounds per capita ca. 1750 – and much higher in some regions – compared with barely 2 pounds per capita for Europe. China circa 1750 seems to have produced 6–8 lbs. of cotton cloth per capita; its richest area, the Yangzi Delta (population roughly 31 million), probably produced between 12 and 15 lbs. per capita. The UK, even in 1800, produced roughly 13 lbs. of cotton, linen and wool cloth combined per resident, and Continental output was probably below China's.[62]

Pomeranz has also calculated that "the Lower Yangzi appears to have produced roughly as much cotton cloth per capita in 1750 as the UK did cotton, wool, linen and silk cloth combined in 1800 – plus an enormous quantity of silk."[63] In addition, as Maddison demonstrates, the Chinese GDP in absolute terms grew faster than that of Europe throughout the eighteenth century, dramatically enlarging its share of world income by 1820.

The usual stereotype of nineteenth-century economic history is that Asia stood still while the Industrial Revolution propelled Britain, followed by the

United States and eventually the rest of Western Europe, down the path of high-speed GNP growth. In a superficial sense, of course, this is true, although the data gathered by Bairoch and Maddison show that Asia lost its preeminence in the world economy later than most of us perhaps imagine. The future Third World, dominated by the highly developed commercial and handicraft economies of India and China, surrendered ground very grudgingly until 1850 (when it still generated 65 percent of global GNP), but then declined with increasing rapidity through the rest of the nineteenth century (only 38 percent of world GNP in 1900 and 22 percent in 1960).[64]

Table 9.3

Shares of World Manufacturing Output, 1750–1900

(Percent)

	1750	1800	1830	1860	1880	1900
Europe	23.1	28.0	34.1	53.6	62.0	63.0
UK	1.9	4.3	9.5	19.9	22.9	18.5
Tropics	76.8	71.2	63.3	39.2	23.3	13.4
China	32.8	33.3	29.8	19.7	12.5	6.2
India	24.5	19.7	17.6	8.6	2.8	1.7

Source: Derived from B. R. Tomlinson, "Economics: The Periphery," in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century*, Oxford 1990, p. 69 (Table 3.8).

The deindustrialization of Asia via the substitution of Lancashire cotton imports for locally manufactured textiles reached its climax only in the decades after the construction of the Crystal Palace. "Until 1831," Albert Feuerwerker points out, "Britain purchased more 'nankeens' (cloth manufactured in Nanking and other places in the lower Yangzi region) each year than she sold British-manufactured cloth to China."[65] Britain exported 51 million yards of cloth to Asia in 1831; 995 million in 1871; 1413 million in 1879; and 2000 million in 1887.[66]

But why did Asia stand in place? The rote answer is because it was weighted down with the chains of tradition and Malthusian demography, although this did not prevent Qing China, whose rate of population increase was about the same as Europe's, from experiencing extraordinary economic growth throughout the eighteenth century. As Jack Goldstone recently argued, China's "stasis" is an "anachronistic illusion that come[s] from reading history backwards."[67] The

Table 9.4

Standing in Place: China vs. Europe

Dollars per Capita GDP/(Population in Millions)

	Western Europe		China	
1400	430	(43)	500	(74)
1820	1034	(122)	500	(342)
1950	4902	(412)	454	(547)

Source: Lu Aiguo, *China and the Global Economy Since 1840*, Helsinki 2000, p. 56 (Table 4.1 as derived from Maddison).

relevant question is not so much why the Industrial Revolution occurred first in England, Scotland and Belgium, but why other advanced regions of the eighteenth-century world economy failed to adapt their handicraft manufactures to the new conditions of production and competition in the nineteenth century.

As Marx liked to point out, the Whig view of history deletes a great deal of very bloody business. The looms of India and China were defeated not so much by market competition as they were forcibly dismantled by war, invasion, opium and a Lancashire-imposed system of one-way tariffs. (Already by 1850, imposed Indian opium imports had siphoned 11 percent of China's money-supply and 13 percent of its silver stock out of the country.)[68] Whatever the internal brakes on rapid economic growth in Asia, Latin America or Africa, it is indisputable that from about 1780 or 1800 onward, every serious attempt by a non-Western society to move over into a fast lane of development or to regulate its terms of trade was met by a military as well as an economic response from London or a competing imperial capital. Japan, prodded by Perry's black ships, is the exception that proves the rule.

The use of force to configure a "liberal" world economy (as Marx and later Rosa Luxemburg argued) is what Pax Britannica was really about. Palmerston paved the way for Cobden. The Victorians, according to Brian Bond's calculations, resorted to gunboats on at least seventy-five different occasions.[69] The simultaneous British triumphs in the Mutiny and the "Arrow" War in 1858, along with Japan's yielding to Perry in the same year, were the epochal victories over Asian economic autonomy that made a Cobdenite world of free trade possible in the second half of the nineteenth century. (Thailand had already conceded

a 3 percent tariff in 1855).[70] The Taiping Revolution – "more revolutionary in its aims than the Meiji Restoration, insisting on gender equality and democratizing literacy" – was a gigantic attempt to revise that verdict, and was, of course, defeated only thanks to the resources and mercenaries that Britain supplied to the embattled Qing.[71]

This is not to claim that the Industrial Revolution necessarily depended upon the colonial conquest or economic subjugation of Asia; on the contrary, the slave trade and the plantations of the New World were much more strategic streams of liquid capital and natural resources in boosting the industrial take-off in Britain, France and the United States. Although Ralph Davis has argued that the spoils of Plessy contributed decisively to the stability of the Georgian order in an age of revolution, the East India Company's turnover was small change compared to the great trans-Atlantic flow of goods and capital.[72] Only the Netherlands, it would appear, depended crucially upon Asian tribute – the profits of its brutal *culturrstelsel* – in financing its economic recovery and incipient industrialization between 1830 and 1850.

Paradoxically, monsoon Asia's most important "moment" in the Victorian world economy was not at the beginning of the epoch, but towards its end. "The full value of British rule, the return on political investments first made in the eighteenth century," write Cain and Hopkins in their influential history of British imperialism, "was not realised until the second half of the nineteenth century, when India became a vital market for Lancashire's cotton goods and when other specialised interests, such as jute manufacturers in Dundee and steel producers in Sheffield, also greatly increased their stake in the sub-continent."[73] The coerced levies of wealth from India and China were not essential to the rise of British hegemony, but they were absolutely crucial in postponing its decline.

The Late Victorian World Economy

During the protracted period of stop-and-go growth from 1873 to 1896 (what economic historians misleadingly used to call the "Great Depression"), the rate of capital formation and the growth of productivity of both labor and capital in Britain began a dramatic slowdown.[74] She remained tied to old products and technologies while behind their tariff barriers Germany and the United States forged leadership in cutting-edge oil, chemical and electrical industries. Since British

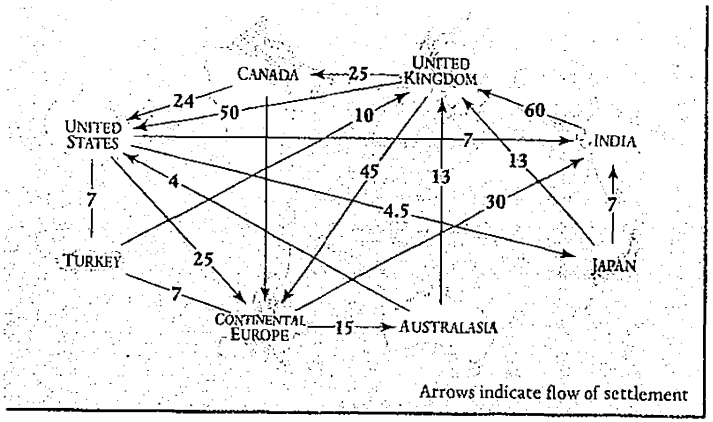

Figure 9.1 World System of Settlements, 1910 (£ Millions)

Source: S. Saul, *Studies in British Overseas Trade, 1870–1914*, Liverpool 1960, p. 58.

imports and overseas investment still dynamized local growth from Australia to Denmark, the potential "scissors" between UK productivity and consumption threatened the entire structure of world trade. It was in this conjuncture that the starving Indian and Chinese peasantries were wheeled in as unlikely saviors. For a generation they braced the entire system of international settlements, allowing England's continued financial supremacy to temporarily coexist with its relative industrial decline. As Giovanni Arrighi emphasizes, "The large surplus in the Indian balance of payments became the pivot of the enlarged reproduction of Britain's world-scale processes of capital accumulation and of the City's mastery of world finance."[75]

The operation of this crucial circuit was simple and ingenious. Britain earned huge annual surpluses in her transactions with India and China that allowed her to sustain equally large deficits with the United States, Germany and the white Dominions. True, Britain also enjoyed invisible earnings from shipping, insurance, banking and foreign investment, but without Asia, which generated 73 percent of British trade credit in 1910, Anthony Latham argues, Britain "presumably would have been forced to abandon free trade," while her trading partners would have been forced to slow their own rates of industrialization. The liberal world economy might otherwise have fragmented into autarkic trading blocs, as it did

later during the 1930s:

> The United States and industrial Europe, in particular Germany, were able to continue their policy of tariff protection only because of Britain's surplus with Asia. Without that Asian surplus, Britain would no longer have been able to subsidise their growth. So what emerges is that Asia in general, but India and China in particular, far from being peripheral to the evolution of the international economy at this time, were in fact crucial. Without the surpluses which Britain was able to earn there, the whole pattern of international economic development would have been severely constrained.[76]

India, of course, was the greatest captive market in world history, rising from third to first place among consumers of British exports in the quarter century after 1870.[77] "British rulers," writes Marcello de Cecco in his study of the Victorian gold standard system, "deliberately prevented Indians from becoming skilled mechanics, refused contracts to Indian firms which produced materials that could be got from England, and generally hindered the formation of an autonomous industrial structure in India."[78] Thanks to a "government stores policy that reserved most government purchases to British products and by the monopoly of British agency houses in organizing the import-export trade," India was forced to absorb Britain's surplus of increasingly obsolescent and noncompetitive industrial exports.[79] By 1910 this included two-fifths of the UK's finished cotton goods and three-fifths of its exports of electrical products, railway equipment, books and pharmaceuticals. As a result, observes de Cecco, Britain avoided "having to restructure her industry and was able to invest her capital in the countries where it gave the highest return." Thanks to India, "British financiers were not compelled to 'tie' their loans to British exports because the Imperial outlet was always available for British products."[80]

The subcontinent was equally important to the rentier strata. The climate-detonated crisis of English agriculture in the late 1870s and the subsequent decline of farm output produced a sharp fall in agricultural rents in England and Wales from £53 million in 1876 to only £37 million in 1910.[81] Indian army and civil service sinecures were accordingly famous for rescuing the fortunes of Britain's landed aristocracy. But, as Cain and Hopkins have argued in making their case for a hegemonic "gentlemanly capitalism," even bigger spoils were returned to the middle

classes of London and the Home Counties as government-guaranteed interest on railroad debentures and Indian bonds. "This constituency of southern investors, and its institutional representatives in banking and shipping, fell in readily behind the flag of empire and gave full support to policies of free trade and sound money. If British rule in India was helpful to British industry, it was vital to British investment."[82] As Hobsbawm points out, "not even the free-traders wished to see this goldmine escape from British control."[83]

But how, in an age of famine, could the subcontinent afford to subsidize its conquerer's suddenly precarious commercial supremacy?[84] In a word, it couldn't, and India was forced-marched into the world market, as we shall see, by revenue and irrigation policies that compelled farmers to produce for foreign consumption at the price of their own food security. This export drive was the hallmark of the new public finance strategy introduced by James Wilson – founder of *The Economist* and finance member of the Council of India – in the first years of direct rule. The opening of the Suez Canal and the growth of steam shipping drastically reduced the transport costs of bulk commodity export from the subcontinent. As a result India's seaborne foreign trade increased more than eightfold between 1840 and 1886.[85] In addition to opium cultivation in Bengal, new export monocultures of indigo, cotton, wheat and rice supplanted millions of acres of subsistence crops. Part of this production, of course, was designed to assure low grain prices in the metropolis after the debacle of English agriculture in the 1870s. Between 1875 and 1900, years that included the worst famines in Indian history, annual grain exports increased from 3 million to 10 million tons: a quantity that, as Romesh Dutt pointed out, was equivalent to the annual nutrition of 25 million people. By the turn of the century, India was supplying nearly a fifth of Britain's wheat consumption as well as allowing London grain merchants to speculate during shortages on the Continent.[86]

But Indian agriculture's even more decisive contribution to the imperial system, from the East India Company's first illegal shipment of opium to Canton, was the income it earned in the rest of the Eastern Hemisphere. Especially in the 1880s and 1890s, the subcontinent's permanent trade and current account imbalances with Britain were financed by its trade surpluses of opium, rice and cotton thread vis-à-vis the rest of Asia. Indeed England's systematic exploitation of India depended in large part upon India's commercial exploitation of China.

This triangular trade between India, China and Britain had a strategic economic importance in the Victorian world system that transcended other far larger flows of commerce. If China generated only a tiny 1.3 percent of the total volume of world trade in the late nineteenth century, it was nonetheless immensely valuable to the British Empire, which monopolized fully 80 percent of China's foreign trade in the 1860s and 60 percent as late as 1899. (British firms, which controlled two-thirds of coastal shipping, also took an important slice of China's domestic commerce.)[87]

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the East India Company had relied on opium exports from Bengal to Canton (which in 1832 earned a net profit "at least fourteen times the prime cost") to finance the growing deficits generated by its expensive military operations on the subcontinent. By forcibly enlarging the Chinese demand for the narcotic and, thus, the taxes collected on its export, the two Opium Wars (1839–42 and 1856–58) and the punitive Treaty of Tianjin (1858) revolutionized the revenue base of British India. "Opium," says John Wong, "serviced the cost of imperial expansion in India."[88] Opium shipments from India reached a peak of 87,000 chests in 1879, the biggest drug transaction in world history.[89]

This extraordinarily one-sided trade – in 1868 India supplied over 35 percent of China's imports but bought less than 1 percent of its exports – also subsidized the imports of US cotton that fueled the industrial revolution in Lancashire.[90] "The sale of Bengal opium to China," Latham explains, "was a great link in the chain of commerce with which Britain had surrounded the world. The chain worked like this: The United Kingdom paid the United States for cotton by bills upon the Bank of England. The Americans took some of those bills to Canton and swapped them for tea. The Chinese exchanged the bills for Indian opium. Some of the bills were remitted to England as profit; others were taken to India to buy additional commodities, as well as to furnish the money remittance of private fortunes in India and the funds for carrying on the Indian government at home."[91]

When, after 1880, the Chinese unofficially resorted to domestic cultivation of opium (an early example of "import-substitution") to reduce their trade deficit, British India found a lucrative new advantage in the export of factory-spun cotton yarn, which, as we shall see, had a devastating impact on Chinese folk textiles.

Moreover, in the later nineteenth century Britain herself started earning a substantial surplus in the China trade for the first time. The Second Opium War – or "Arrow" War – which increased British exports to China tenfold in a single decade was the turning point.[92] Britain's dominant role in Chinese foreign trade, built by Victorian *narcotraficantes* with gunboats, thus leveraged the whole free-trade imperium. "China," summarizes Latham, "directly through Britain and indirectly through India, enabled Britain to sustain her deficits with the United States and Europe on which those countries depended for export stimulus and, in the case of the United States, capital inflow to some degree."[93]

Moreover, China was forced at bayonet point to cede control over tariffs to the British inspector-general of the Imperial Maritime Customs Administration, a de facto imperial proconsul who "came to enjoy more influence with the Foreign Office than did the British Minister in Peking."[94] China's growing trade deficit became intractable by 1884. "Not a single year [in the rest of the nineteenth century] showed a surplus; the average annual deficit rose to 26.6 million taels – roughly about 10 percent of the yearly total trade, but over 20 percent of the annual imports or just under 30 percent of the annual exports."[95] Among its traditional monopolies, tea was undercut in the world market by Indian production while Japanese silk competed with the famous brands of southern China. Unlike India, China was unable to finance any of its "consistent and growing overall deficit" via trade surpluses with a third party, nor could it siphon compensatory incomes, like Britain, from its overseas colonies. As a result, the Qing became increasingly dependent upon foreign exchange remittances from 5 million Chinese emigrants in southeast Asia, Oceania, Peru, the Caribbean and the United States.[96] Although the government publicly expressed its disgust with the coolie trade, it had little alternative but to collaborate in its expansion. The so-called "yellow peril" that English writers would help to popularize was thus a direct consequence of Asia's increasing subsidization of faltering British hegemony. Emigrant Chinese plantation workers and railroad laborers, like Indian ryots, balanced England's accounts on their bent backs.

Militarism and the Gold Standard

In addition to being at the losing end of the imperialism of free trade, the Indian and Chinese economies were also throttled by military expenditures and the Gold Standard. In the Victorian era, no other major countries were forced to devote such excessive portions of their national income to war. India, already saddled with a huge public debt that included reimbursing the stockholders of the East India Company and paying the costs of the 1857 revolt, also had to finance British military supremacy in Asia. In addition to incessant proxy warfare with Russia on the Afghan frontier, ordinary Indians also paid for such far-flung adventures of the Indian Army as the sacking of Beijing (1860), the invasion of Ethiopia (1868), the occupation of Egypt (1882), and the conquest of the Sudan (1896–98). As a result, military expenditures were never less than 25 percent (or 34 percent including police) of India's annual budget, and viceroys were constantly searching for creative ways to purloin monies for the army from other parts of the budget, even from the Famine Fund. Victorian England, on the other hand, never expended more than 3 percent of its net national product on its army and navy, a serendipitous situation that considerably diminished domestic tensions over imperialism.[97]

The Chinese case, of course, was even more extreme. From 1850 to 1873 China was aflame with social and ethnic conflict on a scale that utterly dwarfed the contemporary US War Between the States. As most historians have recognized, this carnage was largely rooted in the structural recession and increasing insecurity of existence that followed the First Opium War. The fiscal effects of epic civil war, in turn, were enormous.[98] The Taiping revolutionaries and their Triad allies for several years cut off Beijing from the revenues of half a dozen southern provinces. Nian rebels simultaneously disrupted administration in large parts of four northern provinces, while a Muslim revolt in Gansu and Shaanxi grew into a nightmarish and immensely expensive war of ethnic extermination. In the worst years, 75 percent of the imperial budget was expended on the maintenance of vast field armies (without, however, leading to real military modernization.)[99] The staggering costs of their survival forced the Qing, in Pomeranz's phrase, to "triage" state expenditure between regions. They ultimately chose to favor the coastal cities, where customs revenues were soaring but sovereignty was

most under threat, over the vast subsistence economy of inland north China. As we shall see later, their abandonment of imperial mandates for flood control and canal navigation, essential to the ecological security of the Yellow River plain, had predictably catastrophic consequences when the ENSO cycle intensified in the later nineteenth century.

The two great nations of Asia were also victimized by the new international monetary system established in the 1870s. Although Britain adopted the Gold Standard in 1821, the rest of the world clung to either a silver standard or a bimetallic system. Supply and demand for both metals were relatively stable with only minor fluctuations in their exchange ratio. After defeating France in 1871, however, Germany shifted to gold and was soon followed by the United States, the rest of Europe and eventually Japan. Vast quantities of demonetarized silver flooded the world market, depreciating the currency of India and China, the major nations outside the hegemonic gold bloc. (India began to move to the Gold Standard after 1893.)

As John McGuire has shown, the London-based Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, which financed much of the Indian trade, had the same kind of quasi-state influence over Indian monetary policy as the Manchester Chamber of Commerce enjoyed over Indian agriculture. Keeping the rupee tied to silver had obvious advantages for Britain, since the value of its exports (denominated in gold) to India increased in value while its imports (denominated in silver) declined in value. "From 1873 to 1895 the value of the rupee fell from an index value in gold of 100 to an index value of 64."[100] Since India's "home charges"– the annual payments to London for pensions, border wars, public debt, the secretary of state's office, and so on – were fixed in gold, the devaluation of the silver rupee cost Indians an additional £105 million between 1874 and 1894.[101]

Likewise it is estimated that the Gold Standard stole one-quarter of the purchasing power of the silver ornaments that constituted the savings of the common people.[102] While the gold-denominated export price of Indian grains remained stable to the benefit of British consumers, their domestic cost in rupees was sharply inflated to the detriment of the Indian poor.[103] As Sir William Wedderburn pointed out: "Indian peasants in general had three safeguards against famine: (a) domestic hoards of grain; (b) family ornaments; and (c) credit with the village moneylender, who was also the grain dealer. But towards the close of

the nineteenth century all were lost by the peasants."[104]

Economic historians celebrate the irony of impoverished Indians providing a flow of cheap credit to Britain. While "at every harvest season," De Cecco writes, "Indian interest rates would shoot up to unbearable levels," British-owned Presidency banks "received deposits from the government and from other public bodies without paying on them one anna of interest." In addition, "The reserves on which the Indian monetary system was based provided a large *masse de manoeuvre* which British monetary authorities could use to supplement their own reserves and to keep London the centre of the international monetary system."[105] Krishnendu Ray expands this point: "By preventing India from transforming its annual surpluses into gold reserves the India Office contributed towards keeping British interest rates low. English banks were able to borrow from the India Office at 2 per cent and reinvest on the London market at 3 per cent."[106] Even more importantly, monetary policy was used, in Dieter Rothermund's phrase, "to flush out India's produce." Until fiscal exigencies forced a partial demonetarization of silver in 1893, inflation greatly abetted the British campaign to recruit peasants to the production of export crops like wheat, indigo, opium and jute that helped balance the Empire's accounts.

> At an earlier time the Dutch had adopted a deliberate method of extracting cash crops from Java by circulating a large amount of worthless copper coins. In India the British did not have to do this deliberately because by simply keeping the mints open to the free flow of depreciating silver they got practically the same result. The management of credit facilitated the extraction of cash crops. By advancing money to the peasants who grew cash crops for export the British and their agents preempted the productive capacity of India's agriculture. The area under cash crops expanded even at times when food grain for home consumption would have fetched a better price. What was grown for export has to be rated as a cash crop in this context. The depreciation of the currency and the preemption of the productive capacity of vast parts of the country combined so as to achieve the miracle that India could export produce at "stable" export prices even at a time when severe famines tormented the country. By absorbing silver and exporting wheat at the lowest price India served as the buffer at the base of the world economy of the late nineteenth century.[107]

In China's case, the shock of the Gold Standard in the late 1870s compounded the monetary chaos inherited from the civil wars of the 1850s and 1860s. Powerless to stop the drain of silver that the British had engineered with the imposition of the opium trade, the Qing had also lost control of their domestic copper supply in the 1860s when Muslim rebels seized the famous Yunnan mines. Accordingly, Beijing had to finance its struggle for survival by issuing worthless paper money and systematically reminting copper cash into higher denominations. The debasement of cash relative to silver created particular havoc in the Yellow River provinces where an estimated 99 percent of exchanges were in copper (versus only 30 percent in the Yangzi Delta).[108] Since land revenues were still assessed in silver, the continuing high price of the metal – as Mary Wright has emphasized – undercut the subsequent attempt of the Tongzhi restorationists in the late 1860s to reclaim the loyalty of the peasantry through an amelioration of the tax burden.[109]

The conversion of world trade to the universal Gold Standard aggravated both China's external and internal exchange crises. First of all, the international price of silver plummeted: "Within a generation, the tael had lost nearly two-thirds of its exchange value."[110] Some mercantile elites may have benefited from the advantage that cheaper international prices gave their exports, particularly tea and Shanghai cotton goods. But "imports from gold-standard countries became more expensive, which was particularly serious for railway development. Foreign investment in China was also discouraged, for fear of repayment in a depreciated standard."[111]

Yet precisely because China's growing commercial debt was financed by the outflow or "dehoarding" of silver, silver's internal value actually rose vis-à-vis the copper coinage that circulated in village economies. The country's shortage of gold in international trade (partly compensated, as we have seen, by the reluctant export of coolie labor) was mirrored by the continuing depreciation of cash, especially in the north. There the common people were also outraged that in order to pay their taxes they had to convert their copper to silver at much higher exchange rates than the privileged gentry. A principal grievance of the Taipings in 1851, monetary instability also helped fuel the Boxer Rebellion nearly a half century later.[112]

The Myth of 'Malthusia'

Forcibly imposed trade deficits, export drives that diminished food security, over-taxation and predatory merchant capital, foreign control of key revenues and developmental resources, chronic imperial and civil warfare, a Gold Standard that picked the pockets of Asian peasants: these were key modalities through which the burden of "structural adjustment" in the late Victorian world economy was shifted from Europe and North America to agriculturalists in newly minted "peripheries." But surely we must also concede that demography – especially in India and China where partible systems of inheritance were the rule – played a major role in undermining food security in the nineteenth century.

Malthus is still a potent figure among at least the older generation of economic historians. Princeton's W. Arthur Lewis, one of the leading authorities on the nineteenth-century world economy, assumed as a matter of course in an influential 1978 study that the underlying cause of famine in Victorian India was not the "drain of wealth" to England as alleged by contemporary critics, but "a large population that continued to live at subsistence level on inadequately watered marginal lands, without a profitable cash crop."[113] Similarly, the historiography of late imperial China has been haunted by the spectre of "agricultural involution" and the so-called "high-level equilibrium trap" – both euphemisms for how the presumed population explosion of the eighteenth century squeezed arable land to the threshold of chronic famine.

Recent scholarship offers a more complex picture of the relationship between demography and subsistence in Asia. (Malthus is not an issue in the cases of Brazil and Africa where land/population ratios were high and labor shortages chronic until at least the middle of the twentieth century.) As Charlesworth points out, "It is indisputable that land was, in absolute terms, hardly under great pressure from population in the Deccan of the early British period." Through the 1840s, at least, "only about half of the cultivable land in most Deccan districts, according to formal British estimates, was being tilled."[114] Although population grew rapidly in the 1850s and 1860s, partly as a result of the cotton boom, the demographic momentum came to an abrupt halt with the catastrophe of 1876. In India as a whole during the half century between 1870 and 1920 there was only a single decade (1880s) of significant population growth. (South Asia's percentage

of world population declined from 1750 to 1900 from 23 percent to 20 percent) while Europe was rising from 17 percent to 21 percent.[115]

Modern case-studies corroborate the position of nationalist critics of the Raj, like G. V. Josh in 1890, who argued that "the problem of India lies not so much in the fact of an alleged overpopulation as in the admitted and patent evil of underproduction." (Josh estimated that fully half of the net savings of India was confiscated as revenue.)[116] If cultivators in the Deccan and other drought-prone regions were relentlessly pushed onto marginal lands where productivity was low and crop failures were inevitable, the culprit was less likely overpopulation than the "British land revenue system itself." This is certainly the finding of Bagchi, who, after a careful inquisition of colonial agricultural statistics, argues that the revenue collectors' inflexible claims on a high "average" harvest "compelled the peasants to cultivate marginal lands, and also forced them to 'mine' their land in a situation where most of them had few investible resources left to improve its productivity."[117]

Likewise contemporary scholars are dramatically revising the traditional image of late imperial China as a "demographic profligate": the hopeless "Malthusia" depicted by generations of economic theorists and demographers.[118] Until recently, most scholars have accepted fragmentary evidence for an eighteenth-century population explosion that doubled or even tripled China's 1700 population. Demographic reductionists, however, have always had difficulty explaining how population growth that was clearly so "Boserupian" in the eighteenth century (promoting a dynamic expansion of productive forces) could abruptly become so grimly Malthusian in the nineteenth (blocking all advances in productivity). (Esther Boserup, of course, inverted Malthus in a famous 1965 study to argue that population increase was really the motor, not the brake, of economic and social progress.)[119] Moreover, there is little evidence for any increase in demographic pressure after the end of the Qing Golden Age. As Maddison points out, China's population was no higher in 1890 than in 1820 while per capita income was significantly lower.[120]

Pomeranz, who has examined this issue in the context of north China, agrees that population pressures alone "do not explain why ecological problems greatly worsened after the mid-nineteenth century." His study area, the Huang-Yun (comprising parts of Shandong, Zhili and Henan around the intersection of the

Grand Canal and the Yellow River), "after the wars, floods and droughts of the 1850–80 period ... did not significantly exceed its 1840s population until after 1949"![121] Moreover, the vast human losses of the Taiping revolution created a demographic vacuum in the middle and lower Yangzi that was refilled after 1864 by millions of immigrants from congested provinces, including Honan and Kiangsu.[122] Thereafter famine and epidemic, followed by war and revolution, kept population growth in north China at a minimum until 1948.

Recently some experts on Qing China, led by Princeton's F.W. Mote and Martin Heijdra, have frontally challenged the orthodox view of a population doubling or even tripling during the eighteenth century. They advance compelling arguments for a late Ming population of 250 to 275 million, rather than the 150 million conventionally adopted as a baseline circa 1700 for Qing demography. This implies an annual growth rate of 0.3 percent (the same as India and less than the world average) rather than the 0.6 to 0.9 percent claimed in most histories.[123] Moderate, rather than exponential, population growth during the Golden Age would perforce revise neo-Malthusian explanations of China's subsequent nineteenth-century crises. As Mote carefully explains:

> A major implication of the proposed outline of Qing population growth is that it discredits what usually has been taken as the most significant demographic fact about Qing: the idea of a "population explosion" in the eighteenth century. That supposed phenomenon is given high explanatory value in relation to many social and political contexts. If, however, the population did not suddenly increase during that century, but started from a higher plateau and grew moderately, many social issues must then be otherwise explained. For example, calculations using those earlier population figures in conjunction with equally suspect Ming and Qing figures for land in cultivation show a disastrous fall in the ratio of cultivated land to consuming population; the implicit crisis in that ratio of productive land to population must be reexamined. Related views about the "optimum population" of China, perhaps in itself a suspect notion, also must be reconsidered....[124]

Rejecting demographic determinism, of course, does not mean that population regimes played no role in China's nineteenth-century crisis. On the contrary, it is clear that the very success of agricultural intensification in the Golden Age encouraged excessive subdivision of land in many regions as well as ecologically destructive reclamations of previously uncultivated highlands and wetlands.

Moreover, population growth often seems to have been concentrated in the poorest and most environmentally vulnerable areas. *Local* population–resource relationships will thus figure prominently in subsequent discussions of subsistence crisis and disaster vulnerability in north China. But population growth was hardly the self-acting, archimedean lever of history imagined by so many economic historians.

The Irrigation Deficit

As Pomeranz points out, Europe faced even more severe demographic and ecological pressures at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but was able to resolve them with the help of New World natural resources, massive colonial emigration and, eventually, urban industrialization.[125] The relevant question, in other words, is less population pressure per se than why Western Europe was able to escape its incipient "high-level equilibrium trap" and Qing China wasn't.

In addition to the factors already highlighted, there is another variable that is frequently missing from historical discussions of "underdevelopment." If (according to Pomeranz) the chief "ecological bottleneck" to economic growth in Atlantic Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century was the inelastic supply of fiber crops and timber, in both India and China it was water. As Patrick O'Brien observes, "up to half of the populations of Asia, Africa, and South America may have subsisted on land where water supply constituted the key constraint upon increasing agricultural output."[126] This was, of course, common sense to "Oriental despots," and a major achievement of the Qing Golden Age, as well as of the Mogul zenith, had been the high sustained levels of state and village-level investment in flood control and irrigation. As we shall see in detail, however, the nineteenth century was characterized by the near-collapse of hydraulic improvement.

"Traditional water-harvesting systems," emphasizes David Hardiman, "disintegrated and disappeared in large parts of India during the early colonial period [and] high rates of land-tax left no surplus for the effective maintenance of irrigation systems."[127] Despite the later development of the celebrated canal colonies of the Punjab, irrigation in British India lagged behind expansion of agriculture until Independence. In China, meanwhile, "irrigation, water storage and control, and grain storage facilities were not extended or improved beyond their

eighteenth-century levels."[128] Indeed irrigated acreage shrank from its Qing high point of 29.4 percent of the arable in 1820 to only 18.5 percent of the arable in 1952. In Brazil's drought-stricken Nordeste, there was no state support whatsoever for irrigation.[129]

This *irrigation deficit* undergirded the Malthusian illusion of helpless "involution" in China and elsewhere. Whether as a result of population pressure or displacement by export crops, subsistence in all three lands was pushed onto drier, often less productive soils, highly vulnerable to ENSO cycles, without parallel improvements in irrigation, drainage or reforestation to ensure sustainability. Modern irrigation-based revolutions in agricultural productivity in northern India and north China (since 1960), as well as in the Nordeste (since 1980), only dramatize the centrality of water resources and the political capacities to ensure their development to any discussion of "carrying capacity" or "demographic ceilings."

More broadly, it is clear that any attempt to elucidate the social origins of late Victorian subsistence crises must integrally incorporate the relevant histories of common property resources (watersheds, aquifers, forests and pastures) and social overhead capital (irrigation and flood control systems, granaries, canals and roads). In the case-study chapters that follow, I argue that *ecological poverty* – defined as the depletion or loss of entitlement to the natural resource base of traditional agriculture – constituted a causal triangle with increasing *household poverty* and *state decapacitation* in explaining both the emergence of a "third world" and its vulnerability to extreme climate events.[130]

NEITHER SETTLER NOR NATIVE

The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities

MAHMOOD MAMDANI

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For Zohran,
You teach us how to engage the world in difficult times.
May you inspire many and blaze a trail!

It's like a path across the land—it's not there to begin with, but when lots of people go the same way, it comes into being.

—LU HSUN, "Hometown"

INTRODUCTION

The standard biography of the modern state begins with the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. That accord largely brought to an end decades of warfare across Europe, in particular the Thirty-Years War that decimated the Holy Roman Empire. At Westphalia, two key components of the modern state were born: religious toleration at home and the reciprocal guarantee of sovereignty abroad. Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists were each given official sanction within the empire, and across much of Europe states agreed to respect one another's legitimacy and authority in their domestic affairs.

This European story tells a moral lesson. In this story, the modern state is associated with tolerance. It is both a product and a guarantor of tolerance—among states and within them. At this triumphant moment, the state imposed a secular peace on the warring factions of society; whatever differences persisted among individuals and groups were subordinated by the law in the interest of peaceful coexistence. But this story starts too late, and, as a result, provides the wrong lesson.

This book traces the founding moment of the modern state instead to 1492. That year marked the beginning of the nation-state, the endurance of which was later secured by Westphalian tolerance. The nation-state was born of two developments in Iberia. One was ethnic cleansing, whereby the Castilian monarchy sought to create a homogeneous national homeland for Christian Spaniards by ejecting and converting those among them who were strangers to the nation—Moors and Jews. The other development was the taking of overseas colonies in the Americas by the same Castilian monarchy that spearheaded ethnic cleansing. In this story, modern colonialism was not something that states started doing in the eighteenth century. Modern colonialism and the modern state were born together with the creation of

the nation-state. Nationalism did not precede colonialism. Nor was colonialism the highest or the final stage in the making of a nation. The two were co-constituted.

The birth of the modern state amid ethnic cleansing and overseas domination teaches us a different lesson about what political modernity is: less an engine of tolerance than of conquest. Tolerance had to be imposed on the nation-state long after its birth in order to stanch the bloodshed it was causing. In Europe tolerance emerged after Westphalia as the key to securing civil peace within the nation-state. Minorities at home were tolerated in exchange for their political loyalty, which, in practice, meant they were tolerated to the extent that they were seen by the national majority as non-threatening. This regime of tolerance solidified the structure of the nation-state by defining the relation between the national majority and minority. It is this structure of tolerance that is seen as defining the liberal character of political modernity.

But that is political modernity in Europe. In the colonies overseas, and in the settler colonies where there is no clear spatial divide between nation and nonnation, political modernity and its liberalism meant something else. It meant conquest. As a Eurocentric ideology and political discourse, modernity did not require tolerance abroad. Only people deemed civilized had to be tolerated. Others—marked by their cultural differences from Christian Europeans—had to be made civilized before earning the right to be tolerated. The light of civilization could shine wherever populations conformed to Eurocentric ideals. Thus did Europeans turn to the colonies and seek to build there the avatar of modernity: the nation-state, as it existed in Europe. The French called this the "mission civilisatrice," which was anglicized as the "civilizing mission."

Had the civilizing mission succeeded, colonial political modernity might have looked a great deal like its European counterpart, with European-style nation-states the world over practicing Christianity and Westphalian tolerance. But the civilizing mission failed, resulting in a colonial modernity that veered sharply from the course taken by European modernity. While liberal tolerance took hold in the European nation-state, liberal conquest inflamed the colonies. By the mid-nineteenth century, the colonizer's forcible imposition of its laws, customs, educational practices, language, and community life provoked fierce resistance among the natives—the word that was used

to describe those deemed uncivilized. In response, the British put aside the torch of civilization in order to maintain order.

As I introduce below and explain in detail in later chapters, the new colonial method involved drafting native allies and claiming to protect their ways of life. In the colonies, there would be no native majority built to resemble the colonizer; instead there would be assorted minorities, each preserved under the leadership of a native elite. The native elite's power was said to derive from custom, but it was the backing of the colonizer that was their true source of authority. Separated into so many distinct races and tribes, the natives would look to their "own" rather than to each other in a solidarity that could challenge the colonizer. Although the British were adept in this method, they did not invent it. The Americans did, in the context of controlling the people Columbus had called Indians.

Historians of colonization refer to the civilizing mission as direct rule and the methods that succeeded it as indirect rule. Part of my focus in the coming pages is on a surprising outcome of this shift from one system of rule to another: the emergence in the postcolonial situation of a violent nationalism following from the creation of minorities under indirect rule. The minorities the colonizer created in the colonies sought, after independence, to become the nation. Postcolonial nationalists struggled to consolidate power by transforming society into the home of the nation as they imagined it. The result was an era of blood and terror, ethnic cleansing and civil wars, and, sometimes, genocide. These are the wages of postcolonial modernity, in which political modernity is instantiated by people whose ancestors rejected it.

Embracing political modernity means embracing the epistemic condition that Europeans created to distinguish the nation as civilized and thereby justify aggrandizing the nation at the expense of the uncivilized. The substance of this epistemic condition lies in the political subjectivities it affords. How does the subject understand herself? If she understands herself as a member of the nation, she is participating in political modernity. Colonized peoples lacked this subjectivity until Europeans foisted it on them, much as this subjectivity was foisted on Europeans themselves, at least in the early days of the nation-state. The Castilians had to impose the nation in order to make it thinkable. Later Europeans, steeped in the idea of the nation, could hardly think of any other. The immense historical irony of the civilizing mission is

that its failure created the conditions in which the nation would come to flourish under postcolonial modernity. Parts of this book are devoted to showing how exactly this happened—how the techniques of indirect rule produced in colonized subjects the nationalist political subjectivity.

The violence of postcolonial modernity mirrors the violence of European modernity and colonial direct rule. Its principle manifestation is ethnic cleansing. Because the nation-state seeks to homogenize its territory, it is well served by ejecting those who would introduce pluralism. Ethnic cleansing can take a variety of forms. These include genocide, whereby the minority population is killed en masse, and population transfer, whereby the minority is removed from the territory or concentrated in a minimal portion of it, away from the majority. Ethnic cleansing unites the examples in this book: the United States, which perpetrated both genocide and population transfer against American Indians; Germany, which perpetrated genocide against Jews and was in turn victimized by Allied population transfers following the Second World War; South Africa, where white settlers forced blacks into tribal homelands known as Bantustans; Sudan, where the British segregated Arabs and Africans into separate homelands; and Palestine, where Zionist settlers forcibly exiled and concentrated non-Jews, an ongoing process.

These examples serve different roles in this book. The United States emerges as the model modern colony from which the others—the Nazis, white power in South Africa, the British in Sudan, and Zionists—learned. Sudan is the chief example of postcolonial modernity, in which the racial and tribal structures imposed by the British became the basis for explosive civil wars following independence. Israel provides a distinctive expression of colonial modernity. Germany provides an example of European political modernity, but my discussion of it is not primarily oriented toward Nazism's place in the pantheon of destructive nationalisms. Rather, I look to the German case primarily to understand why it has been so hard to dislodge the political roots that nourished the Nazi political project. The failure of denazification is the key here. The denazification process treated Nazi atrocities as forms of criminal violence rather than political violence, thereby submerging the nationalist political objectives of the Third Reich and protecting its political project from scrutiny.

South Africa, by contrast, shows us a way out of the morass of the nation-state and its obsession with civilization. The transition away from apartheid

involved a rejection of the permanent majority and minority identities that lie on each side of the civilizational divide at the heart of the nation-state. Post-apartheid South Africa could justifiably have replaced white rule with black majority rule. Instead the new state adopted nonracial democracy. At the same time, tribalism persists in South Africa, and so there is more work to be done.

Building Blocks of Political Modernity

As I noted, the history of the prevailing state system begins in 1492, with the Reconquista, whereby the Castilian monarchy took over regions of Iberia that had for centuries been under Moorish rule. This was a state-building exercise, in that it sought to erect a government—that of the Castilians—over a territory and the people within it. But it was more than that. It was also a nation-building exercise in that it sought to change the people within the territory in order to make the population culturally homogeneous. Under the banner of "one country, one religion, one empire," the Castilians first expelled from Castile and Aragon any Jews who would not convert to Christianity. This was the work of the Alhambra Decree of 1492. Then edicts promulgated between 1499 and 1526 forced the conversion of Muslims across Spain. Next came a series of Inquisitions, each aimed at ridding the nation of impurities said to be harbored by recent converts to Christianity.

A similar nationalism was implicit in the conquest of the Americas. Columbus got royal support for his westward adventure from the conquistadors only months after they entered Granada. He also received support in the form of the doctrine of discovery, announced by the pope in 1493. The pope asserted that explorers could claim foreign territory in the name of Christian monarchs and that such claims were legitimate because the inhabitants of the "discovered" lands lacked European civilization, principally Christianity. In this way the Indians in the Americas became Moors and Jews on the other side of the ocean.

The Treaty of Westphalia brought about significant changes to the nation-state model by ushering in the regime of tolerance. At Westphalia, the European nation-state agreed to protect internal minorities rather than oppress and expel them, as the Castilians had. In turn the nation-state was guaranteed

protection from invasion by other states, where presumably these minorities constituted majorities. Europe's religious wars were predicated on just these sorts of "protective" invasions. The majority in one polity looked across its borders and saw that, in the next polity over, its brethren were a persecuted minority. This became a reason, or perhaps a pretext, for war. To prevent such wars spiraling further out of control, European states agreed to stop persecuting their internal minorities. As long as minorities did not revolt, sovereigns would not persecute them; and as long as sovereigns did not persecute minorities, other sovereigns had to respect their right to rule unmolested.

After 1648, then, the nation-state became liberal. But what exactly did this mean? The Peace of Westphalia did not spell out with precision what it meant to be tolerant or where the boundaries of tolerance lay. Many key questions were beyond the scope of the accord. Just what sort of difference was tolerable? Did Europeans have to tolerate non-Europeans? Did Christians have to tolerate non-Christians? If some peoples were beyond toleration, could they be made tolerable through the erasure of their intolerable differences? Answers to these questions came from various corners of European political discourse, with enormous consequences.

European Modernity and the Boundaries of Tolerance

The most influential theorist of tolerance is the English philosopher John Locke. Notions of tolerance predate him, but his ideas are the ones that became pillars of the nation-state. Unlike Thomas Hobbes, whose *Leviathan* (1651) argued against Westphalia by asserting uniformity of religion as essential to maintaining political order, Locke, in his *Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), argued for a regime of tolerating minorities on the condition that they renounce rival allegiance and support the state. His objective was to "distinguish the business of civil government from that of religion," so that civil government may promote worldly interests and leave the business of salvation to the Church. In particular, in England, it was Catholics who needed to give up their allegiance to the pope in exchange for toleration by the Protestant majority. The Church would also have to limit itself to persuasion, leaving the monopoly on violence to the state government. For its part, the state would abandon the idea that "faith is not to be kept with heretics"—it would cease oppressing apostates, atheists, and nonconformists.[1]

Locke's regime of toleration institutionalized the relationship between a national majority on one side and a national minority on the other, each cast permanently in its political identity. Tolerance therefore became a key structure of the nation-state, for it legitimated the permanent separation of the majority and the minority, a distinction without which the nation-state collapses.[2] This distinction is a product of the essential incoherence of the nation-state, which joins the nation, a political community whose boundaries are determined by its members, to the state, a legal form in which membership (citizenship) is determined by law. These two objects, state and nation, are necessarily incompatible, for the purpose of the state is to apply law equally to all members, while the purpose of the nation is to protect and valorize only members of the nation. If the state does the bidding of the nation, it will instantiate in law the national prejudice, which is antithetical to the rule of law. Locke's compromise was toleration, whereby the state agrees not to enact the national prejudice against the inhabitants of the state who are not also of the nation, as long as these minorities accept their minority status. Minority status boils down to the forgoing of sovereignty. The state will never exist in the image of the minority, which renounces any political project that would change the character of the state.

But if Locke's compromise ensured a degree of peace in Europe, it has had the opposite effect in Europe's colonies. In the colonies, the permanent majority-minority distinction became the division between the nation and the uncivilized, referred to as the native. Europeans generally agreed that they had to find ways other than violence to resolve differences among themselves, but they also agreed that they had a right to colonize the uncivilized because the uncivilized, like the permanent minority in the nation-state, lacked sovereignty. Important thinkers such as the nineteenth-century international jurist Richard Cobden decreed that the principle of sovereignty applied only to civilized countries of Europe—not, for instance, to the Ottoman empire. John Stuart Mill approved: the uncivilized were not sovereign and so were at the mercy of the civilized.[3] Indeed, conquest was portrayed not merely as an option but as a moral responsibility. Sovereigns were obligated either to bring civilization to peoples branded uncivilized, or to save the vulnerable hostages of uncivilized societies, such as women and the enslaved—to rescue them, in today's human rights language.

The terms of tolerance in foreign policy were variously formulated, starting well before Westphalia with the doctrine of discovery, which confirmed that the uncivilized—that is, non-Christians—had no rights that Christians were bound to respect. Not everyone shared that perspective, though. Much debate characterized the centuries between 1493 and the era of Cobden and Mill. The dispute among European intellectuals was triggered by the Iberian conquest of the Americas and the Dutch conquest of the Indies. Europeans agreed that they had the right to colonize the less civilized non-European world, but they disagreed on whether that right was contingent on the consent of the colonized. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, two schools of thought emerged on relations between the civilized and the uncivilized. We know these schools as the humanists and the scholastics; the difference between them has been discussed by several authors, including Anthony Pagden, Robert Williams Jr., and Richard Tuck.[4]

The two schools came to loggerheads on the issue of whether the civilized enjoyed a right to preemptive war against the uncivilized. Both schools embraced the necessity of war, but they disagreed on the justifications for it. Humanists, in spite of their name, were warmongers in the Classical Roman tradition. In *De Jure Belli* (1598), the Italian humanist Alberico Gentili looked to Cicero to justify striking at enemies even when they had not committed violence. The Spanish philosopher Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda argued that Spain had a right to rule over Indians because barbarian customs violated natural law. Scholastics felt otherwise. Luis de Molina, a Spanish Jesuit, turned to medieval Christian thinkers to oppose preemptive strikes and denounce warfare against barbarians as unjustifiable unless to protect innocent victims of their aggression. And even such a protective war could not justify occupying barbarian lands. Domingo de Soto, Francisco de Vitoria, and Bartolomé de las Casas drew on Dominican teachings to insist that the Spanish Crown could have true dominion over America only if the Indians consented.[5]

The humanist articulation of rights was a justification of sovereignty and raison d'état—not a critique of these concepts, as many contemporary human rights thinkers would have us believe. In particular, humanists such as the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius analogized the rights of the individual to those of the state and therefore saw the state as having wide latitude. Importantly, and in contrast to earlier thought that had seen the right to punish as a right possessed only by civil magistrates, Grotius argued that the state had a right

to punish because individuals, he claimed, had a right to punish in the state of nature for purposes of self-preservation. Abstract notions of autonomy, sovereignty, and self-preservation—so central to liberalism—developed in tandem with international practices of conquest and served to rationalize them.[6] It is in this sense that we may understand humanist thought as the founding moment of a colonizing tradition.

Humanism, in the emerging mold of human rights, only became an apparent foil for the pursuit of big-power interests toward the end of nineteenth century, when humanists argued that Europe's new nation states should be required to preserve minority rights. All major Western European powers agreed, and in the 1878 Berlin Treaty minority-protection requirements were imposed on the Balkan states emerging from the Russo-Turkish War in the East. But, demonstrating again that humanism is a fig leaf for the powerful, the same strictures were not applied to Europe's old states, which would not be enjoined by treaty to protect minorities. The primacy of this new variety of humanism was solidified in the Versailles Treaty in 1919, following the dissolution of the Ottoman, Hapsburg, and Hohenzollern empires that had lost the First World War. The resulting international order was based on the Allies' commitment to recognize only those states that pledged to guarantee the rights of their internal minorities. As in earlier treaties, none of these powers accepted the minority-rights provision when it came to their own minorities, such as American Indians in the United States, Welsh and Irish in the United Kingdom, and Britons and Basques in France. Even Germany, in spite of having lost the war, was not subject to these stipulations. The minority rights asserted by the League of Nations Covenant applied only to Eastern Europe. Not much changed when it came to the discussion of rights after the Second World War. When the United Nations gathered to discuss the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Eleanor Roosevelt insisted that the minority question did not exist in North America.[7]

Colonial Modernity and the Making of Permanent Minorities

Armed with doctrines rejecting minority rights for the uncivilized—and sanctioning any self-serving action of the civilized—Europeans went abroad with the intent to convert natives into nations constructed in the European image. This effort failed, but the nation-state project persisted in former colonies. The colonizers had to give up their goal of nation-building in the interest

of consolidating power and maintaining order. Yet, where Europeans left off, the locals took over, absorbing the nationalist project into their own politics.

The failure of the European project triggered the shift from direct rule—the civilizing mission—to indirect rule, which harnessed the "native tradition" to the colonial political project. Direct rule sought to build nations akin to that of the colonizer, indirect rule merely to hold and exploit territories. I have discussed the distinction between the two phases of colonialism in earlier books.[8] Here I sum up that distinction so that we can begin to see how the politics of the nation was installed in diverse colonized states, including those that Europeans left without realizing the nation-building dream.

Direct rule mirrored top-down nation-building in Europe. Much as the forced conversions and Inquisitions of the Reconquista aimed to refashion heretics into members of a nation identified as Christian, direct rule in the colonies sought to make the colonized fit for membership in the colonizer nation. Missionaries, church societies, and colonial officials came together in this project. In one colony after another—British, French, Dutch, Portuguese, and the US internal colony of American Indians—institutions of formal education replaced local modes of education. The laws of the colonizer were imported wholesale. Local customs with respect to religion, language, marriage, inheritance, land use, and so on were replaced with European practices. Colonizers were not under the illusion that they could transform the whole colonized people, so the brunt of their efforts was directed at local elites. By inducing elites to take the role of colonizer nation, colonizers hoped to inject a kind of Trojan Horse into subject societies. The idea was that these colonized members of the nation would, through their example and their power, bring the rest of the natives along. The rationale for direct rule was famously summed up by Thomas Babington Macaulay, a member of the Supreme Council for India in the 1830s, in his "Minute on Education":

> I am quite ready to take the Oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. . . . We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. . . . We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we

> govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.[9]

British efforts to impose direct rule met with insurrection: the Indian Uprising (1857), the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica (1865), and the Mahdiyya (1881–1898) in Sudan. The durability of this resistance forced British leaders to rethink principles of colonial governance. Their solution was indirect rule. Instead of building a nation in the imperial image by uprooting and replacing native customs and authorities, the empire would preserve both. Rather than build the national permanent majority, there would be a proliferation of permanent minorities, each kept down through indirect management by so-called natives deputized by the colonizer. The logic of the civilizing mission had to go so that the British could maintain control. The French also adopted indirect rule, replacing the policy of "assimilation" with that of "association." In Senegal and Morocco, the French followed the British by building a durable alliance with local elites whose moral and ideological standing was intact, even if their political power was on the wane.

But while indirect rule began as an alternative to nineteenth-century nation-building, it wound up creating the conditions for nation-building in the twentieth century. What emerged from indirect rule was a new kind of political community in which colonized groups were subdivided into territorial homelands and made subject to separate legal regimes. These divisions were drawn along lines of cultural and ethnic distinction, thereby transforming ethnic groups into administrative-political units known as tribes. Each territorial division was said to be the homeland of its tribe, administered by local authorities who combined the sanction of custom with the backing of colonial power. These native authorities were empowered to bestow benefits on those said to be indigenous to the homeland, generating native investment in tribe and homeland. This investment endured long after the colonizer departed. The territorial and legal boundaries created by indirect rule thereby became the basis for postcolonial conflicts over political belonging.

In thinking about nineteenth-century indirect rule, we need to be careful to distinguish from very different earlier invocations of indirect rule. The history of indirect rule, understood as rule through local mediation, goes back as far as the Roman Empire. The British, however, brought a kind of genius

to their efforts. They did not merely resurrect Roman divide-and-rule practices but rather pioneered an altogether different form of statecraft based on the recasting of identities. Whereas Romans took the self-consciousness of their subjects as a given, British colonial governance sought to reshape the self-consciousness of the colonized. Another way to put this is that the Romans were content to rule peoples as they found them, but the British were not. In this sense nineteenth-century indirect rule turned out to be a far more ambitious project than direct rule had been: whereas direct rule aimed at civilizing elites, indirect rule looked to impose a native subjectivity on the entire local population.

This effort to create a specifically native subjectivity for colonized peoples—as opposed to an elite subjectivity, à la direct rule—began after the 1857 Indian Uprising, when Queen Victoria called for the protection of native culture. The jurist Sir Henry Maine was a key influence on the queen, elaborating such protection as both a justification and blueprint for colonial rule. By identifying distinctive local customs and histories and incorporating these in the imperial historical narrative, census, and law, the British transformed existing cultural differences into boundaries of political identity that fragmented and fractured those they governed.

Historical writing, census-taking, and lawmaking fostered new subjectivities by creating for the colonized a new past, altering their status in the present, and anticipating for them futures that otherwise would never have come to pass. Colonizers wrote European race theories and perverted variations on local history into the histories of colonized peoples, making European categories of race and tribe appear local and natural. Thus did colonized peoples learn that they had always been rivals. Colonizers then mapped the colonized using census categories organized according to these histories, reinforcing racial and tribal identifications. Finally, by predicating laws and their application on identification with racial and tribal distinctions, colonizers ensured that future political, economic, and social realities would reflect these distinctions.

The British did not cut the novel identities they exploited from whole cloth. The British noted the real cultural differences among colonized people and even asked them how they identified themselves. The genius of the British was not in inventing differences to exploit but in politicizing real and acknowledged differences by turning them into legal boundaries deemed inviolable

and predicating security and economic benefits on locals' respect for these boundaries. The British thereby coopted locals into the myth that they were not just culturally different from each other but in fact had always harbored mutually incompatible interests. In this way the British Empire took the old Roman strategy of divide and rule a step further. A more apt name for this project is define and rule, a concept I explored in a 2012 book.[10]

The present work builds on this argument by looking more closely at the construction, content, and consequences of indirect rule. I now identify three different forms of mediation pursued under indirect rule: individual, institutional, and territorial. Individual indirect rule is associated first with the Romans. They governed their less organized Western Empire directly, through armed settlements of soldiers *(coloni)*. But in the more organized Eastern Empire in Asia and Africa, Roman rule was indirect and individual, effected by taking tribute from local potentates such as Cleopatra of Egypt and Herod of Judaea.[11] After switching to indirect rule, the British used much the same method in ruling Indian princely states, striking deals with the royals. But outside the princely states the British turned to institutional indirect rule, governing through customary law and religious authority, such as Anglo-Mohammedan law. The Ottoman *millet* system is another example of institutional indirect rule, in which the empire's ethnic groups had their own leadership subordinate to that of the central state. In this way, an Armenian in Istanbul and an Armenian in Eastern Anatolia were said to be members of the same millet and subject to its authority—an authority granted by the sultan and superseded by his own.[12] The Mughal practice of governing through local religious institutions and traditions is yet another example.

I mention these two forms of indirect rule—individual and institutional—mainly to distinguish from the third, territorial indirect rule. This is the form I explore in detail in this book. Territorial indirect rule embraces the customary authority and law of institutional indirect rule but binds these to tribal homelands. The innovation that brought about territorial indirect rule was the American Indian reservation. First tested in the mid-nineteenth century in California, then put into practice more formally and completely by presidents Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant, the reservation segregated Indians from whites, stripped Indians of land, and minimized the political threat they posed by subjecting them to domination under colonially supervised customary law.

Although others learned a great deal from the American invention of territorial indirect rule, the chapters that follow make clear that indirect rule is not everywhere the same. It has consistent features, but its fine-grained mechanics vary depending on circumstances. Territorial indirect rule is a technology of colonial modernity deployed in different ways in different eras and places. Thus there are differences between the US system of Indian management and the implementations of indirect rule in South Sudan and South Africa. In addition, the US Indian management system has changed markedly over the years, as indirect-rule technologies morphed with the times. Continuities across time and space are valuable in understanding territorial indirect rule and its consequence for postcolonial modernity. But we should not be too firm in our definition, lest we risk losing sight of what that consequence everywhere has been: the manufacture of permanent majority and minority identities.

Postcolonial Modernity and the Problem of Extreme Violence

Contests over national belonging are at the heart of extreme violence in the post-independence period. Their bloody confrontation notwithstanding, colonialism and anticolonialism share a common premise: that society must be homogenized in order to build a nation. I recall taking a bus in the mid-1970s from Dar-es-Salaam to Maputo, the capital of the newly liberated Mozambique. As the bus entered the square in the middle of the city, I could see a huge banner inscribed with a quote from the Mozambican revolutionary Samora Machel: "For the Nation to Live, the Tribe Must Die." The tribe here referred not to the ethnic group—as in a cluster of culturally unique people—but to political identification with the ethnic group. The message was that every potential source of competing identity had to be cleansed in order to homogenize the nation.

Like other nationalist projects, postcolonial nationalism has been deeply violent. Indeed, the violence of the militant nationalist project often felt like a second colonial occupation. "When will this independence end?" a Congolese peasant asked, in a story related to me by the University of Dar es Salaam professor Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, amid the reign of Mobutu Sese

Seko. But it was not until later, during and after the Rwanda genocide, that many of us African scholars started thinking systematically about why, contrary to what we had expected, political violence had exploded rather than diminished after political independence. Why had Europe's past become our present? Why were nationalist elites reviving the civilizing mission that colonialism had abandoned when it embraced the defense of "tradition"? This was a question that stayed with me, from Rwanda to Darfur and then South Sudan. In kick-starting the nation-building project after independence, postcolonial elites turned their backs on the history of colonialism and thus on their own history. Instead they modeled their political imagination on the modern European state, the result being that the nationalist dream was imposed on the reality of colonially imposed fragmentation, leading to new rounds of nation-building by ethnic cleansing.

Two Models of Understanding Extreme Violence

The ways in which societies respond to such extreme violence tell us something important about how they see themselves and what the future holds for them. Is nation-building violence a criminal act, calling for prosecution and punishment? Or is it a political act, the answer to which must be a new, nonnationalist politics? Where societies choose the first option, criminalizing nation-building violence, progress toward eradicating the political sources of that violence will not come easily, if at all. This is because nation-building violence tends to be cyclical. Those excluded by new boundaries of nationhood turn to a new round of violence in order to establish a national political community in which they are included, necessarily excluding others. And then the cycle restarts.

I seek to theorize extreme violence as political, and thereby to argue that a crime-and-punishment approach is more likely to aggravate than to ameliorate this violence. The examples I discuss in this book are all marked by extreme violence triggered against groups framed and identified politically in the process of state formation. In each instance, I show perverse consequences of countering political violence with responses fashioned in the battle against criminal violence. Those who call for criminal justice focus on individual acts of violence: they draw a list of atrocities, identify its perpetrators, and call for justice for victims. Rather than demand that we hold perpetrators to account, I look for an alternative to this turning of tables. A focus on

the priority of victim's justice, based on the identity of victim as defined by the perpetrator, translates into court processes that call for each crime to be followed by a proportional punishment. By individualizing the crime and the violence, the demand for criminal justice obscures the issues that feed group grievances and hides the constituencies that mobilize around group demands. The postcolonial crisis is first and foremost a political crisis, not a criminal one.

The more political understanding of violence can be glimpsed in Walter Benjamin's distinction between law-making and law-preserving violence. Law-preserving violence is a response to crime; as such, it claims to dispense criminal justice. Law-making violence is fundamentally political. Rather than address the transgression of an existing law, law-making violence seeks to establish a new law—new law in a very general sense, referring to a new political order. Law-making violence is, as Jacques Derrida points out in his comment on Benjamin, an originary violence that establishes a new authority and cannot itself have been authorized by an anterior legitimacy. The state fears this founding violence more than it does crime, for founding violence is able to justify, legitimate, and transform political and legal relations, and so present itself as having a right to right and a right to law.[13]

The tendency to think of all violence as criminal and thus the response to all violence as law-preserving can be traced to the euphoria surrounding the alleged triumph of the liberal democratic model at the end of the Cold War.[14] Since this type of polity was presumed to constitute the final stage in political development, all violence henceforth would appear as criminal. The claim was that the era of law-making (political) violence had come to a close; all responses to violence therefore must be law-preserving, aiming to suppress crime and thereby maintain the existing and final order. Where the political approach is open to reconsidering and changing the rules, the criminal approach reasserts and reaffirms existing rules.

The anti-apartheid movement in South Africa bucked the post–Cold War trend. The great achievement of the anti-apartheid movement was to understand the violence of apartheid as political and therefore seek a political rather than criminal solution for it. This was the negotiated end to apartheid that led to the emergence of nonracial democracy. A criminal approach would have sought to separate apartheid's perpetrators from its victims and punish the perpetrators while producing justice for the victims. This might have gen-

erated good moral sentiments, but it would not have furthered the goal of political reform, which is what South Africa badly needed: the creation of a democratic state in which all could participate, regardless of race. Instead, by taking a political approach, South Africans reconfigured perpetrators and victims—alongside beneficiaries and bystanders—as something altogether new: survivors. All groups were survivors of apartheid, with a place at the table after its violence.

In contrast to criminalization, I offer a South African–inspired model focused on rethinking the political community and political process in the aftermath of extreme nation-building violence. Rather than individualize violence as a stand-alone act, the political model addresses cycles of violence sustained by constituencies in conflict. A single-minded focus on identifying perpetrators leaves undisturbed the logic of institutions that make nation-building violence thinkable and possible. Instead of identifying and punishing perpetrators, the political model attempts to overwrite the institutional context. All survivors—victims, perpetrators, beneficiaries, bystanders, exiles—are included in an expanded political process and reformed political community. It is political reform, not criminal prosecutions, that enables escape from nation-building violence.

My claim is not that societies should dispense with criminal justice. But political reform has to come first because the call for criminal justice within the parameters of the existing political order leaves that order intact. Societies must rethink the order resting on nation-states, each with a permanent political majority alongside equally permanent political minorities, before they can usefully address demands for criminal justice. Political reform also is a prerequisite to the struggle for social justice. That distributional choices are made by reference to cultural, ethnic, and racial identities reflects the politicization of these identities. Only when the political system is decolonized—that is, when identities are uncoupled from permanent majority and minority status—will it be able to secure equity.

Key Objectives

This book is an inquiry into political modernity, colonial and postcolonial. It is also an exploration of the roots of extreme violence that has plagued

postcolonial society. I seek to understand colonization as the making of permanent minorities and their maintenance through the politicization of identity, which leads to political violence—in some cases extreme violence. Decolonization, the counterpoint, is the unmaking of the permanence of these identities. I discuss the making of permanent minorities through historical narratives, found in individual chapters on the United States, Sudan, South Africa, and Israel. But the book also offers a normative claim on how to unmake and undo this reality. Here, South Africa is presented as a counterpoint to the failure of denazification in Germany. Both lessons are brought to bear on a penultimate chapter on Israel. The book invites the reader to think of the relation between these two moments, the narrative and the normative, and their making and unmaking.

When South Africans threw off apartheid and replaced it with nonracial democracy, they began the process of rethinking and restructuring the internal political community. I call this process the *decolonization of the political*. A major aim of this book is to describe what it means for the political to be colonized and what it would look like to achieve political decolonization.

The political is colonized in North America. Rather than equal citizens in the United States, American Indians are wards of Congress. On reservations, they are governed by separate law, much as peoples deemed tribal in South Africa were historically governed by a law distinct from that governing the white national majority. And, like the South Sudanese, Indians in North America have internalized tribalization and the legal structures that come with it. For example, in both the United States and Canada, indigenous groups define membership racially, by "blood." This notion of membership is not in any sense traditional; it was imposed on Indians in order to achieve the national majority's interest in reducing the size of the population deemed native, thereby reducing the number of natives making claims to land. Decolonizing the political requires the end of governance on the basis of such supposedly customary law.

Sudan and South Africa clarify what it means for the political to be colonized. Both are formally independent states, yet both have laws on the books that constrain individuals' rights—or grant them rights—according to their tribe. For instance, the government ministries of South Sudan are set aside for management by particular tribes. Yet the transformation of ethnic groups into territorialized administrative units called tribes was a colonial project.

That "native" citizens of South Sudan, South Africa, and other contemporary states take tribe to be a source of political identification, as in North America, is a sure sign of the ongoing colonization of the political, even in the postcolonial age.

Colonization continues as well in Israel, under the distinctive colonial-modern ideology of Zionism. Jewish settlers, backed by the state, aggressively pursue conquest in the Occupied Territories, the flipside of which is the dispossession of Palestinians. Within the territory of Israel, the state concentrates non-Jewish citizens in towns that are barred from development, much as the United States concentrates Indians in reservations and South Africa concentrated natives in Bantustans. The indigenous homeland is a technology of rule, extended across nation-states seeking to homogenize.

In Israel the civilizing mission, too, has been crucial to the formation and maintenance of the nation-state. Israel's European elite, Ashkenazi Jews, have sought to civilize "oriental" Jews—in particular, Mizrahim, or Arab Jews. They have been de-Arabized, stripped of the culture they shared with other Arabs, and now represent some of Israel's most ardent Zionists. They demonstrate, again, how the victims of modernity internalize its mentality. Indeed, Israel as a whole reflects this. It is a nation-state whose national majority—Jews—were disgorged from Europe, where they were the despised other, the ethnicity that had to be cleansed to make room for the nation.

Decolonizing the polity joins the epistemic and the political in a mutually productive endeavor. The epistemic project both yields changes in policies and follows a change in how we see ourselves in the world. Decolonizing the political means upsetting the permanent majority and minority identities that define the contours of the nation-state. The idea of the nation-state naturalizes majority and minority identities, justifying their permanence. I aim, therefore, to historicize these identities that are taken as natural. Understood as historical objects, political identities are revealed to be products of power, not nature. South Sudanese have learned to see themselves as tribal because tribes have been invested with political power. Zionist Jews have learned to see themselves as natives of Palestine because their conception of nativity involves exclusive rights to the land. Americans have learned to see themselves as immigrants rather than settlers, which suits their sense of the American nation as a historic rupture from Europe rather than a European colonial outpost. Americans pride themselves on being immigrants who

coalesce around the democratic creed of this new nation. But this disables recognition of the settler-colonial dynamic. Today American Indians are an essentially imperceptible component of the population, their ongoing domination by the federal government not just misunderstood but unknown. The American national majority would have to see their history differently, as a continuation of European settlement, in order to begin the decolonization of the political.

So the decolonization of the political demands an intricate engagement with history. The main chapters undertake this project. But before they arrive, I want to head off an objection that may arise from the preceding discussion. I am not merely arguing for humility before the facts of history. Most Americans will readily agree that their state has done terrible things to Indians. Nor do I believe that national majorities and minorities should, by dint of history, be enjoined to switch places. The transformation of native into settler, victim into perpetrator, is nothing to celebrate, as the story of Israel attests. Rather, the point is that history provides resources for seeing past identities of majority and minority, settler and native, perpetrator and victim. The people of today can, through concerted engagement with the facts of political modernity, be convinced of the necessity of discarding its divisive identities. We can all learn to see ourselves as *survivors* of political modernity—created by it, but not doomed to repeat it. Survivors do not necessarily agree on what the shape of society and the affordances of the state should be, but survivors at least are not configured from the start as enemies in a zero-sum contest for power.

How, then, has political modernity persisted? Why is it so hard to decolonize the political? The reasons are various, and I will discuss some later in this introduction, before delving into them in detail in later chapters. My major claim, however, is that a number of forces preserve political modernity by rendering it invisible. These forces are epistemic; they are ideas that discourage the recognition of what should be obvious. One such idea, emerging from anticolonial discourse, is that independence from foreign control is sufficient to ensure the political end of colonization. Another is the conflation of immigration and settlement: immigrants join existing polities, whereas settlers create new ones. If Europeans in the United States were immigrants, they would have joined the existing societies in the New World. Instead they destroyed those societies and built a new one that was reinforced

by later waves of settlement. The conflation of settlers and immigrants is essential to settler-colonial nation-state projects such as the United States and Israel. Through this historical error, settlers wrongly justify their claims to the land and their positions in society on the basis of a rule of law. The political project of the settler—to create and fortify the colonial nation-state—becomes obscured by the nonpolitical project of the immigrant, who merely seeks to take advantage of what the state allows every citizen. The conflation of settler and immigrant is a product of the same false histories that teach natives to behave as natives.

There are two ways of demeaning history and thereby concealing political modernity. One is to falsify history; the other is to diminish and obliterate it. Powerful epistemic forces in the world today seek to make history go away and to replace it with a universal impulse called human rights. Human rights denies the existence of history, instead looking only to the here and now and asking who did what to whom, so that perpetrators may be punished and victims vindicated. The arena of human rights is that of the courtroom, specifically the post-atrocity tribunal. When atrocities are committed, human rights activists find the perpetrators, name them and shame them, maybe even put them in jail. What these activists rarely seek to do is understand why the atrocities happened or what they tell us about the political community. Extreme violence in the postcolonial condition is very often nationalistic violence, as ethnic groups, organized as separate tribal units under colonialism, vie for privileged access to public goods. Human rights ignores this historical background, thereby depoliticizing violence and treating it as merely criminal. Where violence is merely criminal, we can only see it as a function of individual pathology. We cannot see it as a political outcome calling for a political solution.

One of my chief goals in this book, then, is to see political violence for what it is and contrast this vision with the faulty vision of human rights, the better to advance the effort of decolonizing the political. To this end, I articulate two models of understanding and responding to extreme violence: the criminal model and the political model. The criminal model of contemporary human rights was inaugurated by the Nuremberg Tribunals after the Second World War. The tribunals were based on the neoliberal conviction, avant la lettre, that all violence is the act of individuals. Nuremberg effectively depoliticized Nazism, saddling responsibility for Nazi violence with

particular men (mostly men) and ignoring the fact that these men were engaged in the project of political modernity on behalf of a constituency: the nation, the *volk*. The Allies who prosecuted individual Nazis at Nuremberg were invested in ignoring Nazism's political roots, for these roots are also America's. Both the United States and the Third Reich were nation-building projects; the United States is the outcome of a history of genocide, ethnic cleansing, official racism, and concentration camps (known as Indian reservations), and Nazi Germany followed a similar path in the construction of a German nation. Indeed, Hitler made plain that he modeled his program of genocide on that of the United States. The Allies also sought to protect themselves from censure for their contemporary actions. After the war the Allies engaged in many atrocities similar to those the Germans had, including the ethnic cleansing of millions of Germans across Central and Eastern Europe. These Germans were loaded onto the same cattle cars the Nazis used to transport Jews to concentration, labor, and death camps; large numbers of Germans found themselves the new occupants of those camps. Some half a million Germans died amid the ethnic cleansing. But because the Nuremberg process was constrained to providing justice for victims of individual German perpetrators, the political context, contemporary and historical, was not subject to scrutiny.

Victim's justice in Europe ushered in colonial modernity in Palestine, as Western guilt over the mass murder of the Jews became a justification for the founding of the state of Israel. Guilt, of course, is the language and sentiment of crime. If Nazism had been understood not as a crime but as a political project of the nation-state, there may yet have been a place for Jews in Europe, in denationalized states committed to the equal protection of every citizen. However, because the response to Nazism took the nation-state for granted, the solution for the Jews turned out to be the nation-state, again. Israel gave the Nazis what they had wanted all along: national homogeneity, by means of the ejection of Jews from Europe.

Nuremberg was designed both to protect the Allies in particular and to perpetuate a nation-building project and its homogenizing goals. Human rights tribunals, emblematic of the post–Cold War triumphalism that announced the end of history in the form of a neoliberal takeover, carry this tradition into the present. But there is hope of a way out. This lies with the political model. To understand the political model, I look to the anti-apartheid

movement in South Africa. By rethinking political identities, and reforming the political order, South Africa points the way to decolonizing the political. In South Africa, various groups learned to reject the political identities they had been given under colonialism: white, African, Coloured, Indian. Through political mobilization, Afrikaners, the descendants of Dutch colonists, came to realize that they did not have to be members of a racist white national majority—that this was not their natural political identity, but rather an identity they had adopted for historical reasons that need not prevail for all time. Similarly, the various nonwhite groups defined as separate by apartheid's racial categories came to understand themselves as black, a cohesive identity whose solidarity defied the will of the state. Newly conscious of their blackness, they redefined their foe as white power rather than white people, another shift of political identity.

Black South Africans didn't stop being black; Indian South Africans didn't stop being Indian. Afrikaners didn't suddenly start identifying as English or black or Indian. South Africans didn't give up their cultural identities and reject diversity. They rejected the politicization of diversity. Decolonizing the political through the recognition of a shared survivor identity does not require that we all pretend we are the same; far from it. It requires that we stop accepting that our differences should define who benefits from the state and who is marginalized by it.

Case Studies

In the colonizing process I describe, the central part is played by the settler state we now know as the United States of America. It was in North America that the paradigm of territorial indirect rule emerged. It spread from there.

The profound cost of the American scheme has been clear for two centuries and more. Hegel knew it in the 1820s. In his lectures on world history, he noted that, across the Americas, "nearly seven million people have been wiped out." He lamented that "the natives of the West Indian islands have died altogether. Indeed, the whole North American world has been destroyed and suppressed by the Europeans." But the fate of Indians in South America differed from the fate of Indians in the North: "a larger native population has survived in South America," Hegel wrote, "despite the fact that the natives

there have been subjected to far greater violence, and employed in grueling labors to which their strength was scarcely equal." He thought the difference stemmed from a single fact: "South America was conquered, while North America was colonized." Whereas "the Spanish took possession of South America in order to dominate it and to enrich themselves both through political office and by extracting tributes from the natives," the British settlers looked to populate North America. One looked for riches, the other for land.[15]

Therein lies a key difference between premodern and modern practices. For millennia, conquerors have bled resources from far-off places and sent the bounty home. Europeans in South America followed this playbook, taking what they could—including the labor of the locals—but steering no new course in world history. It is the land-devouring settlers in North America who had transformative impact on both sides of the colonial divide, in Europe as well as its colonies.

The impact of settlement in North America is summed up in two words: genocide and homelands. The physical elimination of Indians of the Western Hemisphere was the first genocide in modern history and is probably the most brutal and most complete ever undertaken, resulting in the deaths of about 95 percent of a pre-Columbian population of at least 75 million people, according to David Stannard.[16] In the United States, the natives who survived were excluded from the US political community—an exclusion that was integral to the construction of that community—and placed in homelands. As I discuss in chapter 1, the formation of the US political community comprised two broad developments. One was the coming together of settlers, both voluntary and forced, from Europe and Africa. The other was the legal designation of Indians as aliens without rights, in spite of their residence in US territory. As Chief Justice John Marshall put it in 1831, Indians belonged not to the American nation but to "domestic dependent nations." This was a recipe for the creation of a permanent internal colony in the homelands.

Settlers thought of themselves both as running away from Europe and as recreating Europe anew in the New World. The confederal imagination saw the New World as a coming together of European nations, each with its own state. The Civil War marked the defeat of this imagination and its displacement by another. Championed by Lincoln and summed up in his Gettysburg Address, the alternative view was that America was not Europe; it was not about the coming together of nations of Europe, even in a loose confedera-

tion, each maintaining its political identity as a separate political community with its own membership. Rather, America and Americans would be born again as a new political community, in which rights would be based not on descent but on residence.[17] The post–Civil War constitutional amendments declared that anyone born in any part of the United States would be a citizen of the United States first and foremost, and not of one of its states. Thus, a citizen who moved from one state in the union to another would have the same rights as another citizen born and living for the duration of their entire life in that same state. The move from a confederal to a federal vision was a decisive move *away* from the European nationalist vision. To date, citizenship based on residence continues to show the way forward for Americans of color, mainly African Americans and Latino people, in their bid for equal citizenship. Settlers in the United States—and later in other settler colonies—would craft a federal state structure as an alternative to the nation-state that could provide political order and ensure the political unity of all settlers. But there was a limit to this innovation. That limit was the failure to embrace Indians as part of the new political community, let alone joining existing political communities established by Indians.

Over the years the United States has developed a cascade of measures for maintaining this colony. So successful were these measures that today Americans hardly realize the colony within exists. Reservations were critical to these developments: the Civil War that led to the formal emancipation of enslaved people was followed by the internment of Indians in reservations, the first known concentration camps in the modern era. Indians were eventually granted US citizenship after the First World War, but they were treated as naturalized immigrants. The rationale was both simple and profound: Indians belonged to a different political community, variously called a tribe or nation. To become a citizen by virtue of native birth, as guaranteed by the Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment, one must already have been accepted in the political community. Thus one could reside within the borders of the nation-state while being excluded from it politically, rendered a permanent minority without rights.

Even the 1964 Civil Rights Act excluded Indians from the group whose rights were deemed inalienable. This is why Congress passed a special civil rights act, applicable only to Indians, just four years later. Even then, the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968 was only advisory. The rights it acknowledged were not constitutionally enforceable, thus not inalienable.

The answer to the question "Who is an American?" has changed over the decades as excluded groups have mobilized and won the right to be included as citizens equal before the law, at least in principle if not always in practice. What has not changed, so far, is the exclusion of reservation-based American Indians from membership in the American political community. Indians living on reservations remain aliens in the United States, bound by special laws and unprotected by the Constitution.

The American experience had profound impact when it came to designing systems of minority management in the evolving global nation-state system. European states, most obviously Germany, followed the US model. When it came to the Jewish question, Hitler drew lessons from America's westward expansion and settlement of the Indian question. After defeating the Nazis militarily, the Allies, having arrogated to themselves the task of redrawing Eastern Europe's boundaries, created homogeneous nation-states. At Nuremberg the Allies denounced Nazi ethnic-cleansing policies, but they ensured that Eastern European territories would be cleansed of their own minorities.

Nuremberg and denazification are the focus of chapter 2. I do not focus on the Third Reich in order primarily to elucidate the working of political modernity, although Nazi Germany is very much an instance of that era and ideology. Rather, I show how, in the aftermath of the war, the Allies perpetuated nation-state formation by criminalizing Nazism rather than addressing it as an instance of nationalist politics. Criminalization occurred in the court setting at Nuremberg and through the larger program of denazification. The United States, in particular, was obsessed with rooting out individual Nazis and penalizing them. Millions of Nazis were identified in the American zone of occupation alone, and hundreds of thousands were punished with imprisonment, hard labor, job loss, and other sentences.

The goal of US-led denazification was to establish the collective guilt of the German people. This was a mistake, for two reasons. First, the notion of guilt rendered the violence of the war and the Holocaust a matter of crime and therefore an offense against the state. This foreclosed a reckoning with Nazism's political roots and undercut the possibility of reform, for offenses against the state necessitate no reform of the state, only the restoration of its authority through corrective action against offenders. Second, while many Germans were in fact Nazis, and while many more benefited from Nazi policies, Germans were not in fact collectively to blame. Germany was also home

to an antifascist opposition, which paid dearly for its position. The Americans, however, refused to work with antifascists after the war. Doing so would have undermined the collective-guilt thesis and put the United States in league with the left in the middle of the postwar red scare. As a result, denazification alienated all parties in Germany—ex-Nazis, many of whom were nominal party members, who had joined not out of conviction but because their employers required them to; bystanders, who, like most people, are disengaged from politics and could feel some justification for rejecting the idea of collective guilt; and homegrown idealists, who could have been the vanguard of a new politics. It is no wonder that, during the years of occupation, most Germans felt little remorse about what had happened to the Jews of Europe. Ordinary Germans—already defeated, already crippled by economic crisis and aerial bombing during the war—were battered and bullied by the occupiers, leaving them to wonder at their own victimization. No one in power considered that, after the horror of the war and the Holocaust, something might change fundamentally. For a time, perpetrator became victim, although before long punished Germans were rehabilitated. The status quo ante of the nation-state was restored.

Indeed, after the war, the Allies joined their former enemies in promoting a new homogenizing, nation-building effort that proceeded from the very presumption underlying Nazi ideology. The basis of Nazi thought, unrepudiated at Nuremberg, was that Jews constituted a nation foreign in Europe. The same presumption is foundational to Zionism. Postwar Germans, no less than Americans and Britons, could readily embrace the idea that Israel was the home of the Jews, separate from Germany and Europe at large. The establishment of the state of Israel was the solution to the Jewish question in Europe.

This brings us to another case study in the constitution of the nation-state in the context of colonial occupation. With the European experience stamped indelibly on their psyche, postwar Jewish settlers in Palestine were determined never to be a minority there or anywhere else. To become a majority, they carried out an ethnic-cleansing campaign. Known in Arabic as the *Naqba* (Catastrophe), this was the exile in 1948 of about half the Arab population from the territory that would become Israel. The Palestinians who stayed behind, or returned from exile, formed a permanent minority in Israel.

In so many ways, Israeli Jews appear to have drawn inspiration from the US model of defining and ruling the Indians, as I detail in chapter 5. Much like

the United States, Israel considers membership in the national majority—not birth or residence in the common territory—the key to full citizenship. Thus the law guarantees every Jewish person a right of return to the state of Israel, even if that person has never stepped on its soil, while non-Jewish Palestinians have to navigate countless obstacles en route to citizenship, a process that is designed to ensure they never try. Non-Jewish Palestinians are like American Indians: of the land, but not part of the political community—a domestic dependent nation. Like the American Indian, the Palestinian has rights, but they are not enforceable according to the state's basic laws. Palestinians' rights—including rights to vote and be elected to office—do not extend to representation in the corridors of power, for the disempowerment of Palestinians precedes the democratic process. No matter who is in the Knesset, the state's laws and governing structures ensure that Palestinians are unable to secure the benefits and protections of the state.

In Israel as in the United States, this project of creating aliens at home has been an ongoing one, in which relations and definitions crystallize over time. A basic law declaring "Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People," enacted in 2018, formally and finally marks the Palestinians as beyond the bounds of the nation-state and therefore an internally colonized population. Notably, this declaration replaced the earlier notion that Israel is a Jewish and democratic state. This was always false; Israel has never been a democracy, for the majority there is defined prepolitically. Now we know that the balance of the Knesset agrees. In a democracy, majorities are formed through the political process. In a nation-state, democracy can be real only for the national majority. The permanent minority may have voting rights, but it is ever unable to exercise sovereignty. Nation-state democracy only ratifies the permanent majority, which prevents the political process from addressing the sources of its privilege.

America's experience with the Indians made genocide and ethnic cleansing thinkable in Germany and ethnic cleansing thinkable in Israel. But America's influence was felt elsewhere, too. Europeans responded to the mid-nineteenth-century crises of empire by adopting American tools for creating and managing minorities and applying these tools to colonized populations. These tools included the ethnically demarcated and confined territory known as the tribal homeland; the installation of native authority, said to be customary, within the tribal homeland; the enforcement on the native popula-

tion of a customary law that was in fact sculpted by the state; and close monitoring of natives' movement, by means of a pass system.

All of these methodologies were put to use in South Africa, which is the subject of chapter 3. For decades European colonizers struggled to repress rebellions there, but ultimately they alighted on a cocktail of tribalizing measures much like those of the United States, fusing homelands, native authority, customary law, and surveillance. The first homelands in South Africa were even called reserves. And, as in the United States, neither customary law nor authority was an innocent reproduction of custom. Custom had first to be purified of elements deemed repugnant to the settler conscience. Only then was custom included in the regulatory framework of the state.

In both South Africa and the United States, an essential feature of customary law was the drawing of distinctions among natives to determine who was entitled to customary rights and who was not. Those said to be natives belonging to the tribal homeland were endowed with customary rights, such as rights to land and the protection of native authority. In South Africa and other African colonies, natives whose ancestry could be traced to other homelands were denied these rights. An African who migrated away from her supposed tribal homeland and settled in another was out of luck. If her home was enveloped by the boundaries of a newly created tribal homeland, she was suddenly on the wrong side of customary law. In the United States, too, settlers distinguished natives by tribe, and also by race, which was measured by means of "blood quantum." The true native was defined by blood count; only those biologically deemed Indians could have customary rights, including to land. Race was also an important predicate of native-sorting in Africa. In South Africa, natives were first distinguished from mixed-blood persons (Coloureds) by various race-based tests. If the test—which might involve, say, running a comb through the person's hair to determine its texture—resulted in African as opposed to Coloured identity, then the person would be assigned to a tribe. Similarly, in Sudan, the racial distinction of Arabs from Africans preceded the sorting of the Africans into separate tribes.

Sudan, discussed in chapter 4, was not a settler-colonial state, yet, rather remarkably, British officials deployed the settler-native distinction in the absence of settlers. The British demarcated two races, Arabs said to be Northern and Africans said to be Southern, and described the Arabs as settlers and the Africans as natives. The distinction was based on the concocted history and

ethnography implicit in colonial modernity, which presumed that Arabs were civilized, Africans were uncivilized, and that any civilization in Africa came from abroad. Certainly the peoples deemed Arab and African had their own wide-ranging concocted histories, too, but again the British innovation lay not in inventing histories but rather in politicizing them.

By selecting Arabs for privileged positions under conditions of indirect rule, and by ensuring that Africans were disadvantaged, the British fostered resentment among Africans. This hatred exploded in the aftermath of independence in the mid-twentieth century, leading to a decades-long civil war between the Arab-dominated central government in the North and African militias concentrated in the South. Like nationalists everywhere, Arab nationalists, good pupils who had come to believe themselves inherently superior, attempted to maintain their place in the sun of colonial modernity long after the colonizer departed.

These were the wages of race in Sudan. The wages of tribe were clear in day-to-day administrative practices, especially in rural areas, whether in the South or the North. Once southern soldiers crossed the racial line to join their northern comrades in anti-British demonstrations in the 1920s, the British took to sealing off the southern border. On both sides of the border but primarily in the South, African tribes were confined to homelands under customary law and native authority. Peoples with long histories of migration, coexistence, and cultural exchange were thereby atomized into separate nations in separate territories under separate rule. Here, again, the true native was distinguished from the interloper and was privileged within the domain of the homeland.

This method of governance did not end with Sudanese independence in the 1950s. It did not end with South Sudan's secession from Sudan in 2011. Rather, tribalism as an administrative practice and as the currency of political competition has endured and today been taken to its absurd extreme. Each of the major tribes in South Sudan has its own separate ministries in the government. Each has its separate militias. The army of the state is itself fragmented by tribal rivalries; various wings of the armed forces fought each other in the South Sudanese civil war that began in 2013, a conflict costing hundreds of thousands of civilian lives. As of this writing, a peace is in place, but tenuously. Wealth and power in South Sudan come to whomever can mobilize enough troops to terrorize a population. A new militia could arise

and, if it intimidates enough people, earn its own slice of tribal homeland and its own perch in the government. If the United States, with hardly any surviving natives, can continue to be organized as a settler state, South Sudan can continue to be organized as a collection of native tribes, even with no settler presence.

In the midst of the South Sudanese civil war, the African Union set up a commission of inquiry to investigate its root causes and formulate a response. The commission's majority report followed the Nuremberg precedent, calling for formal criminal investigations of alleged human rights abuses and punishment for those found guilty at trial. As a member of the commission, I wrote the minority report, drawing inspiration from the talks that led to the end of juridical apartheid in South Africa.

The South African Moment

If the United States is the founding settler-colonial regime, then South Africa is at the frontier of decolonization. Over the years, anticolonial resistance has come in two forms, one mimicking colonial logic, the other undermining it. It is the latter that informs my vision of the nonnational state we might aspire to after postcolonialism.

The first phase of the anti-apartheid movement, which lasted into the 1970s, mobilized along lines defined and politicized by the apartheid regime. Each of its designated races—African, Indian, Coloured, and white—formed distinct factions opposed to apartheid power. The African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress, and the Congress of Democrats (for whites) all opposed apartheid. But they reproduced the apartheid imagination in their internal architecture.

It was the student movement of the 1970s that broke through apartheid's cognitive order. I call this the South African moment. This was the epistemological revolution that would spur decolonization. It was characterized by a two-fold development: radical white students joined nonwhite migrant workers in a mobilization that gave birth to South Africa's nonracial unions; and African, Indian, and Coloured students, inspired by the Black Consciousness Movement, were reborn as black. In the 1980s these activists organized under the aegis of nonracial groups like the United Democratic Front and Mass Democratic Movement, which mobilized spectacular confrontations with the enforcers of apartheid. These efforts were the precursor to the

referendum in which the same white community that had repeatedly and "democratically" endorsed apartheid voted for talks with anti-apartheid voices.

White civil society delegations began meetings with Nelson Mandela's African National Congress long before the ruling National Party (NP) did. The NP was the party of apartheid, its inventor and protector. The NP repeatedly returned to power on an apartheid platform. But it, too, eventually changed. Behind this remarkable turnabout was the realization that the apartheid project was rapidly losing the support of the white intelligentsia, and that, given time, the party would lose its political majority in the white community. The state was not defeated militarily or by virtue of intense social disorder. What changed was the political landscape. White South Africans were learning to adopt a new kind of political subjectivity that defied that of the nation. The change was especially pronounced among student youth. Soon they were joined by leading academics at Stellenbosch University, the prestigious home of the Afrikaner intelligentsia. These alliances made clear that the nation could no longer be defined by whiteness, compelling the NP to change its tune and take part in the transition. The state might have used its power to violently break the stalemate with anti-apartheid forces, but the nation had changed underneath it, rendering apartheid no longer a viable nation-state project. As in Algeria and Kenya, where the supremacy of colonial militaries did not yield political victory, in South Africa political defeat required no military result. When the time for political change came, and right-wing Afrikaner groups attempted an organized revolt, they found themselves isolated. Settler defection made an enormous difference in bringing down apartheid.

The outcome has been mixed. On the positive side, one kind of permanent minority has unraveled: that based on race. The solidarity fostered by black consciousness and the radicalization of whites in the labor movement made this possible. However, the ethnic tribe, the other category naturalized by apartheid, remains a source of political identity driving what South Africans call "xenophobic" violence. The target of xenophobic violence in South Africa is not the racial stranger but the tribal stranger. Even as South Africa has consciously moved away from a race-based nation-state project, it has maintained the logic that equates African or native political identity with tribe. Claims associated with tribe have been sanctified as traditional prac-

tices. While race-based privilege in the central state is being dismantled, however unevenly, masses of South Africans have yet to conceptualize and challenge tribe-based privilege, which mostly plays out in local governance in rural areas.

Another way to think about this differential outcome with respect to race and tribe is that South Africans have recognized that racial political identities are impermanent but have yet to realize that tribal political identities are too. The end of apartheid teaches us to appreciate more fully the challenge of the political and to better craft our understanding of decolonization. Political community and political identity are historical. Neither permanent nor natural, the boundaries of community and identity are imagined in specific historical circumstances and can be reimagined as circumstances change. The end of juridical apartheid in South Africa provides us with a new way to think of decolonization in other contexts, including the United States and Israel / Palestine, which could also experience settler defection from the nation. The starting point of decolonization is to rethink political identity and the political community based on the nation.

Decolonizing the Political

The period since World War II has seen a flourishing of anticolonial intellectual discourse. Yet this discourse has been unable to make sense of extreme postcolonial violence. Anticolonial intellectuals have taken their lead from Marx's reflections on the 1848 revolutions in Europe. The political revolution must clear the way for the social revolution, Marx argued in his seminal *On the Jewish Question*. Political revolution (or political independence) confers formal political equality and citizenship but at the same time sharpens the experience and thus the consciousness of social inequality, broadening the horizons of struggle from the political to the social. The final stage in this process, according to the teleology of anticolonial theory, is epistemological revolution, whereby the very consciousness of being, the vocabulary in which we understand the world around us, is transformed.

And yet, in a growing number of cases, the attainment of political independence and formal citizenship has not led to mobilizations for social equality. Rather, recurring civil wars have followed in the course of nation-building.

Europe's past, ethnic cleansing and all, has become our present. Participants in these civil wars are not primarily demanding redistribution and social equality; they are fighting for or against inclusion in the political community. That the new political community is constituted in the course of anticolonial resistance is clearly an unreasonable presumption. So the question must be asked anew at independence: Who belongs to the political community? Who is the citizen and who is the sojourner? This question short circuits the social question; it is prior to it.

Marx was silent about the political community within whose boundaries these struggles were presumed to unfold. He assumed that political and social equality will be realized within the bounds of a preexisting political community. Following his lead, scholars of colonialism, particularly in Africa, have focused attention on the artificiality of boundaries drawn up at the conference table in Berlin in the late nineteenth century while ignoring the boundaries created inside the colony. This work draws attention to these boundaries, outcomes of administrative and political classifications that comprised the architecture of colonial governance. When civil wars end either because one side wins or because both are exhausted, responses to these questions frame new constitutions, each a founding document of a new political community. Politically, decolonization is best thought of as a two-sided process: externally, the assertion of political independence from the colonial power and a claim to membership in the community of states in the world at large; internally, the reimagination and redefinition of the political community.

Like Marxist theory, decolonial theory too gets decolonization backward. Not only does the political precede the social, I argue that the political is twinned with the epistemological. The first question at independence is not "how do we distribute wealth?" but "who belongs?" Answering the question of belonging in a productive way necessitates decolonizing the political, which is a process of reimagining political identities as historical rather than natural. The epistemological revolution is closely tied to internal political revolution—not throwing off outside rule but excising the ideology of political modernity internalized under colonialism.

This calls for a further rethinking of the mainstream literature on citizenship. That literature is strongly influenced by T. H. Marshall, whose work assumed the nation as the political community joined to the state. This literature tends to downplay the political and tells the story of rights as one of a

linear development. Marshall's 1950 classic, *Citizenship and Social Class,* provides a historical account of the birth of three generations of rights and justice: civil, political, and social. For Marshall, these came to constitute the meaning of citizenship over three centuries, signaling the dawn of civil rights in the eighteenth century, political rights in the nineteenth century, and social rights in the twentieth century.[18] Whereas Marshall focused on the question of which rights citizens have, I shift focus to a different question, one explicitly political: Rights for whom?

My project, then, is to tell a new story that historicizes political identities. I take us back to the colonization process, so as to historicize the categories of race and tribe on which national identities are based. I did not realize, when I began the research for this book, that I would end up focusing on this history. I was primarily concerned with justice in the aftermath of extreme violence. I wrote the first draft from this perspective, trying to differentiate among three dimensions of justice: criminal, social, and political. My object was to think of political justice in terms broader than those of criminal justice. I wrote articles wrestling with these issues.[19] The more I turned out variations of my argument, and shared them with colleagues, the more they probed my assumptions. The most insistent of these colleagues was Raef Zreik at Tel Aviv University, who politely reminded me that justice presumes the existence of a political community. In so doing, he challenged me to theorize more deeply the alternative to which I was pointing.

I came to realize that we need to rethink not only justice but also the political order in which it is pursued. To obtain justice for victims necessitates an end to the conditions that marked them for unjust treatment, and that means decolonization at last. Getting to justice is not just a normative project of imagining a better world—that is the stuff of mainstream political theory. Yes, we should imagine that better world, but realizing it means also understanding the making of the world we live in, a world of permanent minorities, reproduced through the politicization of identity under the structure of the nation-state. Unmaking the permanence of political identities begins with the recognition that they are not natural and are not forever. They were invented by power and are reinforced by those who mobilize them in a bid for power. If enough people think through the violent consequences of these identitarian power struggles, then they will have the insight to rethink and remake the world.

I don't pretend to know exactly what this next world will look like. Decolonizing the political is nothing less than reimagining the order of the nation-state. I cannot prescribe the outcome. I do have some recommendations for getting there, though. First, to reform the national basis of the state by granting only one kind of citizenship and doing so on the basis of residence rather than identity. Second, to denationalize states through the institution of federal structures in which local autonomy allows diversity to flourish. And third, to loosen the grip of the nationalist imagination by teaching the history of the nation-state, juxtaposing the political model against the criminal, and bolstering democracy in place of neoliberal human rights remedies. The case studies throughout the book justify these recommendations and speak to both their urgency and their promise.

I am an incorrigible optimist, given to privileging the future over the past. Perhaps that is why I believe that blood enemies can become political adversaries, adjudicating their differences through a political process rather than on battlefields or in courtrooms. Perhaps that is why I believe that perpetrators and victims can live together as survivors. I have never been persuaded that we live the Foucauldian nightmare in which power produces the subject, productively, as we now repeat endlessly, and the subject mimics power—not so productively, I might add. I am not convinced that we are like so many moths fatally attracted to the candle, revolving around it until we perish in its flame, a tragic fate immortalized in Urdu poetry. In the Foucauldian vision, power and knowledge—for what else is there?—together produce a closure. Every beginning is fated to end as a tragedy. Any attempt to write or make something else, something new, produces nothing but a romantic illusion.

But I am not a Romantic. I embrace the Foucauldian insight but not the closure it points to. The logic of power does permeate agency, but only in its formative stage. The logic of power does inform the parameters within which the subjugated mobilize and organize, but again, only in the first instance. The power of the South African story is that it gives us more than just the proverbial first instance. It gives us the glimpse of another possibility, a beyond, a suggestion that the relation between power and agency is neither determinative nor irrelevant, because identities are politically created. Neither history nor identity has to be permanent, and decolonization does not have to be a romantic illusion.

FORMATIONS OF MODERNITY

EDITED BY STUART HALL AND BRAM GIEBEN

CHAPTER 3 THE EMERGENCE OF THE ECONOMY

Vivienne Brown

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1 INTRODUCTION: THE ECONOMIC FORMATION OF MODERNITY

The 'economy' as an object of interest is so much a part of our everyday lives and concerns that it is easily taken for granted. Newspaper headlines provide the latest economic forecasts and economic gurus on TV offer a stream of opinions about any and every aspect of economic performance. In this way, economic terms and economic analysis have entered into the daily media coverage of events, and most people have some working understanding of these debates even if the points of economic detail seem arcane.

Though we take this kind of economic debate for granted, it is a 'modern' debate indicative of a 'modern' society. Its comparative modernity may be seen in a number of different ways. First, such a debate takes for granted a certain kind of economy: a modern economy where there is a highly specialized and educated workforce organized to produce a differentiated range of goods for sale on a worldwide market. This presupposes a multinational corporate structure which is itself organized on a global scale, together with a vast network of interlinking financial, marketing, scientific and technological agencies.

Second, such a debate is articulated within a set of economic terms and economic models that derive from a certain way of thinking about the economy; that is, from modern economic theory. Experts in the field of modern economic theory are specialists in the sense that they have undergone a lengthy period of training and are now employed in a range of specialist institutions, such as: universities and polytechnics, governmental and commercial organizations, and international agencies, such as the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund. Although it is these professional economists who develop economic theory and conduct economic research, many of the key terms of the economic debates are understood by a wider and ever more discerning public.

Third, such an ongoing economic debate presupposes not only a literate and informed public audience, but also one which considers that it has the political right to be well-informed about the performance of the economy. This itself presupposes a political context of open democratic debate (whatever the actual restrictions may be in practice), where critical arguments may take place over the conduct of economic policy.

Living and working as we do in the midst of this 'modern economy', it is easy to take it for granted. In this chapter we are going to pause to consider the emergence of the modern economy and ways of thinking about it. In line with other chapters, we shall examine the emergence of the economy as part of the more general emergence and definition of modernity that we now associate with Enlightenment thinking in the eighteenth century. As Chapter 1 showed, the Enlightenment was a period of intense questioning about the nature of society and, inevitably,

some of this questioning was also directed towards those parts of society that we would now designate as 'economic', although this term, a modern one, was not used then.

In presenting a series of 'histories' of different aspects of the formation of modern societies, this book is underlining the multifaceted character and complexity of modern societies. This is an important point and one to which this book will frequently return. But these different 'histories' of the emergence of modern society also contribute to another and more fundamental point: that our understanding of modern society is itself closely linked to the kind of 'history' that we tell about it. The notion that there are different 'histories' of modern society as opposed to a single 'history' unsettles any idea that there is only one correct view either of a society or of its history. It also displaces any notion that historical time is a one-dimensional course of events or a single historical process. This means that a historical account of the formation of modernity will uncover discontinuities in the development of modernity as well as a continuous thread of progress, and that understanding any period in history entails looking backwards and sideways, as well as forwards.

By exploring the emergence of the economic formation of modernity, this chapter examines some of these issues. Section 2 compares the contours of the economy in eighteenth-century Britain with those of the modern UK economy of the twentieth century, and discusses the extent to which the rudiments of a modern economy can be discerned in the eighteenth century. Two different historical approaches to this issue are presented, thus providing two different 'histories' — or 'discourses' — of economic change during the period, but the overall conclusion of the section is that recent historical research has underlined the gradual nature of the economic changes taking place in the eighteenth century.

Section 3 investigates what are generally taken to be the origins of modern economic analysis in the eighteenth century. One of the reasons for the fascination of this period for those wishing to acquire an understanding of the development of modern economics is that it is regarded as the century which produced the first systematic treatise on the economy. In 1776, Adam Smith published *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Adam Smith is often regarded as the 'father' of economics because he published the first major book on the subject at just that moment in Britain's history when signs of the modern economy seemed to be appearing. Armed with prescient insight and a commitment to objective economic analysis, Adam Smith is thought to have initiated the scientific study of economics and to have heralded the new era of the modern, industrial, profit-seeking economy. Changes in the economy in the eighteenth century are thus thought to be 'mirrored' by corresponding changes in economic thinking, and both processes are seen as providing a clear overture to the later economic developments of the Industrial Revolution and beyond. This interpretation, which many historians and economists have found deeply compelling, is discussed in Section 3.

Just as Section 2 problematizes the notion that the eighteenth century could be understood in terms of later economic developments, Section 4 questions this popular view of Adam Smith as the spokesman for the emerging capitalist market order. It presents recent research on Adam Smith which locates his writings within the broad cultural context of the eighteenth century rather than seeing him as the originator and prophet of later economic developments.

Hence, the chapter concludes that one of the interesting links between the eighteenth century and ours is not so much that the eighteenth century and its thinking signposted modernity but that, looking back into the past, modernity retrospectively reinterprets the past. According to this view, writing 'histories' is also partly a process of constructing a story about society's own origins, and this process involves both self-recognition and self-reconstruction. It is also a process in which the 'classic' books of the past take on a new meaning as they are reinterpreted as signposts of the future order. This concluding account of the economic formation of modernity is presented in Section 5.

2 A MODERN ECONOMY IN THE MAKING?

2.1 A NEW COMMERCIAL SOCIETY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY?

Looking back, the eighteenth century seems to be the moment when the pace of economic life began to quicken. To those living and writing at that time, it was the age of 'commerce', the apex or culmination of a long period of social development in a country's manners, laws and government, as well as in its productive powers and patterns of consumption. The idea of a commercial society included social as well as economic considerations, with an emphasis on the polite, even polished, character of the manners of the time made possible by what was thought to be a more refined way of life and enlarged cultural horizons.

Differences in wealth and life style, however, were enormous: a great peer might get £10,000 per annum, a prosperous knight £800 per annum, and a poor labourer £10 per annum. But the social ladder was finely graduated along its entire length and so a certain degree of social mobility could take place across adjacent rungs, more so than in other European countries where the class structure was more ossified and the rungs of the ladder were further apart. While Enlightenment thinking may have opened up the intellectual and cultural horizons of the age, life still remained wretched for many. As a correspondent to the *Northampton Mercury* wrote in 1739: 'I never see lace and embroidery upon the back of a beau but my thoughts descend to the poor fingers that have wrought it ... What would avail our large estates and great tracts of land without their labours?' (quoted in Porter, 1990, p.87).

Even so, the increasingly commercial basis of social relations did make possible new standards of consumption for many that would have been inconceivable a generation earlier, even though these standards were not achieved uniformly or for everyone. Population increased, and so did the urban areas. The population of the UK increased from about 9.4 million in 1701 to 10.5 million in 1751, and 16.0 million in 1801, with a marked increase in the proportion living in urban areas. London dominated, but Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dublin were all growth points. Urban growth was accompanied by the development of characteristic Georgian flat-fronted terraced brick houses which introduced a more wholesome and spacious style of living for many. Canals and road improvements opened up the regions to the cultural influences of the metropolis and they also provided vital infrastructure for the burgeoning trade links between the rapidly growing cities. Road travelling times were slashed: the Edinburgh to London journey was reduced from 256 hours in 1700 to 60 hours in 1800, and the journey from Bath to London was reduced from 50 hours to 16 hours over the same period. As in the twentieth century, improved roads led to increased travel, congestion, and moralists decrying the obsession with speed. In 1767, the *London Magazine* reported that: 'There is scarce a cobbler in the counties of York and Lancaster, but must now be conveyed to his cousin german [i.e. his first cousin] in Wapping in two days time' (quoted in Langford, 1989, p.407).

Improved communications meant that people and goods could travel more easily; so too could fashions and trends in consumer taste. The eighteenth century has been identified by some historians as the period of the 'birth of a consumer society' (McKendrick *et al.*, 1982), when social emulation manifested itself in a fast-moving fashion-consciousness in dress and in households goods. Although some manufacturers were careful to cultivate the patronage of royalty and the aristocracy in order to promote the fashionable credentials of their wares, the consumer markets thus developed were essentially popular rather than socially exclusive. Reading A is an account by Roy Porter of English society at this time. It describes how the growth of shops and advertising in newspapers enabled the new fashions to be quickly transmitted from London to the provinces, thus contributing to the first national market in clothing and household goods.

ACTIVITY 1 You should now read **Reading A, 'The birth of consumerism'**, by Roy Porter (which you will find at the end of this chapter).

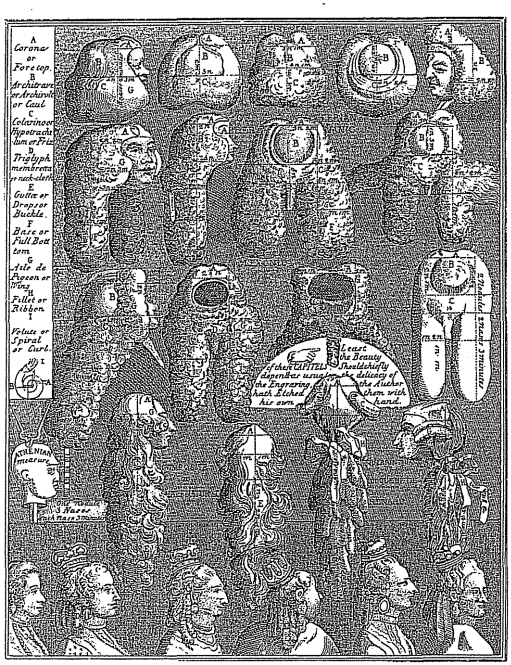
In this extract Porter points to the development of a national market and the importance of the growth in advertising. Porter mentions the increased availability of home furnishings — hangings, blankets and rugs, together with mirrors and dinner services as well as fashion clothes. The eighteenth century was the age when Josiah Wedgwood commercialized the potteries and made expensive dinner and tea

services which were eagerly sought after by the rich and fashionable; it was the age when Chippendale, Hepplewhite and Sheraton established new designs for elegant furniture; and it was the age of Georgian silver cutlery, buckles, buttons, new fabrics, high wigs, new breeds of animals, and new species of plants. Porter also refers here to a general paraphernalia of 'knick-knacks' and 'curios' which were bought on whim and appealed to a newly developing sense of novelty. Note too the development of retailing, with its alluring presentation of goods, and the power of advertising in stimulating a demand for the new products of the day. London acquired a reputation as the most dazzling shopping opportunity in all Europe, with its paved and well-lit shopping streets where even the most obdurate would be unable to resist the enticement of gorgeous displays presented in glass-fronted shop windows. Reading this description of eighteenth-century advertising and retailing, it comes as no surprise to recognize why many twentieth-century shopping malls and 'boutiques' are neo-Georgian in style, with bow windows and reproduction decors. Even the commercialization of commemorative mugs and handkerchiefs adorned with the symbols of national events have sound historical precedents!

Porter's account provides a telling insight into some of the changes taking place in eighteenth-century society, changes which were apparent to observers at the time and which were widely commented upon. These changes were also noted by visitors to Britain, who compared it in favourable terms with other European countries. Ordinary folk seemed to be better dressed, better fed and better housed than the native peasantry in other countries or, at least, in the words of one American traveller, 'the poor do not look so poor here as in other countries' (quoted in Porter, 1990, p.86). Ordinary folk seemed cleaner too; in the 1720s a visitor remarked: 'English women and men are very clean; not a day passes by without their washing their hands, arms, faces, necks and throats in cold water, and that in winter as well as in summer' (*ibid.*, p.221). As a mid-century commentator from Nottingham observed, imported goods such as tea, coffee, chocolate and sugar were no longer regarded as expensive luxuries reserved for the few but had entered the national diet: ' ... not only Gentry and Wealthy Travellers drink it constantly, but almost every Seamer, Sizer and Winder will have her Tea in a morning ... and even a common Washer woman thinks she has not had a proper Breakfast without Tea and hot buttered White Bread!' (*ibid.*, p.218). Entertainment, music and theatre were also becoming commercialized and available to a growing ticket-buying audience, and this brought with it a large increase in the number of pleasure gardens, pubs, coffee houses, theatres and concerts. In the middle of the century, for example, in 1749, 12,000 people paid 2s. 6d. each to hear Handel's *Fireworks Music* at Vauxhall in London, and in the last decade of the century when Hayden visited London, the concert halls were packed with enthusiastic and musically literate audiences.

This description of eighteenth-century English social life is an optimistic one, in which a more refined and comfortable way of life is

1784, or the Fashions of the Day, by Thomas Rowlandson: In a fashion-conscious society, personal dress and adornment achieved a new significance; wigs and headgear completed the outfit ...



The Five Orders of Perriwigs, by William Hogarth

Such things are: that such things are we must allow but such things never were till now

seen to be spreading right down the social scale. Such accounts also have a directly modern ring to them; it seems easy to bridge the historical gap of 200 years or so by imagining those eighteenth-century folk on their shopping sprees, lounging in the newly-opened pleasure gardens, or doing some home improvements on the side. Porter's account is written in a very engaging style too; this isn't the formal history of kings and queens and high diplomatic manoeuvres, but the everyday history of ordinary folk — folk like us — going about their lives. Thus, the style that Porter uses to recount an engaging story about the new consumerism of the eighteenth century contributes to our sense that this early consumerism was not so unlike the consumerism of the 1980s and 1990s with which we are familiar.

Porter's account of eighteenth-century consumer society, and the informal style in which it is written, both contribute towards painting a distinctly 'modern' picture of the eighteenth century, and it is easy to conclude that the eighteenth century really did contain an embryonic version of the modern consumer economy of today which has developed directly from it. But this style of social history is itself new. This account of the eighteenth century reflects a relatively recent interest in the everyday facets of social history, and the wealth of detail that makes Porter's descriptions so fascinating is often culled from relatively new research. What this means is that his own project in writing this kind of social history, fascinating and scholarly though it is, is itself part of a relatively new trend in writing history. Porter's interest in the consumer activities of the eighteenth century is also partly the result of a recent trend in writing social history that attempts to counter what is seen as an excessive emphasis on the production aspects of the Industrial Revolution; in this approach, the 'consumer revolution' is seen as an essential precursor of the better publicized 'Industrial Revolution'.

But recent scholarly interest in the new consumer activities of the eighteenth century may also be seen partly as the result of the consumer orientations of the latter part of the twentieth century. Thus, interest in the consumer society of the late twentieth century has to some degree stimulated a lot of fine research on similar tendencies in eighteenth-century society. This contributes to our sense that the eighteenth century contained the seeds of modern society, but we must remember that it was modern society that itself produced the detailed research that made such a historical understanding possible. And furthermore, as you will discover in other books in this series, the consumer orientations and ideologies of late twentieth-century society are often taken as symptomatic of a *post-modern* social order, and sociological analyses of these are often denominated as 'post-modern' analyses. Thus, there is a sense in which Porter's account of eighteenth-century consumerism not only pulls that period into line with modernity, but even propels it beyond that and into line with current trends identified with post-modernity.

Porter's social history relies on anecdotal and literary evidence from a wide range of sources: from letters, journals, foreign visitors' accounts,

newspapers, and private papers. Very often economic historians attempt to provide a quantitative estimate of the changes that were taking place. By collecting statistical evidence they try to answer questions such as: by how much were standards of living increasing over the period?; were trade and commerce expanding at a greater rate than agriculture during this period? The attraction of this kind of research is its generality and its precision; for example, if national output is increasing at 3 per cent per year and population at 1 per cent per year, then the society is able to support a rising population with an approximate 2 per cent annual increase in the standard of living. The great difficulty with this approach is that the statistics become increasingly unreliable as they are projected further back in time. The margin of error may then become so wide as to make the conclusion unreliable. If, in the above example, both statistics are subject to an error of 0.5 in either direction, then the result is that output increases by between 2.5 and 3.5 per cent while population increases by 0.5 to 1.5 per cent. In this case the average standard of living will be increasing by somewhere between 1 per cent and 3 per cent per annum approximately, a much less precise result. Here at least, in this example, the margin of error is known. A greater source of difficulty with historical statistics is that the degree of unreliability may also be subject only to informed guesswork.

In spite of these difficulties, research on the quantitative dimensions of the eighteenth century provides another way of understanding the changes taking place; it may not tell us what an individual family had for breakfast but it may indicate whether living standards were improving on average. This kind of historical research poses questions that are quantitative in nature and which require detailed statistical analysis in order to provide answers. Table 3.1 (from an article by the economic historian R. V. Jackson) shows the annual growth rates over two periods during the eighteenth century: from 1700–60 and from 1760–1800. The first row shows the annual percentage increase in real output, the second shows the annual percentage increase in population, and the third shows the annual percentage increase in output per head of population.

Table 3.1 Annual growth rates of output, population, and output per head in eighteenth-century Britain

	1700–60	1760–1800
	(per cent per annum)	
Output	0.58–0.60	1.04–1.20
Population	0.38	0.83
Output/head	0.20–0.22	0.21–0.37

Source: Jackson, 1990, pp.219, 225

The table suggests that output increased by between 0.58 and 0.60 per cent each year on average in the early period, and that this rate of growth increased to between 1.04 and 1.20 per cent each year on average in the later period. Taking account of population growth during

the period, this means that real output per person grew at an average annual rate of between 0.20 and 0.22 per cent in the early period and between 0.21 and 0.37 per cent in the later period. Although highly tentative, these figures suggest that the rising output over the eighteenth century did enable a growing population to live at a rising standard of living, a standard which increased at a somewhat higher rate in the latter part of the century; but note how small these increases are. This suggests that the optimistic picture painted by Porter's account should perhaps be tempered a little by the realization that, although increased consumption was available for many members of a rising population, on average the rate of improvement was slow.

But to say that the rate of improvement was slow suggests a standard of comparison of some sort. What is the implicit standard of comparison that is being used in the previous paragraph? Compared with improvements in living standards in the seventeenth century, the figures in Table 3.1 may look substantial. For those living and writing during the eighteenth century, the point of comparison would have been either backwards to an earlier period, or sideways to other countries at the same period. And clearly, from Porter's account, many contemporary observers did find the changes remarkable. But if we are comparing the eighteenth with the twentieth century, then these figures do look small. Table 3.2 provides a modern point of comparison by presenting data for the UK, West Germany (as it then was), France, the USA, and Japan.

Table 3.2 Annual rates of growth of gross domestic product per head of total population, 1983–88

	1983–88 (per cent per annum)
UK	3.4
W. Germany	2.5
France	1.7
USA	3.4
Japan	3.8

Source: *Basic Statistics of the Community*, 1990, 27th edn, p.40, Eurostat, Luxembourg

The statistics in Table 3.2 were compiled on a different basis from those in Table 3.1 and so they are not directly comparable, but they are clearly of a different order of magnitude from those in Table 3.1. The range of figures is from 1.7 per cent for France to 3.8 per cent for Japan, with a UK figure of 3.4 per cent. The figure for the UK looks so good because the middle period of the 1980s was a period of rapid growth in the UK; if either the early or the late years of the decade had been included the figure would have been lower. None the less, this annual figure of 3.4 per cent for the mid-1980s is about fourteen times as great as the average figure for the eighteenth century in Table 3.1. Thus we can say that the annual increases in output during the eighteenth century were small by present-day standards, but they were significant and observable to many of those living in the eighteenth century.

The quantitative results shown in Table 3.1 may look firm and definite, giving us a clear bird's-eye view of the long term trajectory of economic change in the eighteenth century. For this reason they may appear more secure than the portrayal of contemporary life in Porter's account, especially in view of the realization that Porter's description is partly the result of modern research in social history and a recent interest in the consumer aspects of society. But Jackson's data in Table 3.1 are also representative of a relatively new style of economic history, known as 'cliometrics', where the statistical techniques and modelling methods of modern economic theory are applied to the past. So in Jackson's case, too, the insights provided into the course of economic development in the eighteenth century are the product of modern ways of analysing the economy. Thus, the statistics presented in Table 3.1 are the product of recent research, and reflect the belief of many economic historians that the rate of economic growth during the eighteenth century was lower than had previously been thought (see also Crafts, 1985). This new conventional wisdom suggests that there was a smaller increase in output over the course of the century, but that there was a smoother trend over the century as a whole; in particular, this implies that earlier views of the 1780s and 1790s, as marking a dramatic turning point in economic development and as heralding the onset of the 'Industrial Revolution', now seem to be an exaggeration. According to the new estimates, the Industrial Revolution took place in the nineteenth century rather than the late eighteenth century, and even then it was a more gradual and piecemeal affair than had previously been thought.

Furthermore, in the article from which these statistics were taken, Jackson goes on to present revised estimates that challenge even these more circumscribed views on the eighteenth-century pattern of economic change. Jackson argues in this article that inclusion of government activities seriously distorts the national output figures for purely statistical reasons; when government activities are excluded to provide an estimate of the growth of *private* sector output growth per head, the rate of growth of output per head falls *below* the level reported in Table 3.1. Jackson estimates that, on this revised basis, output growth per head was about 0.13 per cent per annum during the 1700–60 period and 0.19 per cent per annum from 1760–1800, but the article reiterates the important point that all these estimates must be regarded as highly approximate and that they are all subject to a very wide margin of error. As other economic historians readily agree, these economic statistics represent hypotheses for future research rather than final judgments about what actually happened.

2.2 DISCOURSES ON THE ECONOMY

Just as Porter's description of eighteenth-century consumerism is a 'modern' account of the eighteenth century, so are economic statistics such as those presented by Jackson. Both approaches to describing the eighteenth century are the product of modern intensive research by specialist professional historians using up-to-date resources and

methods. And both accounts will surely need to be amended in the future as new historians construct new ways of formulating evidence and arguments from the archives. Thus, as more knowledge is produced about the eighteenth century, we can see how that knowledge is itself a product of modern society and would not have been available without the priorities, attitudes, perspectives, theories and research techniques that are themselves a product of modern society.

This underlines a more general point that knowledge about the eighteenth century does not exist in a pure or absolute form, just waiting for historians to come and record it. Knowledge about the period, about any period (including our own), has to be 'produced' and this process of reseach production necessarily takes place within the context of modern academic life. This means that the research produced will bear the marks of modern academic conventions concerning standards of scholarship, the questions which are deemed worthy of further investigation, and the institutional bases for funding research projects.

Further, as we have seen, each of these histories of the eighteenth-century offers its own insights into the social and economic processes of the time: the account of eighteenth-century consumerism offers us insights into early acquisitiveness and social emulation as structured by the commercialization of fashion; the account of national economic performance offers us insights into economic growth conceived as an aggregate or economy-wide process. Whichever approach we take, our insights are both opened up and closed off by the characteristics of that account itself.

Thus, we could say that our knowledge of the economy or of society is constituted by a series of 'discourses' on these topics, discourses which structure our thinking and predispose us towards specific asssumptions and specific forms of enquiry. Note too that this notion of 'discourse' is also comparatively recent, but it is one that is increasingly being adopted in a number of different areas in social analysis, and you will meet it again in later chapters of this book.

2.3 STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

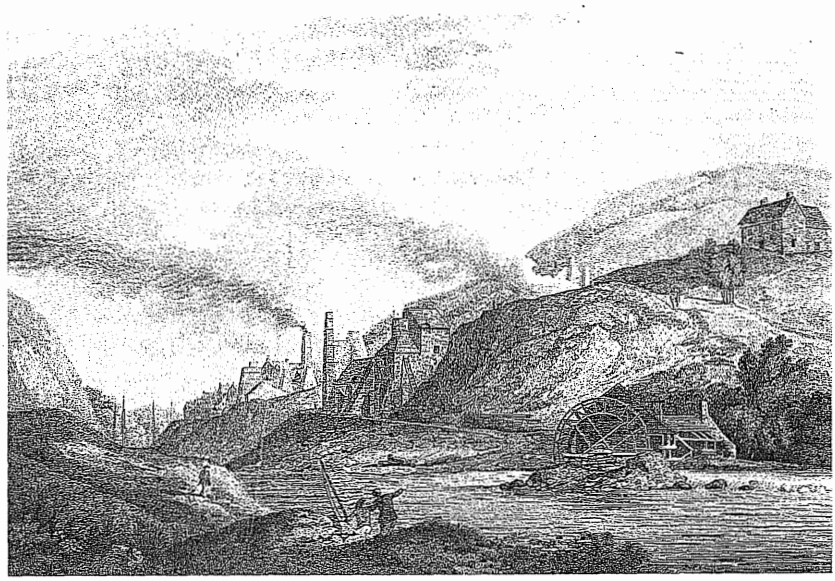
In trying to assess the extent to which an economy is becoming 'modernized', many economists and economic historians also look at changes in the structure of output; here they try to assess the relative importance of agriculture and industry as sources of employment and final output. It is generally thought that a 'pre-modern' economy is one where agriculture is more important than industry, whereas a 'modern' economy is one where industry is more important than agriculture. This is a very rough and ready rule of thumb as different economies develop according to their own particular characteristics, but it can prove a useful starting point.

If an increasing population was experiencing an increasing standard of living in the eighteenth century, where was this increased output coming from? In Reading B, a second extract by Roy Porter, you will find a brief summary of some of the sources of increased industrial output.

ACTIVITY 2 Now read **Reading B, 'Pre-modern manufacturing'**, by Roy Porter, and make brief notes on the main sources of increased output during the eighteenth century.

'cottage industry'

One of the remarkable features about the increased economic activity right up until the later part of the eighteenth century is that it was not based on major changes in technology nor on the reorganization of the workforce into factories, the features of change which characterized the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century. Change as Porter describes it here was on the whole small-scale and piecemeal; industry was labour-intensive and skill-intensive and was largely based on the work-unit of the household. This system economized on capital by operating on a low capital–output basis, and it was flexible in the face of unforeseeable changes in demand. With the opening up of both the domestic market and the international market, economies of scale were gradually incorporated and a host of minor improvements were made possible; in particular, the development of the canals and the turnpike system represented a considerable investment in transport which reduced transport costs and facilitated regional specialization. But industrial giants were the exception rather than the rule, and often these were linked (as is still the case) with large government defence contracts. This was to change somewhat later on, especially during the 1780s and beyond when the Lancashire cotton industry expanded as a result of the technical developments in spinning and weaving, and cotton became the single most important industry in Britain. Later on, in the nineteenth century, factory production and a factory workforce became more significant as features of industrial production but, even at this later stage, change was piecemeal and most workers were still craft workers rather than factory operatives tending the machinery of the new technology. Certainly during the eighteenth century, production remained labour-intensive and was based largely on the household and the small workshop. The main industries in the eighteenth century were the traditional ones of wool, leather and building, although by the end of the century cotton had caught up. The goods produced were mainly items intended for personal consumption; items such as textiles and clothing, leather goods and pottery, pots and pans, and the products of the Birmingham 'toy' trade such as buttons, buckles, jewellery, and a wide range of trinkets and novelties.



An iron works, Coalbrookdale, Shropshire, 1788.
Smoke from the stacks, but the scale is still near human-size.

An Iron Forge, by Joseph Wright of Derby, 1772: a family setting.
An artist's representation of a 'model' iron-founder with a water-driven tilt-hammer to save effort in the swing of the hammer. Fashion makes its presence felt here too.

Again, Porter's account focuses in on the kaleidoscopic details of change. If we want to get an overall picture of structural shifts in the economy, say between agriculture and manufacturing, we need to take a quantitative approach. In an economy such as the one reported by Porter, we would not expect the annual increases in industrial output to be very large, nor perhaps would we expect those increases to be much greater than for agricultural output, and this is the picture that the statistics endorse. Table 3.3 shows the growth rates for different sectors for the same periods that were shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.3 Annual growth rates for different sectors in eighteenth-century Britain (excluding government)

	1700–60 (per cent per annum)	1760–1800
Agriculture	0.47	0.43
Industry	0.71	1.81
Commerce	0.51	1.02
Services	0.38	0.83
Total private output	0.51	1.02
Output per head	0.13	0.19

Source: Jackson, 1990, p.232

Table 3.3 suggests that it was only in the later period that the performance of the different sectors began to diverge markedly. Although lagging behind industry and commerce, agriculture was growing at just under 0.5 per cent per year in the early period. This improved agricultural efficiency had its origins in the previous century; it resulted from improved husbandry and stock breeding, a more commercial approach to agricultural organization, and a keen interest in applying scientific techniques to agriculture. But in the later period agricultural growth was clearly overtaken by industrial and commercial growth, each of which exceeded one per cent per year; here the front runner is clearly industry with an annual growth rate of about 1.81 per cent.

The significance of these changes can also be seen in terms of the structure of output during the course of the eighteenth century. The statistics so far suggest an economy that was still marked by traditional features, with a small and unmodernized manufacturing sector, a large agricultural sector, and a large domestic service sector. It is difficult to be precise about the division of employment across these sectors, as much employment combined elements of more than one sector; for example, where the family was the unit of production, the domestic servant often performed the work of the agricultural labourer as well as of the tradesman's assistant. Table 3.4 shows estimates of the proportion of national output accounted for by the agricultural sector and the industrial/commercial sector for the years 1700, 1760 and 1800.

Table 3.4 Proportion of national output produced by the agricultural and industrial/commercial sectors in the eighteenth century (England and Wales)

	1700 %	1760 %	1800 %
Agriculture	40	34	35
Industry/commerce	33	37	40
All other sectors (including government, domestic services and rent)	27	29	25
Total	100	100	100

Source: Cole, 1981, p.64

Even keeping in mind the reservations about the reliability of these statistics, this table clearly shows how agriculture and industry/commerce switched over in importance during the course of the eighteenth century. In the early part of the century, agricultural output was pre-eminent; it accounted for about 40 per cent of national output, whereas industry and commerce together accounted for about a third. By the end of the century the position was reversed, with agriculture contributing about a third of the national product and industry/commerce contributing about 40 per cent. Thus, Table 3.4 illustrates the transformation that took place in the course of the eighteenth century. At the beginning of the period the economy was very largely an agricultural one, although this does not mean that it was stagnant. But by the end of the period the agricultural sector contributed a smaller share of total output than industry/commerce, and its rate of growth also fell way behind that of the industrial sector.

As the nineteeth century progressed these trends became even more marked. By the end of the nineteenth century the agricultural share fell below 10 per cent, and the combined share of industry and commerce amounted to something like two-thirds of national output. This is typical of the proportionate contribution of agriculture, industry and commerce that has often been thought to characterize the 'modern' economy; most of its employment and output derive from industry and commerce, which are increasingly organized on an international basis. This has been the pattern for economies such as the UK, the USA and many other advanced industrial capitalist societies, at least until the middle of the twentieth century, and it has provided a model for what is often denoted as a 'modern' economy. Since that time, however, the size of the industrial sector in many countries has shrunk and that of the service sector has grown considerably. Table 3.5 shows the relevant data for the UK, West Germany as it then was, France, the USA, and Japan for 1987, the most recent year available.

Table 3.5 shows that the movement towards a larger service sector and a smaller industrial sector can be discerned in all the countries shown. This change has led to discussions about the 'deindustrialization' of the

Table 3.5 Composition of output in the UK, W. Germany, France, the USA, and Japan, 1987

	UK %	W. Germany %	France %	USA %	Japan %
Agriculture	1.2	1.5	3.7	1.9	2.7
Industry	36.7	40.3	31.5	28.5	39.0
Services	62.1	58.2	64.8	69.6	58.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: *Basic Statistics of the Community*, 1990, p.41, 27th edn, Eurostat, Luxembourg

advanced capitalist countries where the manufacturing sectors fail to compete with the low-wage, newly industrializing countries of South East Asia. This change has focused attention on new ways of organizing the industrial sector, with a renewed emphasis on flexibility and technological innovation. It has also led to discussions of a 'post-industrial' society, thought to be structurally and culturally distinct from the 'modern' or 'industrial' society which characterized the UK for the century and a half or so from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. It is sometimes argued that this process of 'de-industrialization' is a disease peculiar to the UK, but note that Table 3.5 shows that the UK comes midway in terms of the relative sizes of the industrial and service sectors; West Germany and Japan both have larger industrial sectors and smaller service sectors than the UK, while France and the USA have smaller industrial sectors and larger service sectors.

So far these tables of statistics have painted a broad picture of the changing relative importance of agriculture and industry/commerce. In Table 3.4, the figures for industry and commerce were combined into a single sector, but to many eighteenth-century observers it was 'commerce' itself that seemed to provide the great impetus to growth. The acute contemporary observer Arthur Young estimated that commerce amounted to about 13 per cent of the national product in 1770 (leaving about 24 per cent for manufacture, mining and building) (Deane and Cole, 1967, p.156), but even by his time commerce was almost as much an international affair as a domestic one. During the course of the eighteenth century, exports increased more than fourfold, far faster than domestic output. International commerce was accompanied by an active colonial policy and a considerable amount of protective legislation intended to promote domestic interests:

> Commerce in an international setting was an acutely competitive affair, in which the full power of the States competing was exerted to strengthen the national economy. The struggle for raw materials and tropical commodities, as well as for markets and the carrying trade which served them, was central to international relations ... Every war during this period was in essence a commercial war ... (Langford, 1989, p.3)

Britain had for many years encouraged trade with old allies such as Portugal and Holland, and discouraged trade with old enemies such as France and Spain. This resulted in a complicated system of import tariffs to discourage imports (especially of what were seen as 'luxury' items), export bounties to promote exports, and colonial monopolies to encourage a favourable balance of colonial trade with the mother country. It meant that the British gentry got drunk on port (from Portugal) rather than on claret (from France), that aspiring ladies wore protected home-produced silk rather than French silk, and that colonial products such as tea and sugar became mainstays of the national diet as we saw earlier.

Thus, the state was seen to have an active role in maintaining British interests aboad. In normal years the expenditure of the state amounted to about 5 per cent of total national expenditure, but in extraordinary years associated with wartime, this could increase to 10–14 per cent of national expenditure. In spite of the active role of the state in pursuing international interests, the preference of the times was generally for fewer state restrictions at home, although this did not stop cartels from forming when the producers thought it was in their own interest.

2.4 CONCLUSION

This section has provided a broad view of the developing economy in the eighteenth century and has compared some of its structural characteristics with those of modern economies of the twentieth century. But in building up this picture we found that the canvas itself seemed to change shape depending on how it was being painted by the modern historians; we could say that different 'discourses' on the eighteenth century seemed to project us into different eighteenth-century worlds. The discourse on nascent consumerism in the eighteenth century seemed to provide a direct forerunner of twentieth-century consumerism, and here we could see the seeds of modernity, or even post-modernity itself. Porter's account of industrial activity, however, seemed to betoken an economy that was largely pre-modern, with its cottage industries and the absence of large-scale factory production. The cliometric discourse presented another view; here the quirks and details of the period were smoothed over to provide simple statistics for the aggregate economy over long historical periods.

The eighteenth century also seemed to become a less unified economic entity as we looked at it more closely, rather like an impressionist painting when studied close at hand. Agriculture was predominant in the early part of the century but it was gradually superseded by industry and commerce as the century progressed. Though the entire century became increasingly active in an economic sense, it was not until the later period that industrial output seemed to achieve a momentum of its own, but even here the introduction of new technology was slow and uneven. Descriptions of dramatic turning points in the 1780s which characterized earlier research seem now to have exaggerated the

position, and current historical research is more inclined to emphasize that the acceleration in growth was a gradual affair, both for the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Production was still largely organized on a household basis and this was only partially displaced by the factory system as the new century replaced the old.

An emphasis on the slow and piecemeal nature of the economic changes taking place is, however, still consistent with a recognition of the structural changes that were taking place in the eighteenth century as agriculture slowly became eclipsed by industry and commerce, a process of change that seemed to be more or less complete by the late nineteenth century. This structure then provided something of a model for modern industrial society, in spite of the variation across individual economies, but this pattern of output itself proved to be a historically transient form for advanced economies such as the UK. The passage of the twentieth century in its turn has shown that the sectoral composition of output is not a final or predetermined issue; as the industrial sector declines in importance and the service sector becomes a new source of dynamism and technological innovation, a new debate has emerged about the structural features of what has come to be known as 'post-industrial' society.

3 THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN ECONOMICS

3.1 ADAM SMITH

One of the most famous books of the eighteenth century is Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. This was not Adam Smith's first book although it is the book for which he is now largely remembered. In 1759, when still working as a professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow, Smith published *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, and it was this book that established his reputation as a major thinker and philosopher. On the basis of the reputation thus secured, Smith resigned his university appointment in 1764 to travel to France and Switzerland as tutor to a young Scottish nobleman, the Duke of Buccleuch. The strength of Smith's reputation was such that he was warmly received by the French *philosophes* and enjoyed the friendship and intellectual activities of the Parisian salons of the time. After returning from his travels, Smith received a generous pension and this enabled him to spend some considerable time working on *The Wealth of Nations* which was eventually published in 1776, the year in which the North American colonies achieved their independence.

Adam Smith (1723–90)

Writing on the eve of the Industrial Revolution, the celebrated Scottish professor who had been welcomed into the élite philosophical circles of France has seemed to epitomize the new, enlightened ways of thinking about the economy. In his account of the social history of the eighteenth century, Porter refers to Adam Smith as 'that high priest of capitalism' (1990, p.87), and an authority on Adam Smith writes that: 'The *Wealth of Nations* was adopted as the ideology of early liberal capitalism and its popularity may have been due as much to the way in which it accorded with the economic and political prejudices of the emergent bourgeoisie as to its intrinsic merits as a scholarly work' (Campbell, 1971, p.15). Thus, many commentators have read Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* as a prescient anticipation of the capitalist economy; it has seemed to be a book that extolled the benefits of the unregulated, profit-seeking market economy at a time when commercial market relations were becoming increasingly significant.

According to this view of *The Wealth of Nations*, its centrepiece is the analysis of the 'invisible hand', the mechanism by which the economic activities of profit-seeking individuals result in the greatest economic good for society as a whole. As Smith wrote of the profit-seeking individual: '... by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and

he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention' (Smith, 1976b, p.456). Although each individual is intending his own gain, it is argued that the overall effect is the promotion of the interest of society as a whole. Here is thought to lie the central core of the message of *The Wealth of Nations*: that there exists a fundamental harmony of interests between the activities of profit-seeking individuals and the general good of society as a whole. The remainder of this section will examine three aspects of the writings of Adam Smith that have achieved prominence as integral parts of this vision of the invisible hand: the competitive market (Section 3.2); the division of labour (Section 3.3); and the pursuit of self-interest (Section 3.4). This section will also consider very briefly how economics developed after Adam Smith (Section 3.5)

3.2 THE OPERATION OF THE FREE MARKET ECONOMY

By emphasizing the importance of profit-seeking and self-interest, Smith is thought to have been arguing in favour of free trade and against state involvement in the economy. The market mechanism works by allocating goods and resources by the free interplay of demand and supply, and so goods are produced only if they are thought to be profitable. In this situation, it is both unnecessary and inefficient for the state to take an active economic role. Smith's analysis of competitive markets and the formation of 'market price' has seemed to later economists to represent a high point in analytical precision. This analysis provides the core of Smith's 'allocation analysis', showing how resources in a capitalist economy are allocated by the operation of the price mechanism.

These points are illustrated in the passage from *The Wealth of Nations* reproduced as Reading C.

ACTIVITY 3 You should now read **Reading C, 'The market'**, from *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith.

In this passage Smith is showing how the competitive market price is responsive to the difference between demand and supply. If demand is greater than supply, then the market price will increase, and if demand is less than supply then market price falls. In the longer term, the outcome is that the market price will eventually settle down at the level of the natural price; that is, at the level of costs of production, even though short-term shortages and surpluses will push the market price either above it or below it.

The influence of this competitive market analysis has been immensely far-reaching. The notion of the invisible hand at work in the competitive market came to form a powerful basis for the nineteenth-century argument in favour of *laissez-faire,* the admonition that government should 'leave well alone'. According to this view, the capitalist

competitive market harnesses the natural self-interest of every individual person in such a way that the well-being of the society as a whole is promoted. If individuals are left alone to pursue their own profit, so the argument goes, the resulting outcome will be the most beneficial one.

The economic implication of this argument in favour of *laissez-faire* capitalism coincided with the obvious political inference to be made. As the competitive market, untrammelled by burdensome restrictions, would promote both individual prosperity and national prosperity, the state would be absolved from any duty of directing the economic affairs of private individuals, and would provide only the basic infrastructure of legal order, protection of private property — the linchpin of the system — and external defence. It was accepted that there would need to be some state provision of those items that could not be secured satisfactorily through the market. These items are sometimes known as public goods — goods such as education, transport and health services. Vital though these goods are, they are not supplied in sufficient quantity to all who need them when they are left to the free market, and so most modern economies have designed alternative methods of provision involving the state or other community-based organizations. Furthermore, the political liberties associated with the individual citizen were now seen to be part and parcel of a wider set of liberties connected with the use of private property and participation in competitive markets. This view seemed in many ways also to be a direct descendant of the writings of John Locke, according to which certain liberties and rights in the use of private property were 'natural' rights that every person had and which could not without injustice be encroached upon by the state.

The consequences of this view of the 'economy' as a self-regulating mechanism operating independently of the state were crucial for the future development of economic theory. Earlier concepts of the economy as an aspect of the political power of the state implied that the directing hand of the statesman was essential to the economic well-being of the state, but Smith's concept of the invisible hand seemed to make the statesman almost redundant in an economic sense. In the earlier writings of mercantilism, the statesman had performed vital functions for the economy, controlling its direction and securing a favourable balance of trade. Similarly, earlier paternalist concepts of the moral obligation of the state in ensuring a plentiful supply of provisions to the populace also seemed to become outmoded in the face of this new reliance on market provision. The new view of the competitive market as economic regulator meant that economic activities could be conceptualized independently of the role of the government in a way that had not been possible before *The Wealth of Nations*. A new understanding of the economy was thus being developed, one that enabled the 'economy' to be regarded as a separate domain or area of social life that was largely distinct from the political power and moral duties of the state.

As the process of industrialization gathered momentum in the nineteenth century, and as social and economic change became more pronounced,

the issue of the role of the state became more pressing. The new analysis of the economy deriving from this reading of *The Wealth of Nations* was one that placed the state largely outside the main sphere of economic operations, and this had enormous repercussions for the actual role of the state during that time of social upheaval. It is arguable that the state was always more actively involved in the nineteenth-century economy than the official opinion of the times either sought or recognized, but the prevailing views about the limited economic role of the government did have a far-reaching effect on British public opinion. It is for this reason that Campbell could argue, as we have seen, that the influence of *The Wealth of Nations* resulted not only from its intrinsic merits as a scholarly work but also from its popularity as the 'ideology of early liberal capitalism'. And these political effects are still providing powerful reverberations in the last decades of the twentieth century, when a number of governments in both Eastern and Western Europe have been involved in a series of disengagements from their national economies. In the UK, the Conservative governments from 1979 initiated a series of moves intended to reduce government involvement in and responsibility for the overall economic performance of the country.

3.3 THE DIVISION OF LABOUR

Another area in which *The Wealth of Nations* has seemed to have its finger firmly on the pulse of the future is that concerning the economic advantages deriving from the 'division of labour'. Smith argues that the division of labour had made possible an enormous increase in the productivity of labour in what he terms 'opulent' countries. There are two aspects to this division of labour. First, there is the division of labour between different trades. Second, there is the division of labour within the manufacture of a single good; here Smith provides the example of pin-making, where the operation has been divided into as many as eighteen separate activities. The second extract from *The Wealth of Nations* (Reading D) is a very famous one which provides an account of the division of labour.

ACTIVITY 4

Now read **Reading D, 'The division of labour'**, by Adam Smith, which has been taken from the opening chapters of *The Wealth of Nations*.

As you read, make brief notes on what Smith has to say on:

1. the particular factors causing the increased output resulting from the division of labour;
2. the range and quality of the goods available to ordinary working people;
3. the factors which determine the extent to which the division of labour may actually be carried out.

1 In this extract Smith argues that the greatest improvements in the productive powers of labour have been the result of the division of labour, and he spends some time describing how this occurs in a trifling manufacture such as pin-making. He refers to the eighteen or so distinct operations involved, and argues that the division of labour increases a man's output from between one and twenty pins a day to about 4,800 pins a day. Smith gives the particular factors that cause this increased output as: the increased dexterity arising from the repetition of simple tasks; the saving of time lost in passing from one task to another; and the invention of specialized machines which this close division of work is thought to encourage.

2 The effect of this division of labour for the range and quality of goods is startling, and brings to mind Roy Porter's description of the shopping possibilities that developed during the eighteenth century. A consequence of this worldwide division of labour is that even a 'common artificer or day-labourer in a civilised and thriving country' has access to a wide range of commodities that represent the labour inputs of many thousands of other workers. Thus, even an ordinary workman takes for granted the extensive worldwide division of labour involved in providing his basic articles of consumption. The result of this division of labour for the workman's overall standard of living, Smith argues, is that, though the difference between his lifestyle and that of the rich in his own country might seem great, it is probably less than the difference between his own material standards and those of an 'African king, the absolute master of the lives and liberties of ten thousand naked savages'. Smith's acceptance of the cultural determinants of this comparison with an 'African king' points to the wide interest of the time in the experiences of other societies, something which will be explored critically in Chapter 6; the point to notice here is that Smith argues that even the humble day-labourer is the unknowing beneficiary of a worldwide division of labour.

3 The extent to which this division of labour can actually be carried out in any society depends on the extent of the market. A porter, for example, cannot find sufficient employment in a village, and in lone houses and small villages every farmer must also be butcher, baker and brewer to his own family. In Chapter 3 of *The Wealth of Nations*, from which the last two paragraphs of Reading D are taken, Smith goes on to recognize the productive possibilities opening up in the move towards larger urban centres and the improved transport and communications that were illustrated in Section 2 above. Smith's argument also provides powerful ammunition for the opening up of markets on both a regional and international level as, the larger the market, the greater are the possibilities for an increased division of labour and further improvements in productivity.

The two extracts from *The Wealth of Nations* in Readings C and D thus suggest a view of Smith's writings as endorsing the new market-orientated commerce of his own day and also presaging the later events of the Industrial Revolution. The passages on the competitive market

take it for granted that any person will use his own property to his own individual advantage; in this Smith was very much following the general approach of the eighteenth century, which placed considerable importance on the right to use one's own property. Indeed, for Smith one of the social benefits of a commercial society was that the monetized relations replacing the older relations of servitude and dependence were conducive to greater liberty for all, including the lower ranks of society; but note that this independence was based on a generalized self-interest.

3.4 SELF-INTEREST

In *The Wealth of Nations* Smith discusses self-interest in the context of the need to save and increase the stock of capital so that production can be expanded. Smith also discusses ambition and self-interest in the context of his account of moral philosophy in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* first published in 1759 but extensively revised shortly before his death in 1790. In *The Wealth of Nations,* self-interest is discussed more narrowly in terms of its economic effects. Reading E, the third and final extract from Adam Smith's writings, has been selected from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* where Smith discusses ambition and the desire to 'better our condition'.

ACTIVITY 5

You should now read **Reading E, 'The origin of ambition'**, which has been selected from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* to give you the opportunity to read something of Smith's moral evaluation of social and economic ambition. As you read this piece, make brief notes on the basic reason why people desire to better their condition.

In this extract Smith argues that ambition is based on a person's desire to be approved by others. It is not ease but vanity, Smith argues, that promotes people to wish to better their condition. Smith says: 'To be observed, to be attended to, to be taken notice of with sympathy, complacency, and approbation, are all the advantages which we can propose to derive from it. It is the vanity, not the ease, or the pleasure, which interests us.' Smith's argument is that it is not the pursuit of riches or luxuries for their own sake that attracts people, but the effect which the possession of these items will have on other people. For this reason it is the conspicuous consumption of the rich which marks them off and guarantees the attention and approbation of other people. From an economic point of view, Smith is here referring to what modern economists refer to as 'positional goods'; that is, status goods which by definition cannot be owned by a large number of people without losing something of their appeal. Thus, Smith's analysis of human ambition is not restricted to its economic dimension. He argues that people very often strive after material goods not for the sake of those goods

themselves but because of the social esteem and respect that they think such wealth will bring them. In this sense, such goods are not so much an end in themselves, but a means to an end, that of social approbation.

Adam Smith's writings on the economy formed just a part of his larger intellectual interests, which included moral philosophy, jurisprudence, history, science, rhetoric and the study of fine writing. In spite of the comprehensiveness of Smith's interests, however, the separation between his writings on moral philosophy (in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*) and his writings on the economy (in *The Wealth of Nations*) has set the pattern for much economic writing since which has aspired to join the scientific rather than the moral or social approach to economic analysis. This separation has reinforced the view that *The Wealth of Nations* can be read independently of Smith's other works and that it exemplifies the new Enlightenment approach to a rational and scientific study of society. It has also provided a famous precedent for the later professionalization of economics as a discipline purportedly characterized by a scientific rather than a moral approach to economic issues.

3.5 AFTER ADAM SMITH

Adam Smith's analysis was developed by other writers in the course of the nineteenth century, although most of these later writers took a narrower approach to the economy which excluded a historical or moral dimension.

One such writer was the economist David Ricardo (1772–1823). He took a more abstract approach to economic issues, and was particularly concerned to refine what he took to be the glimmer of a labour theory of value in *The Wealth of Nations*. In developing his own labour theory of value in his book *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1817), Ricardo put at centre stage the issue of the distribution of income between the three main classes of society (landlords, capitalists and labourers) in his analysis of the relationship between rent, profits and wages.

Karl Marx (1818–83) challenged Smith in a number of different ways and argued that *The Wealth of Nations* was essentially an ideological defence of emerging capitalism. *Das Kapital* was published in 1867 and translated into English in 1887 under the title *Capital*; in this book Marx argued that capitalism was characterized not by an underlying harmony of interests but by an irreconcilable conflict of interest between capital and labour. Marx's analysis therefore challenged the doctrine of the invisible hand, and instead emphasized the exploitation of the working class and the revolutionary need to overthrow the capitalist system.

In the twentieth century, one of the greatest challenges to the doctrine of the invisible hand came from John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946), whose most famous book *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and*

Money was published in 1936 during a period of high unemployment. The issue that Keynes addressed was not exploitation but unemployment; he argued that, contrary to the doctrine of the invisible hand, it may not always be the case that the pursuit of individual interest is consonant with the general interest. In particular, Keynes argued that the failure of 'aggregate demand' is the fundamental cause of prolonged unemployment in the modern economy, and that governments should take upon themselves the responsibility for increasing aggregate demand and reducing unemployment. Keynes' analysis was intended as an answer to the socialist challenge; by making capitalism function more efficiently and more equitably, it was thought that its revolutionary overthrow would become unnecessary.

Keynes' doctrines became influential both at the level of government economic policy and at the level of popular debate, but by the late 1970s the twin problems of 'stagflation' — stagnation and inflation — were associated with a new anti-Keynesianism. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, a new free-market and anti-statist approach had become dominant in many countries including the UK, and this approach explicitly looked back to the tradition of *The Wealth of Nations* for political and analytical support. Adam Smith was then popularly cited not only as the 'father' of economics but as the original architect of a free-market, capitalist order in which the economic role of the state would be minimal.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Section 3 of this chapter has shown how Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* has been understood as the beginning of a new kind of scientific analysis of the capitalist market economy. In particular, the section has outlined the theory of the invisible hand as an account of the capitalist market mechanism, the division of labour as an explanation of the sources of increased productiveness, and the pervasiveness and strength of the motive to 'better one's condition' as a spur to individual profit-seeking behaviour. In laying down this framework for the objective study of the capitalist economy, Smith's influence was also enhanced by the fact that he correctly anticipated the actual development of the UK economy. Writing before the period when the largely agricultural economy of the UK turned into the workshop of the world, Smith was able to point to just those developments that were going to prove decisive for the industrial growth of the capitalist economy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The power and appeal of *The Wealth of Nations* at both the economic and the ideological level are thus thought to be a direct result of the timely nature of its analysis.

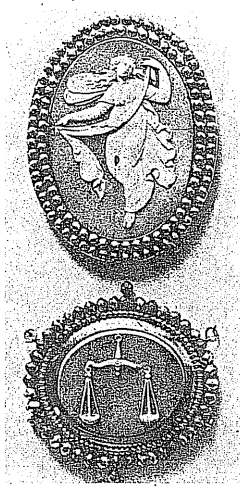
4 A MODERN ECONOMICS?

Seeing the analysis of *The Wealth of Nations* as a direct response to changes in the economy gives a robustness to the account of its enormous influence; as a tract for the times it spoke directly to the economic interests of its own day, and in the same vein it is thought to speak directly to us today. This approach to the founding or 'classic' texts of an academic discipline is a common one, but it is a view that is not well borne out by recent research. In this section I shall draw on recent research which has attempted to understand Adam Smith's writings as part of the broader context of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, where questions of commerce and wealth were indissolubly linked with questions of history, jurisprudence, law, government and morality (Winch, 1978; Haakonssen, 1981; Hont and Ignatieff, 1983; Teichgraeber, 1986; Brown, 1991).

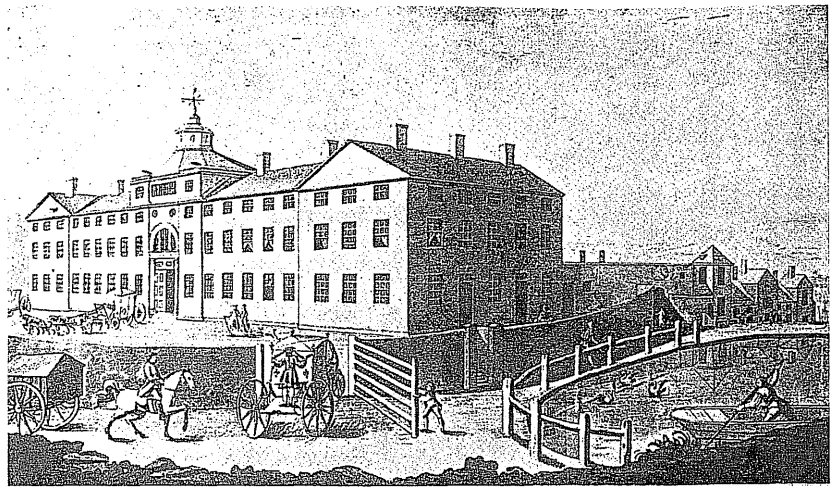
4.1 ANTICIPATING THE MODERN ECONOMY?

This newer approach to Adam Smith's writings points up a number of weaknesses in the traditional interpretation presented in Section 3. First, the traditional interpretation results in a process of 'historical foreshortening' that overlooks the differences between the modern period and the earlier period when *The Wealth of Nations* was written. Seeing *The Wealth of Nations* as an embryonic description of 'early liberal capitalism' tends to exaggerate the extent to which the eighteenth century of Smith's own day had already embarked on an irreversible process of modern economic transformation. This reduces the historical distance between *The Wealth of Nations* and our own period, thus contributing to our sense that such a book, although written over 200 years ago, may yet speak directly to us now. But as we saw in Section 2 of this chapter, the process of economic change in the eighteenth century was slow and uneven. The economy of the eighteenth century was a pre-industrial economy, and it is anachronistic to think that Adam Smith could have had in mind a later modern industrial economy.

If we reconsider the passage on the division of labour in Reading D and read it in the context of the small-scale, unmodernized state of British industry at that time, a different impression is given. In this extract, we have already seen that Smith was capturing something of the new developments of his own day, but, at the same time, we should note what he does *not* say. Smith's discussion is framed in terms of a trifling manufacture involving very little in the way of capital investment, where the production process is very labour-intensive. Smith describes how 'One man draws out the wire, another straights it, a third cuts it, a fourth points it ... ' etc. In the middle of the eighteenth century, pin production was organized as a cottage industry, with a hundred or more pin 'manufactories' employing a handful or so of workers each, although much of this work was located in workhouses; the little pin manufactory that Smith himself had apparently witnessed employed only ten men. It



Wedgwood cameos in Boulton cut steel frames



Matthew Boulton's Soho Manufactory, near Birmingham, *c.*1781: a 'model' eighteenth-century manufactory

Boulton's manufactory was something of a showpiece for its forward-looking approach. In 1770, about 700 workers were employed, producing a range of metal goods, including 'toy' goods such as the Wedgwood cameos set in steel frames shown above. James Watt's famous 'lap' engine, which used steam power for driving the laps or polishing buffs, was not introduced until 1788, twelve years after the publication of *The Wealth of Nations*.

was not until the nineteenth century that machine production of pins was introduced and it was this, rather than the division of labour as such, that vastly increased labour productivity in pin production (Pratten, 1980). Thus, what is *not* included in Smith's account is the impact of machine production on the division of labour and how this affects the size of factories and the structure of industry. We should therefore be cautious about assuming that the example of the pin manufactory provides an astute anticipation of the enormous productive potential that lurked in the shadows of the Industrial Revolution of the future. In the case of the division of labour, as elsewhere, Smith's examples are typically of small-scale, low-technology industries requiring little in the way of capital equipment, industries that were more characteristic of the small-scale manufactories and cottage industries of his own time than the factories that came in the following century.

A second major problem with the traditional view of Adam Smith is that it is based on an implicit selection of those passages that seem to speak directly to an audience of modern economists and a relative neglect of those passages that fail to do so. Thus, those passages that refer to the debates that were current in the eighteenth century gradually become invisible as they become meaningless to later readers who are unfamiliar with those earlier debates. This means that many passages containing economic arguments, historical comparisons, political analyses, juristic comment, or moral assessments that relate to an eighteenth-century context, are simply ignored as irrelevant. In this way, the main thrust of

the argument of the book is reconstructed retrospectively in terms of the interests and preconceptions of a later age.

In interpreting *The Wealth of Nations* as a signpost for the emerging liberal capitalist order, this implicit selection of passages is based on their congruence with modern notions of the superior productiveness and underlying harmony of the free-market order as represented by the invisible hand. But *The Wealth of Nations* also contains passages criticizing the effects of the division of labour and the unfettered pursuit of individual self-interest. The passage on the division of labour which is reproduced as Reading D is a very famous one; less famous is the following passage from a later chapter on the harmful effects of the division of labour:

> The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects too are, perhaps, always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become. The torpor of his mind renders him, not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgment concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life. Of the great and extensive interests of his country, he is altogether incapable of judging; and unless very particular pains have been taken to render him otherwise, he is equally incapable of defending his country in war.
> (Smith, 1976b, p.782)

A life spent repeating a few simple operations is thought to lead to stupidity and ignorance; the torpor of the mind thereby induced, Smith argues, renders a person incapable of entering into rational conversation and unable to make moral or political judgments. A man's natural courage is corrupted, making him incapable of defending his country. Smith's condemnation here is unequivocal and contrasts strongly with an idealized picture presented later in *The Wealth of Nations* of a person's intellectual and moral capabilities in the early stages of society before the advent of commercial society. This shows that Smith's attitude towards commercial society was not one of undiluted approval. He recognized and appreciated the improved productive power arising from the division of labour, especially as this led to an improvement in the living conditions of the poor, but he clearly disapproved of what he saw as the intellectual, moral and martial impoverishment of the 'inferior ranks' of society in the commercial stage of society.

Furthermore, as this chapter proceeds, Smith compares the degraded 'inferior ranks' of his own society with both the 'barbarous' nations which preceded commercial society and with the ancient republics of

Greece and Rome. These comparisons show that Smith admired the classical notion of an active and virtuous citizenry, which included the capacity to bear arms in defence of the republic. Smith argued that, in the commercial stage of society, the inevitable division of labour had proceeded to such a point that a professional army had become a more practical proposition than arming the citizenry. Nevertheless, the classical model remained something of an ideal for Smith, and it was one against which the actual experience of commercial society compared unfavourably in a number of respects. In these passages, Smith is responding to a specifically eighteenth-century context formed partly by a new interest in comparing the development of society through a number of different historical stages, and also by an older discourse on the nature of 'civic virtue' which tended to take the ancient republics of Greece and Rome as models for a particular kind of active and participatory citizenship for a favoured male élite. Smith's own framework for assessing the effects of the division of labour therefore derived from a set of concerns that were specific to the eighteenth century.

Smith's solution to the degrading effects of the division of labour was the public provision of elementary school education for the poor, which would compensate to some extent for the debilitating effects of the division of labour, as well as equipping young minds more effectively for later adult work. Smith's argument here is that this provision should be made irrespective of any direct economic advantage that may accrue to the state, although in his view there would be a considerable advantage. In particular, Smith points to the political and public order implications of having a decent and respectable populace which is able to make political judgments calmly, free of either political or religious faction.

This example shows how ready Smith was to recommend state involvement where arguments of social benefit or political expediency seemed to call for it, and is a far cry from the traditional picture of him as the opponent of all state activities. In spite of references in his writings to the harmony of interests in society, there are also many references to the conflict of interests between different groups and classes in society, and there are also many practical instances throughout *The Wealth of Nations* of cases where the state should intervene in one way or another, in addition to what Smith saw as the three basic state functions of defence, justice, and maintenance of public institutions and works.

A third problem with the traditional interpretation of Adam Smith is that it is blind to the textual nuances evident in Smith's writings, even in those passages that seem to speak more directly to a later time. This leads it to overlook the range of other influences at work in Smith's texts that make the meaning of even these familiar passages much more problematic than the traditional interpretation accepts. As an example of this, consider again Readings C and E from Adam Smith's writings, which you studied in Sections 3.2 and 3.4.

ACTIVITY 6 Taking the first extract on the operation of the competitive market in Reading C, re-read this passage and make a note of any words or expressions that you would not expect to see in a modern piece of economic analysis.

This is not an easy activity. Having already read the extract as a piece of modern economic analysis, it is not easy to re-read it looking for elements that stand apart from modern economics.

As I re-read this passage I noted two expressions that I would not expect to see in a modern piece of economic writing. The first expression is that of 'natural price', an expression that would not even occur to a modern economist. The traditional interpretation of *The Wealth of Nations* regards this as a reference to 'long run costs'; the passage is thus taken to mean that in a competitive market the market price will eventually settle down at the level of long run costs, a result that is fully consonant with modern economic analysis. But the expression derives from a long tradition of 'natural law' treatises where the natural price is discussed along with the market price. Indeed, Smith first used this expression in the course of his lectures on jurisprudence, law and government, which were delivered at the University of Glasgow during the period 1752–64; these lectures were not published during Smith's lifetime but students' notes have since been published, providing modern scholars with the content of these lectures (Smith, 1978). The natural law treatises are in turn linked to the broader tradition of Stoic philosophy, a philosophy which greatly influenced Adam Smith. Within the Stoic philosophy, a person is enjoined to live 'according to nature' and so the attribute 'natural' was permeated with normative and philosophical overtones. The natural law tradition is also linked to mediaeval discussions of the 'just price', and for this reason some commentators have argued that the expression 'natural price' carries with it some of the moral resonances of the earlier just price discussions.

The second expression that I would not expect to see in a modern piece of economic writing is that of the 'wanton luxury' of those demanding a good, which pushes its market price above the natural price. Modern economic analysis accepts that high-income consumers have a relatively large influence on market outcomes, but the expression 'wanton luxury' carries with it a set of value judgments that modern economists would normally avoid. The expression can however be located within the context of eighteenth-century mercantilist and moral debates about the effect of 'luxury' (i.e. consumerism) on morals, manners and the employment of labour. A famous contribution to this debate was Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* (1714), which argued that private vices (i.e. 'luxury' or consumerism) lead to public benefits (i.e. increased demand for goods and hence increased employment).

ACTIVITY 7 Now look again at the third of the Smith extracts, Reading E, from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Re-read this long paragraph, and consider what you think is Smith's attitude towards the ambition to 'better our condition'. Do you think that the tone of the piece changes as it progresses?

Stylistically this passage is more complex than much of *The Wealth of Nations*. Consider the place where Smith asks from whence arises the emulation which runs through all the different ranks of men. Read the answer which follows directly ('To be observed, to be attended to ... ' etc.), and consider whether you think that Smith is endorsing this answer in the sense of justifying or defending ambition.

It seems to me that the tone changes markedly in the course of this long paragraph. The paragraph starts by appearing to identify with the man of ambition; the voice in which the text is couched is that of the first person plural, which seems to include us all in the scope of the human naturalness of ambition. But in the course of the paragraph there is a shift to a more detached voice which refers to the man of ambition in the third person and, with critical reserve, notes that ambition inevitably involves anxiety, mortification and the loss of ease and security.

In a later passage Smith refers to 'wealth and greatness' as 'mere trinkets of frivolous utility, no more adapted for procuring ease of body or tranquility of mind than the tweezer-cases of the lover of toys' (1976a, p.181). He also argues that power and riches are 'enormous and operose machines contrived to produce a few trifling conveniencies to the body' (ibid., pp.182–3). Here we see Smith the moral philosopher inveighing against the consumerism of his own time and the futility of worldly ambition by deploying the language and argument of Stoic philosophy. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* there are many references to the Stoics, whose philosophy influenced Smith more deeply than any other, although he did not accept it in its entirety. According to the Stoic philosophy, a person's happiness and virtue are not dependent on material well-being; a person may be happy and virtuous in a cottage as well as a palace, more so most likely, and Smith generally went along with this view.

Thus, recent research on Adam Smith has argued that the traditional interpretation of his writings is inadequate, and this section has suggested some of the ways in which the traditional interpretation leads to historical foreshortening, retrospective selectivity, and textual blindnesses. Different writers within the research approach outlined in this section stress different aspects of this, but what they all share is an awareness of the historical complexity of Adam Smith's writings. Drawing on the notion of 'discourse' from Section 2, we could say that the new approach attempts to understand Adam Smith's writings as a distinct form of discourse according to its own terms of reference and its own framework of assumptions. This means that it has to be situated

with respect to other discourses of the eighteenth century in order to identify its own internal points of reference which determine its meaning. As we saw in this section, this implies that Adam Smith's discourse can be understood only with respect to other writings of the eighteenth century and earlier, writings such as the natural law discourse, the mercantilist discourse, and the stoic discourse. It also implies that the detailed linguistic and stylistic features of Adam Smith's writings are also significant.

If Adam Smith was not the 'prophet of capitalism', how are we to understand *The Wealth of Nations*? The following section will present a brief account of an alternative reading.

4.2 THE SYSTEM OF NATURAL LIBERTY

One of the objects of enquiry during the Enlightenment was the idea of social progress and the way that a society's laws, government and mode of subsistence were uniquely linked. Underlying this interest was a concern with the apparently unstable or cyclical nature of much historical development. We have seen how Smith was fascinated with the ancient Greek and Roman republics, but these republics eventually fell into decline or absolutism and were overtaken by other forms of government. Within the mercantilist discourse too, concern was expressed about the long-term course of international trade; it was feared that a rich country would eventually find itself unable to compete internationally unless the statesman intervened. This raised a serious question about the long-term trajectory of the commercial system in which Smith himself lived. What was the place of international trade in the progress of 'opulence' — Smith's own term for economic growth — and what were the respective roles for agriculture and manufactures?

Smith's answer to this problem was to propose a scheme of the 'natural' progress of opulence; that is, a scheme whereby the natural order of economic progression for any country, reflecting people's natural preferences, was also the best possible order of development. In this way, a system of 'natural liberty', where economic agents would choose freely how to use their economic property, would best promote a country's opulence. In this scheme of development, Smith argued that agriculture was the sector that would inevitably be developed first. He based his claim on the idea of a natural division of labour between the country and the towns, in which the development of the towns would necessarily be subsequent to the development of agriculture which produced the food and raw materials required by the towns. The sector which would naturally be developed next was that of domestic manufactures, which was responsible for working up the raw materials into the goods required by the domestic population. According to this scheme, foreign trade would be developed last in the sequence and only when the needs of domestic agriculture and manufactures required it. Foreign trade was thus seen as following the development of domestic output rather than leading it:

> According to the natural course of things, therefore, the greater part of the capital of every growing society is, first, directed to agriculture, afterwards to manufactures, and last of all to foreign commerce. This order of things is so very natural, that in every society that had any territory, it has always, I believe, been in some degree observed.
> (Smith, 1976b, p.380)

When Smith then analysed the actual development of Europe he found that this 'natural' order had been inverted by the mercantilist policies of Europe which had developed the towns before the country, and promoted foreign commerce before domestic production was ready for it. This inversion of the natural sequence of development, Smith argued, resulted in an 'unnatural and retrograde order' where agriculture had been relatively neglected in the mercantilist race for exploiting new foreign markets. Smith of course poured scorn on the mercantilist concern with the balance of trade and the beggar-my-neighbour attitudes that this had fostered. Smith argued that it was always in a country's best economic interest to buy from the cheapest supplier and devote its own resources to producing what it could produce most efficiently at lowest cost. Exceptions there may be for reasons of national security, but on straight economic grounds Smith argued that trade protection and colonial monopolies could not pay their way.

Smith therefore charged the mercantilist system with leading governments into misconceived policies, but note that his arguments were based on the superiority of agriculture over manufactures, and manufactures over foreign trade. In the absence of government restrictions and in the absence of the monopoly with the North American colonies, Smith argued that more resources would be devoted first to agriculture and then to domestic manufactures and that this rerouting of resources would be beneficial in promoting opulence. By arguing for free trade Smith was not promoting trade and commerce, but was opposing what he saw as their artificial and harmful overdevelopment.

This interpretation makes it easier to understand how Smith could speak so harshly about manufacturers and traders, masters and employers. Throughout *The Wealth of Nations* there are adverse comments on the 'mean and rapacious spirit' of manufacturers and traders, comments that fall into place when it is realized that *The Wealth of Nations* was not written as a eulogy to trade and manufactures but as an analysis of their undue pervasiveness and influence. Smith spoke bitterly of the activities of manufacturers and traders, and he advised that any proposal for a new law or regulation on trade 'ought always to be listened to with great precaution' because it comes from 'an order of men, whose interest is never exactly the same with that of the publick, who have generally an interest to deceive and even to oppress the publick, and who accordingly have, upon many occasions, both deceived and oppressed it' (Smith, 1976b, p.267). These passages show that Smith was not putting forward a simple-minded

theory of the invisible hand, according to which the pursuit of individual interest always resulted in a benefit to the public interest. Smith tended to be somewhat sceptical of the motivations and the claims made by any particular order of men, whether they were manufacturers, the clergy, professors or statesmen, and his general stance on many issues of policy was one of sceptical analyst rather than ardent reformer.

As Smith argued that the 'natural' order of development from agriculture through manufactures to commerce would be pursued in the absence of government intervention, he was able to provide a scheme of economic development, based on his system of natural liberty, that was not dependent on state direction. As we have seen, however, this does not imply that Smith saw no role for the government, nor does it imply that he wanted a sudden dismantling of the existing regulations on trade. Smith's preference was always for gradual change that would take public opinion into acount, even where he felt that opinion to be misguided.

Britain's dependence on foreign trade continued unabated into the nineteenth century and beyond. At the end of the twentieth century one of the weak features of the UK economy is its ability to provide enough exports to pay for imports, a trend which appears to be worsening. But economists do not now hold to the view that there is a natural or normal course of development from agriculture to manufactures to commerce that every economy has to follow. Furthermore, economists do not now agree with Smith that agriculture, taken by itself, is the most beneficial form of economic activity. Here Smith was influenced by a group of French writers who have come to be known as the physiocrats, and who formed a group around the physician François Quesnay. These writers were active in the 1760s when Adam Smith was visiting France as tutor to the young Duke of Buccleuch. The physiocrats had argued that only the agricultural sector was productive in producing a net product out of which taxes to the government could be paid. Smith disagreed with the physiocratic argument that all sectors other than agriculture were unproductive, but in formulating his criticisms of their theory he adopted the physiocrats' approach of identifying different sectors according to their contribution to society's annual revenue. Whereas the physiocrats argued that only agriculture contributes to annual revenue, Smith argued that all sectors contribute, but that agriculture contributes the most, followed by manufactures, followed by commerce and trade.

Thus, the theoretical basis of Smith's conception of the natural progress of opulence was derived in part from the physiocrats; this was because Smith partly adopted their own perspective in categorizing and ranking different sectors of the economy, even as he was developing his own criticisms of their theories. Here, then, we see another example of how *The Wealth of Nations* derives from and can be understood only in terms of its relationship with other discourses of the eighteenth century. The physiocrats' approach is one that rapidly fell into disfavour; by the early nineteenth century their theories were being heavily criticized and

little of their work found its way into mainstream economics, although Marx developed the notion of productive and unproductive labour which Smith derived from the physiocrats. These sections of *The Wealth of Nations* have become largely neglected areas of his book. Smith's analysis of the inversion of the natural progress of opulence as the basis for his extended criticisms of the mercantile system has thus slipped from sight in many of the interpretations of *The Wealth of Nations*. Conversely, because Smith's analysis of the competitive market (reviewed above in section 3.2) is a form of analysis that modern commentators can make sense of in terms of their own understanding of demand and supply, it has been reinterpreted as the most prominent feature of his system of natural liberty.

Thus, what we see happening is that those parts of *The Wealth of Nations* that seem to relate most readily to modern forms of economic analysis are the parts that are emphasized in modern interpretations of Smith's work, and those parts that refer to other forgotten or neglected approaches slip gradually from view. In this way, over a period of time, the picture of *The Wealth of Nations* that has emerged is one that is made consonant with modern interests and perspectives.

5 CONCLUSION: SIGNPOSTING THE FUTURE?

One reason why the Enlightenment period is so challenging is that it seems to present social science with an account of its own origins. By searching for its origins, modern social science attempts to understand the course of its own development and hence arrive at a deeper understanding of its present state of knowledge. But this chapter has argued that we have no direct entry route into the eighteenth century, into either the course of its economic development or its writings about economic development. Any intellectual process of exploring the eighteenth century and its literary products must take place within a discursive framework of one sort or another that provides us with a way of reading and understanding those eighteenth-century materials.

In the case of the economic changes taking place in the eighteenth century, we reviewed two different approaches, each of which may be seen as a different kind of historical discourse. The discourse on nascent consumerism provided us with one way of understanding changing attitudes to the acquisition and display of material goods; it provides an interpretation of diverse materials such as newspaper advertisements, fashion reports, and retailing developments, and the output of satirists such as Hogarth, within the same unifying discursive framework. The statistical analysis of the economic historians or cliometricians represents another kind of historical discourse; employing modern economic theories and statistical methods, modern estimation techniques are used to construct a unified account of the

momentum of economic development from the scattered data of the eighteenth century.

Similarly, in the case of Adam Smith's writings, or Adam Smith's discourse if you like, alternative interpretative strategies were reviewed. Section 3 outlined a traditional reading of Adam Smith's discourse which located it firmly within the context of what were perceived to be immanent changes in economic activity. According to this interpretation, *The Wealth of Nations* was a signpost for the newly emerging liberal capitalist order which became pre-eminent in the nineteenth century. According to this approach, Adam Smith is also regarded as the 'father' of modern economics; by this is meant that his work laid the analytical foundations on which modern economics has been built. A sign of his own times and a sign of the future, Adam Smith's writings were seen as the fountainhead and guiding spirit for an entirely new economic order.

But Section 4 of this chapter argued that Smith's own writings do not unambiguously lend support to such an interpretation. Smith's own system of natural liberty was based not only on the traditional analysis of the competitive market, but more signficantly on the natural progress of opulence from agriculture to manufactures to commerce. The guiding hand of the statesman was replaced by the invisible hand, but this still allowed scope for state involvement in the economy in a number of ways. Smith was so far from being an uncritical supporter of an economic system motivated entirely by self-interest that he frequently made harsh judgments on the activities of employers, manufacturers and dealers; and he was so far from recommending an expansion of commerce and manufactures that he argued instead that these sectors had been overdeveloped in relation to agriculture, a more beneficial activity.

It was argued further that *The Wealth of Nations* has been interpreted in terms of modern discourses on the economy and that in this process large sections of the book have been overlooked. The effect of this approach has been to reconstruct *The Wealth of Nations* in the image of the concerns of a later time, and thence to find in it the origins of a later course of development. The alternative account of Adam Smith's discourse that was presented in Section 4 was one that involved using a different interpretative matrix; here Adam Smith's discourse was interpreted in terms of other discourses of the Enlightenment which were held to account for the particular positioning and textual resonances of the arguments of *The Wealth of Nations*. For example, Smith's own moral evaluation of commercial society was interpreted in terms of his attachment to Stoicism and his interest in jurisprudence, and was not located on a spectrum of left–right political positions which mark the ideological parameters of a later age. But note that this approach to reading *The Wealth of Nations* also embodies a view of history: one that sees it as a less deterministic process, in which *The Wealth of Nations* was not the necessary embodiment of an age that was yet to come, but the complex product of a range of political, economic and moral discourses that were influential at the time.

Our attempt to understand the course of economic change in the eighteenth century, together with its most famous economics treatise, has resulted in the conclusion that both have been subject to a range of interpretations that may well tell us a good deal about the present as well as the past. In this process, views about the development of the economy become intermingled with views about the classic books on the economy. Thus, the interpretation of Adam Smith presented in Section 3 tends to be associated with a view of the eighteenth century as the clear beginning of industrial capitalism, and also with an interpretation of the modern economy as the inevitable result of those early eighteenth-century beginnings.

The view of Adam Smith presented in Section 4, however, emphasizes that his works can only be understood historically in terms of the other discourses of the Enlightenment period. At the same time, however, it recognizes that the power and the historical significance of a book is not necessarily related to this historically-situated reading, but depends precisely on the ways in which the book's arguments have been taken over by later generations and made their own. For it is one of the characteristics of a classic book — one that has been raised to canonical status — that instead of simply pointing the way of the future, it often becomes part of the process of struggle and debate out of which that future emerges. In the course of this untidy and loose-ended process of social change, the book's meaning and significance may well change along with the perceptions and political requirements of the age. In retrospect, it seems to have had the power to predict that change, but this power of prediction may well be the result of the book's canonization rather than its cause.

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READING A THE BIRTH OF CONSUMERISM

Roy Porter

A thousand other developments expedited trade. For instance, foreigners complimented the English on their retailing. 'The magnificence of the shops,' wrote Von Archenholz, 'is the most striking thing in London.' Defoe underlined the key distributive role of shops (bright, glass-fronted and bow-windowed) in serving householders with goods from the length and breadth of the country — hangings from Kidderminster, a looking-glass from London, blankets from Witney, rugs from Westmorland. He rhapsodized over their sheer number: 'I have endeavoured to make some calculation of the number of shop-keepers in this kingdom, but I find it is not to be done — we may as well count the stars' (yet the old Puritan in him begrudged the outlay lavished on their tinsel display). Advertising swelled enormously, especially in newspapers. Between 1747 and 1750 Bottely's *Bath Journal* carried 2,740 advertisements, between 1780 and 1783, well over twice as many. Provincial newspapers especially alerted readers to metropolitan tastes. Thus a North Walsham staymaker told lady readers of the *Norwich Mercury* in 1788 'that he is just returned from Town with the newest Fashions of French and Italian Stays, Corsetts and Riding Stays ... their Orders will be executed in an Height of Taste not inferior to the first shops in London' (who could resist?). A Newcastle-on-Tyne lady was demanding a Wedgwood dinner service with an 'Arabesque Border' before her local shopkeeper had even heard of it; she insisted on that precise pattern, having discovered it was 'much used in London at present', and refused to be fobbed off with substitutes. In 1777 Abigail Gawthern noted in her diary that she 'used a parasol for the first time ... the first in Nottingham'. Advertising's role in puffing demand was clear to all. 'Promise, large promise, is the soul of advertisement,' wrote Dr Johnson, who believed 'the trade of advertising is now so near perfection that it is not easy to propose any improvement'. Advertising's allure whipped up demand for knick-knacks, curios and all manner of disposable items, bought upon whim, and increased turnover in fashion. Handkerchiefs were hawked with Marlborough's five great victories painted on them; other designs celebrated Dr Sacheverell or the Peace of Utrecht. The radical John Wilkes's squinting face was plastered over mugs, jugs, teapots, plaques and plates.

Source: Porter, R. (1990) *English Society in the Eighteenth Century,* 2nd edn, Harmondsworth, Penguin, p.190.

READING B PRE-MODERN MANUFACTURING

Roy Porter

Until late in the century, output operated almost exclusively through small-scale crafts, cottage and workshop industry. Expansion did not hinge on revolutionary innovations in technology, but on the steady sucking of accumulated wealth into circulation, better use of labour reserves, and new techniques facilitating exchange of goods and services. The heroes of this steady, inexorable march of commercial capitalism are largely anonymous: rank-and-file distributors, hauliers, shippers, transporters, and thousands of humble waggoners, packmen, tinkers, carters and hucksters. Up to 1760, no decisive breakthroughs had occurred in mechanization, in work organization, in the scale of the workplace, in sources of industrial power. The agricultural sector remained paramount, the fluctuating price of corn still largely dictating the tempo of commercial and industrial activity. Thus when agricultural profits were low in the 1730s, turnpiking tailed off. In mid-century, two thirds of British iron was still being used for agricultural purposes.

Even profit-conscious expanding trades continued to organize their labour force in traditional ways, often within guild or company rules. Such regulation after all ensured stability and rarely proved a brake upon expansion. Manufacturing typically remained in workshops, based on the work-unit of the household. Putting out was perfect for expansion in textiles. Master-clothiers supplied workers — carders, rovers, spinners, weavers — with materials, usually a week's supply, which they worked up on their own premises, using their own or rented wheels and looms. This system was a cost-effective use of capital. The capitalist needed to freeze little fixed capital in plant, and had flexibility in hiring and firing labour. Sub-contracting remained ubiquitous as a mode of employment and industrial organization, for instance in the 'butty' system used in shallow Midlands coal-mining. It shared investment risks, profits and the problems of managing the workforce. (Publishing books by subscription could be seen as a parallel case, obviating the need for the author and printer to lock up too much capital in the project.) Where metal extraction was regulated by ancient court jurisdictions, as in Cornish tin-mining and Peak District lead-mining, each sinking was under-taken by a gang supplying its own capital and equipment, and getting its return, not in wages, but in shares of ore sales. In all such trades, 'middle management' had hardly emerged as a regular profession. Most intermediaries in businesses were not salaried foremen or 'executives' but were part of the family, bosses in their own right. Employment was direct, responsibility personal, rewards proportionate to success.

Industry remained largely labour-intensive and skill-intensive. Weaving, smithying, hat-making, the furniture and cutlery trades, metal-working and thousands more besides expanded by recruiting more hands. When

Source: Porter, R. (1990) *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 2nd edn, Harmondsworth, Penguin, pp.193–6.

demand was high it was easy to take up the slack (and especially from mid-century, population pressure made the labour market a buyers' market). Women and children in particular could easily be drafted into the labour force.

There were, of course, a handful of mammoth factories in the first half of the century. Thomas Lombe's silk-throwing mill in Derby employed 500, his twenty-three-foot water-wheel driving 26,000 spindles. But this was highly exceptional — and not very successful (nor indeed original: Lombe merely copied Italian factories). There were also a few colossal entrepreneurs. Around 1700, Ambrose Crowley, the iron-master who got rich on navy contracts, commanded a workforce of nearly 1,000 and pioneered the techniques of shop-floor organization, discipline and welfare taken up in later generations by industrialists such a Josiah Wedgwood (Cowley had no alternative: he directed his Tyneside works by letter from London). In his 'Law Book of the Crowley Ironworks', all instructions begin 'I DO ORDER'. Crowley knew it paid to take pains over workers. He housed his employees on company property — but enforced a 9 p.m. curfew — and provided a doctor and poor relief, but the recipients had to wear a badge inscribed 'Crowley's Poor'. Yet such a man was utterly exceptional — a 'giant in an age of pygmies' as his biographer has called him. Only a vast purchaser such as the wartime navy could create such concentrated demand: civilian consumer requirements did not support titan captains of industry so early. Even with later industrialization, the expansion of great iron firms such as the Carron Works, Walkers, and Wilkinsons depended largely on military contracts. Indeed, only naval dockyards themselves had a comparable scale and division of functions. 'The building-yards, docks, timber-yard, deal-yard, mast-yard, gun-yard, rope-walks; and all the other yards and places, set apart for the works belonging to the navy, are like a well-ordered city,' was Defoe's comment on Chatham in the 1720s, 'and tho' you see the whole place as it were in the utmost hurry, yet you see no confusion, every man knows his own business.'

Furthermore, in the first two thirds of the century, it was highly exceptional for technological innovations to revolutionize a trade. The development of the coke-smelting of iron by the Darbys of Coalbrookdale was, of course, to prove vital in facilitating mass iron-casting. But despite rising charcoal prices, this innovation made slow headway (the Darbys kept it secret). New textile machinery such as Kay's flying shuttle also came in slowly. Newcomen's steam engine was used almost solely for pumping mines, and industrial power still came from animals, hands and feet, wind and water. Improvements occurred through the piecemeal modification of existing technologies within traditional employment stuctures. England consolidated her skills-base.

READING C THE MARKET

Adam Smith

The market price of every particular commodity is regulated by the proportion between the quantity which is actually brought to market, and the demand of those who are willing to pay the natural price of the commodity, or the whole value of the rent, labour, and profit, which must be paid in order to bring it thither. Such people may be called the effectual demanders, and their demand the effectual demand; since it may be sufficient to effectuate the bringing of the commodity to market. It is different from the absolute demand. A very poor man may be said in some sense to have a demand for a coach and six; he might like to have it; but his demand is not an effectual demand, as the commodity can never be brought to market in order to satisfy it.

When the quantity of any commodity which is brought to market falls short of the effectual demand, all those who are willing to pay the whole value of the rent, wages, and profit, which must be paid in order to bring it thither, cannot be supplied with the quantity which they want. Rather than want it altogether, some of them will be willing to give more. A competition will immediately begin among them, and the market price will rise more or less above the natural price, according as either the greatness of the deficiency, or the wealth and wanton luxury of the competitors, happen to animate more or less the eagerness of the competition. Among competitors of equal wealth and luxury the same deficiency will generally occasion a more or less eager competition, according as the acquisition of the commodity happens to be of more or less importance to them. Hence the exorbitant price of the necessaries of life during the blockade of a town or in a famine.

When the quantity brought to market exceeds the effectual demand, it cannot be all sold to those who are willing to pay the whole value of the rent, wages and profit, which must be paid in order to bring it thither. Some part must be sold to those who are willing to pay less, and the low price which they give for it must reduce the price of the whole. The market price will sink more or less below the natural price, according as the greatness of the excess increases more or less the competition of the sellers, or according as it happens to be more or less important to them to get immediately rid of the commodity. The same excess in the importation of perishable, will occasion a much greater competition than in that of durable commodities; in the importation of oranges, for example, than in that of old iron.

When the quantity brought to market is just sufficient to supply the effectual demand and no more, the market price naturally comes to be either exactly, or as nearly as can be judged of, the same with the natural price.

Source: Smith, A. (1976) *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations,* 1776 (first published 1776), edited by R.H. Campbell and A.S. Skinner, vol. II of The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith, Oxford, Oxford University Press; reprinted by Liberty Press, 1981; pp.73–4.

The whole quantity upon hand can be disposed of for this price, and cannot be disposed of for more. The competition of the different dealers obliges them all to accept of this price, but does not oblige them to accept of less.

READING D THE DIVISION OF LABOUR

Adam Smith

The greatest improvement in the productive powers of labour, and the greater part of the skill, dexterity and judgment with which it is any where directed, or applied, seem to have been the effects of the division of labour. ...

To take an example, therefore, from a very trifling manufacture; but one in which the division of labour has been very often taken notice of, the trade of the pin-maker; a workman not educated to this business (which the division of labour has rendered a distinct trade), nor acquainted with the use of the machinery employed in it (to the invention of which the same division of labour has probably given occasion), could scarce, perhaps, with his utmost industry, make one pin in a day, and certainly could not make twenty. But in the way in which this business is now carried on, not only the whole work is a peculiar trade, but it is divided into a number of branches, of which the greater part are likewise peculiar trades. One man draws out the wire, another straights it, a third cuts it, a fourth points it, a fifth grinds it at the top for receiving the head; to make the head requires two or three distinct operations; to put it on, is a peculiar business, to whiten the pins is another; it is even a trade by itself to put them into the paper; and the important business of making a pin is, in this manner, divided into about eighteen distinct operations, which, in some manufactories, are all performed by distinct hands, though in others the same man will sometimes perform two or three of them. I have seen a small manufactory of this kind where ten men only were employed, and where some of them consequently performed two or three distinct operations. But though they were very poor, and therefore but indifferently accommodated with the necessary machinery, they could, when they exerted themselves, make among them about twelve pounds of pins in a day. There are in a pound upwards of four thousand pins of a middling size. Those ten persons, therefore, could make among them upwards of forty-eight thousand pins in a day. Each person, therefore, making a tenth part of forty-eight thousand pins, might be considered as making four thousand eight hundred pins in a day. But if they had all wrought separately and independently, and without any of them having been educated to this peculiar business, they certainly could not each of them have made twenty, perhaps not one

Source: Smith, A. (1976) *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations,* 1776 (first published 1776), edited by R.H. Campbell and A.S. Skinner, vol. II of The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith, Oxford, Oxford University Press; reprinted by Liberty Press, 1981; pp.13–17; 22–4; 31.

pin in a day; that is, certainly, not the two hundred and fortieth, perhaps not the four thousand eight hundredth part of what they are at present capable of performing, in consequence of a proper division and combination of their different operations.

In every other art and manufacture, the effects of the division of labour are similar to what they are in this very trifling one; though, in many of them, the labour can neither be so much subdivided, nor reduced to so great a simplicity of operation. The division of labour, however, so far as it can be introduced, occasions, in every art, a proportionable increase of the productive powers of labour. The separation of different trades and employments from one another, seems to have taken place, in consequence of this advantage. This separation too is generally carried furthest in those countries which enjoy the highest degree of industry and improvement; what is the work of one man, in a rude state of society, being generally that of several in an improved one. In every improved society, the farmer is generally nothing but a farmer; the manufacturer, nothing but a manufacturer. The labour too which is necessary to produce any one complete manufacture, is almost always divided among a great number of hands. How many different trades are employed in each branch of the linen and woollen manufactures, from the growers of the flax and the wool, to the bleachers and smoothers of the linen, or to the dyers and dressers of the cloth! ...

This great increase of the quantity of work, which, in consequence of the division of labour, the same number of people are capable of performing, is owing to three different circumstances; first, to the increase of dexterity in every particular workman; secondly, to the saving of the time which is commonly lost in passing from one species of work to another; and lastly, to the invention of a great number of machines which facilitate and abridge labour, and enable one man to do the work of many ...

It is the great multiplication of the productions of all the different arts, in consequence of the division of labour, which occasions, in a well-governed society, that universal opulence which extends itself to the lowest ranks of the people. Every workman has a great quantity of his own work to dispose of beyond what he himself has occasion for; and every other workman being exactly in the same situation, he is enabled to exchange a great quantity of his own goods for a great quantity, or, what comes to the same thing, for the price of a great quantity of theirs. He supplies them abundantly with what they have occasion for, and they accommodate him as amply with what he has occasion for, and a general plenty diffuses itself through all the different ranks of the society.

Observe the accommodation of the most common artificer or day-labourer in a civilized and thriving country, and you will perceive that the number of people of whose industry a part, though but a small part, has been employed in procuring him this accommodation, exceeds all computation. The woollen coat, for example, which covers the day-labourer, as coarse and rough as it may appear, is the produce of the joint labour of a great multitude of workmen. The shepherd, the sorter of the wool, the wool-comber or carder, the dyer, the scribbler, the spinner, the weaver, the

fuller, the dresser, with many others, must all join their different arts in order to complete even this homely production. How many merchants and carriers, besides, must have been employed in transporting the materials from some of those workmen to others who often live in a very distant part of the country! How much commerce and navigation in particular, how many ship-builders, sailors, sail-makers, rope-makers, must have been employed in order to bring together the different drugs made use of by the dyer, which often come from the remotest corners of the world! What a variety of labour too is necessary in order to produce the tools of the meanest of those workmen! ... if we examine, I say, all these things, and consider what a variety of labour is employed about each of them, we shall be sensible that without the assistance and co-operation of many thousands, the very meanest person in a civilized country could not be provided, even according to, what we very falsely imagine, the easy and simple manner in which he is commonly accommodated. Compared, indeed, with the more extravagant luxury of the great, his accommodation must no doubt appear extremely simple and easy; and yet it may be true, perhaps, that the accommodation of an European prince does not always so much exceed that of an industrious and frugal peasant, as the accommodation of the latter exceeds that of many an African king, the absolute master of the lives and liberties of ten thousand naked savages ...

As it is the power of exchanging that gives occasion to the division of labour, so the extent of this division must always be limited by the extent of that power, or, in other words, by the extent of the market. When the market is very small, no person can have any encouragement to dedicate himself entirely to one employment, for want of the power to exchange all that surplus part of the produce of his own labour, which is over and above his own consumption, for such parts of the produce of other men's labour as he has occasion for.

There are some sorts of industry, even of the lowest kind, which can be carried on no where but in a great town. A porter, for example, can find employment and subsistence in no other place. A village is by much too narrow a sphere for him; even an ordinary market town is scarce large enough to afford him constant occupation. In the lone houses and very small villages which are scattered about in so desert a country as the Highlands of Scotland, every farmer must be butcher, baker and brewer for his own family. In such situations we can scarce expect to find even a smith, a carpenter, or a mason, within less than twenty miles of another of the same trade. ...

READING E

THE ORIGIN OF AMBITION

Adam Smith

It is because mankind are disposed to sympathize more entirely with our joy than with our sorrow, that we make parade of our riches, and conceal our poverty. Nothing is so mortifying as to be obliged to expose our distress to the view of the public, and to feel, that though our situation is open to the eyes of all mankind, no mortal conceives for us the half of what we suffer. Nay, it is chiefly from this regard to the sentiments of mankind, that we pursue riches and avoid poverty. For to what purpose is all the toil and bustle of this world? what is the end of avarice and ambition, of the pursuit of wealth, of power and preheminence? Is it to supply the necessities of nature? The wages of the meanest labourer can supply them. We see that they afford him food and clothing, the comfort of a house, and of a family. If we examined his oeconomy with rigour, we should find that he spends a great part of them upon conveniencies, which may be regarded as superfluities, and that, upon extraordinary occasions, he can give something even to vanity and distinction. What then is the cause of our aversion to his situation, and why should those who have been educated in the higher ranks of life, regard it as worse than death, to be reduced to live, even without labour, upon the same simple fare with him, to dwell under the same lowly roof, and to be clothed in the same humble attire? Do they imagine that their stomach is better, or their sleep sounder in a palace than in a cottage? The contrary has been so often observed, and, indeed, is so very obvious, though it had never been observed, that there is nobody ignorant of it. From whence, then, arises that emulation which runs through all the different ranks of men, and what are the advantages which we propose by that great purpose of human life which we call bettering our condition? To be observed, to be attended to, to be taken notice of with sympathy, complacency, and approbation, are all the advantages which we can propose to derive from it. It is the vanity, not the ease, or the pleasure, which interests us. But vanity is always founded upon the belief of our being the object of attention and approbation. The rich man glories in his riches, because he feels that they naturally draw upon him the attention of the world, and that mankind are disposed to go along with him in all those agreeable emotions with which the advantages of his situation so readily inspire him. At the thought of this, his heart seems to swell and dilate itself within him, and he is fonder of his wealth, upon this account, than for all the other advantages it procures him. The poor man, on the contrary, is ashamed of his poverty. He feels that it either places him out of the sight of mankind, or, that if they take any notice of him, they have, however, scarce any fellow-feeling with the misery and distress which he suffers. He is mortified upon both accounts; for though to be overlooked, and to be disapproved of, are things entirely different, yet as

Source: Smith, A. (1976) *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (first published 1759), edited by D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie, vol.I of The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith, Oxford, Oxford University Press; reprinted by Liberty Press, 1981; pp.50–1.

obscurity covers us from the daylight of honour and approbation, to feel that we are taken no notice of, necessarily damps the most agreeable hope, and disappoints the most ardent desire, of human nature. The poor man goes out and comes in unheeded, and when in the midst of a crowd is in the same obscurity as if shut up in his own hovel. Those humble cares and painful attentions which occupy those in his situation, afford no amusement to the dissipated and the gay. They turn away their eyes from him, or if the extremity of his distress forces them to look at him, it is only to spurn so disagreeable an object from among them. The fortunate and the proud wonder at the insolence of human wretchedness, that it should dare to present itself before them, and with the loathsome aspect of its misery presume to disturb the serenity of their happiness. The man of rank and distinction, on the contrary, is observed by all the world. Every body is eager to look at him, and to conceive, at least by sympathy, that joy and exultation with which his circumstances naturally inspire him. His actions are the objects of the public care. Scarce a word, scarce a gesture, can fall from him that is altogether neglected. In a great assembly he is the person upon whom all direct their eyes; it is upon him that their passions seem all to wait with expectation, in order to receive that movement and direction which he shall impress upon them; and if his behaviour is not altogether absurd, he has, every moment, an opportunity of interesting mankind, and of rendering himself the object of the observation and fellow-feeling of every body about him. It is this, which, notwithstanding the restraint it imposes, nothwithstanding the loss of liberty with which it is attended, renders greatness the object of envy, and compensates, in the opinion of mankind, all that toil, all that anxiety, all those mortifications which must be undergone in the pursuit of it; and what is of yet more consequence, all that leisure, all that ease, all that careless security, which are forfeited for ever by the acquisition.

New Keywords

A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the text:

BCE	Before Common Era (before the period dating from the birth of Christ)
C	Followed by numeral, century (C16: sixteenth century)
CE	Common Era (the period dating from the birth of Christ)
Ch	Chinese
eC	First period (third) of a century (eC16: early sixteenth century)
F	French
fw	Immediate forerunner of a word, in the same or another language
G	German
Gk	Classical Greek
It	Italian
L	Latin
lC	Last period (third) of a century (lC16: late sixteenth century)
lL	Late Latin
mC	Middle period (third) of a century (mC16: mid-sixteenth century)
mE	Middle English (c.1100–1500)
mF	Medieval French
mL	Medieval Latin
oE	Old English (to c.1100)
OED	*Oxford English dictionary: New dictionary on historical principles*, 2nd edn. Eds. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
oF	Old French
rw	Ultimate traceable word, from which "root" meanings are derived
Sp	Spanish

Economy

Economy became an everyday term in the lC20, denoting a force to be reckoned with outside of politics and society, located both above as a mystical abstraction, and below as the grounded bottom line. Somewhat more than the sum of its parts, **the economy** includes money, markets, commodities, wealth, industry, labor, enterprise, finance, investment, employment, consumption, production, credit, debt, competition, monopoly, and development. Not included in Raymond Williams's *Keywords* (1976), the word would be impossible to ignore in the eC21. Indeed over the last 30 years (the) ''economy'' has been gathering a new set of powerful and emotive meanings in popular discourse, sliding in the process from the left, where **economism** was always social(ist)ly acceptable, to the right, where systemic thinking that displaces the primacy of the individual is usually outlawed.

Associated in the original Gk with management of a household (*oikos*), ''economy'' has continued to connote both management and the complex unity, or system, that requires administration – whether it be the household (eC14), the divinity (lC15), the body (mC15), nature (mC15), the mind (mC16), the nation (mC16), truth (lC18), or the **economic system** (eC20). As representations of systems have become increasingly influenced by biological and mechanical theories of self-regulation, the tension embedded within the term ''economy'' between management (as a practice of intervention) and system (that which manages itself) has periodically loosened and tightened, drastically changing the meaning of the word.

The notion of an economic system encompassing the institutions and arrangements of a society that behave according to **economic principles** is drawn from mC19 delineations of

capitalism as an historically specific form of economic organization. But the groundwork for thinking of economy as a knowable whole was laid in the lC16 and eC17 with the rise of mercantilism and methods of accounting for flows of wealth. According to J. Mitchell (2002: 5–6), **political economy** as developed by Adam Smith and others in the C17 and C18 referred to the "prudent management or 'government' of the community's affairs" – that is, the economy (management) of the polity (society as a complex system). Smith's theorization of civil society as a "self-regulating and beneficent arrangement" (Bottomore, 1983b: 377) provided later political economists with the template for a less benign system organized by the economic principles of competition, accumulation, exploitation, growth, and periodic crisis. In this representation "management" to regulate and harness the economy was virtually impossible. Yet submission to its laws could lead paradoxically to mastery, as when proletarian revolution replaced capitalism with an economic system based on different (even opposite) principles. In the eC20, socialists building **planned economies** placed management by the state at the organizational center of the economic system (for example, in E. Preobrazhensky's New Economic Plan for the USSR). In response to the Great Depression, projects of national economic management were instituted in **market economies** guided by John Maynard Keynes's brand of **macro-economics**, which promised to tame the excesses of capitalism via adjustments to demand.

It was not until the eC20 that "the economy" was widely adopted in popular discourse and disciplinary practice as a "self-evident totality" (T. Mitchell, 2002: 7). For the lC19 exponents of what became modern-day **economics**, the individual's utility-maximizing actions under conditions of scarcity were the focus of the new discipline, not the operations of an underlying system as such. Eager to establish its credentials as a science, **neo-classical economics** borrowed liberally from the flourishing field of physics and mechanics, adopting concepts such as equilibrium, elasticity, friction, inflation, expansion, and stability to represent the lawful operations of prices and markets. What brought a notion of economy as a unified system some respectability, distancing it from the discursive grip of socialist revolutionaries, was the interaction of new technologies of analysis and control. The rise of modern nation states, with administrative bureaucracies and jurisdiction over territorial economies, saw an expanded capacity to collect data on commerce, labor, and industry. A burgeoning data bank supported the establishment of national income and product accounts and the tracking of key indicators of economic performance. Meanwhile, in the business world, management accounting (mC19) and financial reporting (eC20) had developed to ensure the efficient and effective administrative co-ordination of large corporations. Methods of accounting for costs, benefits, stocks, flows, capital, and income within closed systems heightened confidence in rational calculability at all levels of analysis. Along with these new techniques of calculation came a renewed sense of mastery over economic matters. Business and management schools proliferated in the mC20, and international agencies (such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund [IMF])

were established and charged with regulating the development and dynamics of discrete **national economies**. Still, the economy was something that had yet to take over society – it was a functional backdrop – and the term ''economy'' was most prevalent in advertising, denoting a cheaper or more efficient alternative – the giant **economy size** box of detergent or the **economy class** air fare.

The almost total naturalization of ''the economy'' in public discourse in recent decades has curiously coincided with globalization and a growing alarm that the autonomy of national economies, and therefore their manageability, is being undermined. With the shift from an understanding of the economy as something that can be managed (by people, the state, the IMF) to something that governs society, the economic imaginary has seemingly lost its discursive mandate and become an objective reality. In this natural(ized) state, the term ''economy'' harks back to its mC17 theological meaning, ''the method of divine government of the world.'' According to Donald Horne: ''Real people, as manifest in 'society,' have been melted down into an abstraction called 'The Economy' which we all serve, as if it rises above us. No-one any longer seems able to speak a human language of economic change; instead politicians recite the latest figures as if they were magic charms'' (Horne, 2002: 5).

This naturalization/deification of the economy must be seen in the light of the continued hold of neo-liberal economic orthodoxy over policy since the heady days of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. The rejection of economic intervention of any sort (Keynesian, social-democratic, welfarist, ''wet'') that might hinder the operations of the ''free market'' is central to the neo-liberal agenda. And in the intensely ideological realm of national economic ''deregulation,'' ''the market'' and ''the economy'' have become one and the same. So when we are told that ''our'' economy must become more efficient if it and we are to survive, the message is that markets must be further freed from regulatory constraints (that is, freed from those interventions that in previous eras were seen as mechanisms of macro-economic mastery).

Increasingly it is the financial press that has become the voice of the economy in its new slimmed-down guise of the market (whether the housing, futures, commodity, currency, or financial market – it doesn't really matter). Sometime within the last 15 years, daily prime-time TV news programs began to include the ''market report'' along with the weather report. This, together with the integration of large business news sections into mainstream newspapers, marks the widespread popular submission to the economy as manifest in the numbers/latest figures/magic charms that indicate systemic health or disease.

In the academy, neo-classical economics has flourished and taken on the colonizing and fundamentalist project of viewing all aspects of society, from childrearing and membership in voluntary organizations, to educational attainment or criminal involvement (that is, not just market behavior), in terms of games of rational, individual economic calculation. With strong governmental support academic economists have reduced society to ''social capital,'' ''human capital,'' ''information capital,'' etc. As a system, the economy has

been reduced to the market, and as a style of calculation and management, it has taken hold of all manner of human interactions.

At the other end of the academic spectrum, in cultural studies and the humanities, a language of economy has taken hold in a very different way. The waxing of interest in representation, discourse, and poststructuralist thought has seen intense discussion of various **economies of meaning**. Refusing to submit to a closed system, or **restricted economy**, in which meaning is conserved, invested, circulated, reproduced, and thus rendered self-evident, social theorists have become interested in writing within a **general economy of meaning** in which multiple meanings are generated and valued.

A hopeful move that mirrors the purging of certitude surrounding the security of meaning in philosophical and social analysis has been the recent proliferation of **economies** in public discourse. While the **welfare economy** has been summarily banished, we increasingly hear talk of the **social economy**, **community economy**, **sustainable economy**, and **green economy**, in which **economic "value"** endowed by the market is challenged and displaced. The systemic monolith of mainstream representation is being supplanted or supplemented by **diverse economies** (Gibson-Graham, 1996). All these innovations are attempts to expand the boundaries of "economy" to include that which has been prohibited – the household, voluntary and community sectors, non-capitalist enterprises, and ethical judgments related to the future, the environment, and social justice. All are attempts to wrest "economy" back from the reductionism of the market and perhaps assert that an economy is, after all, what we make it.

J. K. Gibson-Graham

See: ***BUREAUCRACY, CAPITALISM, GLOBALIZATION, MANAGEMENT, SOCIALISM, SOCIETY.***

Education

Few would deny that **education** is both an individual and a social good. However, the nature and the implications of its undoubted benefits are hotly contested. Are the benefits to be seen as private or as public goods – as individual advantage or as collective social enrichment? Is the primary goal of education to be seen as training in economically important skills, as in **vocational education** and **professional education**, or as a preparation for civilized living and citizenship, as in **liberal education**? Keeping in mind the different but often intertwined etymological strands in education may help us better understand some of the misunderstandings and miscommunications that can beset contemporary debates.

The etymology of "education" leads back into two separate but not dissimilar L roots: *educare*, with connotations of "drawing out" or "bringing up"; and *educere*, with connotations of "leading forth." The two strands do not yield disparate senses; they often

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6
Neoliberalism and Politics, and the Politics of Neoliberalism

Ronaldo Munck

Neoliberalism dominates the political horizon at the moment both for the powers that be and for the movements that challenge them. It has established a new socio-political matrix that frames the conditions for political transformation across the globe. This chapter examines the political impact of neoliberalism, but also the politics of neoliberalism itself, something less often focused on. It begins with an examination of the political *making* of the free-market system, contrary to what we might call the 'naturalist' views of the neoliberal ideologues. It continues with a critical review of the ways in which the capitalist state has been *restructured* by neoliberalism, again contrary to the neoliberal orthodoxy that stresses only the driving back of the state by the market. This section closes with a review of the new political *matrix* created by neoliberalism and the impact that it has had on all aspects of political life. A second section turns to the politics of the neoliberal project itself and the possibilities for moving beyond it through a transformative political project. The way democracy has become 'devalued' as a political currency is perhaps the most damaging effect of the neoliberal hegemony over the last quarter of a century. Yet in the last few years this hegemony has been contested and the cosy confidence that 'there is no alternative' (TINA) to neoliberalism has been partially dissipated. This has, arguably, created space for political movement 'beyond' neoliberalism, the various permutations of which are considered in the last section.

We must distinguish at the outset between neoliberalism as a system of thought and actually existing neoliberalism. While the first can be traced back to the ideas developed in the writings of Frederick Hayek during the Second World War and their popularisation in the 1970s by Milton Friedman (1962), the latter is a more practical vision centred on a programme of macroeconomic stabilisation, liberalisation of trade and privatisation (or destatisation) of the economy (see Chapter 3). Neoliberalism in practice means the Washington consensus as a practical development strategy whose advocates can, with some justification, distance themselves from the particular neoliberal theories developed by the so-called Austrian school launched by Hayek. Thus John Williamson, who actually coined the term 'Washington consensus', has argued that he never intended the term 'to imply policies like capital account liberalisation . . . monetarism, supply-side economics, or a minimal state . . . which I think of as the quintessentially neoliberal ideas' (Williamson 2002, p. 2). These notions in fact never commanded a consensus in Washington or elsewhere other than in small right-wing pressure groups. This is

an important distinction to stress, as it is one often conflated in critical accounts of neoliberalism (see Chapters 3 and 12).

NEOLIBERALISM AND POLITICS: THE MAKING OF THE MARKET

For neoliberalism, the market symbolises rationality in terms of an efficient distribution of resources. Government intervention, on the other hand, is deemed undesirable because it transgresses that rationality and conspires against both efficiency and liberty. The market-based society will, according to Hayek, nurture individual freedom. But, as Barry Smart (2002, p. 95) comments: 'This society achieves its coherence not through design but through the market and its processes of exchange, through supplying goods and services for others and seeking, in turn, goods and services for others.' The overall order created by the market is deemed superior in terms of efficiency and equity compared to any deliberate or engineered form of societal organisation. As Polanyi (2001, p. 60) puts it, this system means that '[i]nstead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system' or, even more starkly, 'a market economy can function only in a market society'. The market continuously seeks to make a society in its own image.

If we take a historical rather than a theological view of the making of markets we can see, contrary to the neoliberal vision, that this has always been a contested political process and not a natural event. Karl Polanyi, who wrote during the Second World War of the first 'great transformation' of the nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution, showed clearly that 'the emergence of national markets was in no way the result of the gradual and spontaneous emancipation of the economic sphere from governmental control' (Polanyi 2001, p. 258). Market society and market rules did not evolve naturally or through some process of self-generation. That is why, in the strongest possible sense, we refer here to the *making* of markets. On the contrary, as Polanyi argued, 'the market has been the outcome of a conscious and often violent intervention on the part of government which imposed the market organisation on society for non-economic ends' (2001, p. 258). So politics is always 'in command' and there is no such thing as a purely economic process if we look beneath the surface of political rhetoric. As Marx argued with regard to the 'primitive accumulation' that was necessary for the building of capitalism, the making of the market and a market society was often a violent affair with very clear winners and losers.

The notion of a self-regulating market was at the core of classical liberalism and is still today reflected in the discourse of global neoliberalism. Indeed, as Polanyi once put it: 'The true implications of economic liberalism can now be taken in at a glance. Nothing less than a self-regulating market on a world scale could ensure the functioning of this stupendous mechanism' (2001, p. 145). Liberalism is thus only realised in the current phase of world history through the complex cluster of economic, political, social and cultural processes we know as globalisation. To carry through this project, the transnational capitalist class made a concerted bid during the 1970s and 1980s to create a 'disembedded liberalism', which led to the triumph of neoliberal globalisation as discourse and practice in

the 1990s. Capital mobility was facilitated, free trade was sanctified, labour was made more 'flexible' and macroeconomic management became fully market compliant. Of course, the question then arises as to whether markets can be 'disembedded' from social relations and the political order without engendering social disintegration and political disorder.

We find today that actually existing neoliberalism does not really believe in a straightforward 'roll back' of the state (see next section), and understands the need for a constant making and remaking of the market and the rules that govern it. The international trade regime – first GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and now the WTO (World Trade Organisation) – is the main mechanism through which the global market is effectively regulated and disputes are resolved through a formalised system. It was precisely the qualitative leap in the volume of world trade that necessitated the move from the GATT to the more formal and 'judicialised' system of rules that the WTO seeks to enforce, notwithstanding the political obstacles in terms of global power to obtain consensus for them. A whole set of international rules was established to regulate the vastly increased volume of international trade in terms of contract law, patents and arbitration procedures. This set of international rules is negotiated by the powerful states of the world that dominate the multilateral economic organisations; they are not generated spontaneously as neoliberalism would pretend (see Chapter 10).

RECONFIGURING THE STATE

We have seen how government intervention was crucial to the making of markets, yet neoliberalism has as a central tenet the seemingly contradictory mission of 'driving back' state intervention. Indeed, following Unger, we can say that the main source of ideological unity in actually existing (or, as he calls it, 'operative') neoliberalism, and one of its central *political* tenets, is 'the negative unity of the disempowerment of government: it disables the state from interfering with the established order of society' (Unger 1999, p. 58). That in practical terms represents a key task for the neoliberal politician. For the liberal theorists such as Hayek, the target was always what was seen as an 'excessive' or 'bloated' state sector, its intrusion into and attempts at regulation of the 'free' market and, ultimately, the erosion of freedom this represented for the individual. The state's intervention in the economy would lead to an unbridled 'collectivism' (the thin end of the wedge of communism according to the neoliberal political creed) and, as in the title of Hayek's most influential treatise 'The Road to Serfdom'. In practice, however, actually existing neoliberalism has not simply acted to 'roll back' the state or to remove the market from the realm of regulation.

The first phase of global neoliberalism began with the Pinochet military coup in Chile in 1973 and the 'Chicago Boys' (a group of Chilean economists trained at the University of Chicago under a broadly 'Friedmanite' programme) project that followed. It took on its more established form with the economic policies followed by Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom after 1979 and by Ronald Reagan in the United States after 1981. Taking their cue from Hayek and Friedman, Pinochet, Thatcher and Reagan used a strong state to 'roll back' state interference

and consolidate free market mechanisms. This was the first stage of the neoliberal revolution, based on forcing a retreat from the Keynesian and developmental state political matrix. The labour market was to be 'deregulated' and labour made more 'flexible'. Management's 'right to manage' was to be restored in all its splendour and the market would not be allowed to suffer from 'political' constraints. While the paths towards neoliberalism were diverse – being shaped by historical context and political process – by the end of the 1980s it had become remarkably hegemonic, with previous welfare and development state models seeming archaic. This was when TINA had an awful truthfulness about it.

The second phase of global neoliberalism began in the 1990s, committed to a 'roll out' of new policies rather than just a 'roll back' of the state. As Peck and Tickell (2002, pp. 388–9) argue, once the natural limits of the negative phase of neoliberalism had been reached, a more 'positive' or proactive policy was called for; thus 'the outcome was not implosion but reconstitution, as the neoliberal project itself gradually metamorphosised into more socially interventionist and ameliorative forms by the Third Way contortions of the Clinton and Blair administrations'. One could add the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration in Brazil (1995–2002) to show that this was not only a North Atlantic shift in the modalities of neoliberalism. Simply extending the logic of the market through liberalisation and commodification was no longer sufficient and the neoliberal project had to be extended to the social domain with issues such as welfare reform, penal policy, urban regeneration and asylum seekers coming to the fore. It was no longer sufficient to drive back the state; now recalcitrant members of society such as migrants, single-parent families, prisoners and 'deviants' or socially 'excluded' members of society needed to be brought under control and regulated in the interests of the neoliberal *political* agenda. This was the social regulation aspect of neoliberalism being implemented.

So in terms of reconfiguring the state we can say that neoliberalism has transformed the state rather than driven it back as Hayek would have liked. The much-vaunted policies of 'deregulation' (removal of state regulatory systems) have, in fact, been creating new forms of regulation with new market-oriented rules and policies to facilitate the development of the 'new' capitalism. Society is transformed in the image of the market and the state itself is now 'marketised', or as Philip Cerny puts it in developing his model of the 'competition state', this turn towards 'commodification of the state' is 'aimed at making economic activities located within the national territory, or which otherwise contribute to national wealth, more competitive in international development terms' (Cerny 2000, p. 30). This competition state model is no longer geared towards national economic development but, rather, towards the promotion of neoliberalism on a global level. The political arena of the nation-state is thus restructured and the old divide between 'inside' the nation-state and 'outside' is eroded. As the function of the state become reorganised to fit with the new global order, so the state begins to act even more clearly as a market 'player' itself and not a 'referee' as in the old national order of states. Regulation is seen as something carried out not on behalf of the common good but, rather, on behalf of the globalisation project itself.

MATRIX RENEWAL

It is often said that the triumph of neoliberalism depended on the perceived failure of the Keynesian model in the West and the development model in the South. Each of these politico-economic paradigms can be conceived of as a socio-political matrix that set the parameters of social, political and economic development for a whole era. For Garretón and co-authors, who deploy the concept to study Latin America, a socio-political matrix (or SPM)

> refers to relationships among the state, a structure for representation or a party political system (to aggregate global demands and involve subjects politically), and a socio-economic base of social actors with cultural orientations and relations (including the participation and diversity of civil society outside formal state structures) – all mediated institutionally by the political regime. (Garretón et al. 2003, p. 2)

For our purposes we shall seek to examine to what extent neoliberalism represents a new socio-political matrix for capitalist development on a global scale, reconfiguring the public–private domains and the nature of economy–politics–society relationships.

The international system of the nineteenth century rested according to Polanyi on the balance-of-power system between the Great Powers, the international gold standard, the self-regulating market and the liberal state but, he adds, 'the fount and matrix of the system was the self-regulating market' (Polanyi 2001, p. 3). The international system that developed in the last quarter of the twentieth century has variously been called 'globalisation', the 'information society', and the 'network society', but its fount and matrix has undoubtedly been the global market. The emphasis on 'competitiveness' at all levels of society and at the various scales of human activity, from the household to the world economy, prevails utterly. The development model shifts from the state as matrix of the development process to the 'private sector' as main vector of development, with only minimal regulation. The very model of modernity and civilisation shifts under the influence of this new political matrix. The individualist and rationalist market-based model of the West is deemed the one true path and all others are discounted or devalued. The horizon of political possibilities has dramatically closed in.

Much of the analysis of the political effects of neoliberalism has been focused on the advanced industrial societies of the West. Neoliberalism has fundamentally recast the traditional relationship between the private and public domains in society and has 'depoliticised' politics to put it that way. However, the neoliberal revolution has had a much more devastating effect on the countries of the East that were once state socialist or bureaucratic socialist regimes, but where the state firmly regulated the impact of market forces. Even the World Bank has had to admit the disastrous social and political consequences of the 'market transition' in the East. Yet it is in the poor, or 'developing', nations of the South where the effects of the turn to neoliberalism have been most devastating. Classical and radical development theory alike was cast aside and replaced by a 'one size fits all' neoliberal set

of remedies (see Colcough and Manor eds 1993). The 'Washington consensus' codified the actual implementation of neoliberalism across the South and set the terms of the new development debates. All development debates would have to be within the parameters of this so-called consensus.

A political matrix is only as effective as the discourse that supports and expresses it, and here neoliberalism has been spectacularly successful until quite recently. The struggle for hegemony waged by the neoliberal project was, at least in part, a struggle over meaning. Thus the term 'reform' ceased to be associated with land distribution or income distribution, to become synonymous in the neoliberal discourse with opening up of the economy and the 'freeing' of the market from political controls or regulation. Neoliberalism successfully articulated neoclassical economic theories with a liberal individualist conception of political freedom. Thus a theory such as neoliberalism, which should never really have existed outside the pages of a textbook, became singularly effective at '*making itself true* and empirically verifiable', as Bourdieu (1999, p. 2) argues in analysing neoliberalism as a 'strong discourse'. It is that discursive power that neoliberalism brings to bear as a political project, as we shall explore in the next section.

POLITICS OF NEOLIBERALISM: DEMOCRACY DEVALUED

For neoliberalism, the market is not only the most efficient way to allocate resources but also the optimum context to achieve human freedom (see Friedman 1962). It is government intervention in economic life that threatens freedom, according to the neoliberal theorists. Competitive capitalism is seen as the necessary base for capitalist democracy against all 'totalitarianisms' of the left. Of course, in practice the neoliberal gurus saw no contradiction in supporting General Pinochet's bloody imposition of neoliberalism in Chile after 1973. Restrictions on party-political life and repression of trade unions were seen as necessary to restore the market-friendly version of democracy they espoused. What is remarkable, though, is the way in which this fundamentally conservative political vision of the neoliberals was successfully presented as progressive, even 'revolutionary'. Basic social conquests related to labour rights, for example, and fundamental political freedoms were presented as backward-looking anachronisms. The future belonged to neoliberalism, the new 'common sense' for the new post-socialist era (see Chapter 20).

Neoliberalism Sought to Convert the Citizen into a Consumer: 'I Shop Therefore I Am.'

The complex and empowering vision of citizenship in its classic democratic presentation was reduced, in the era of neoliberalism, to the power of the credit card and the pleasures of the shopping mall, realisable or not according to one's position in a sharply hierarchised class structure between and within nation-states. Even the 'political' notion of citizenship became banalised, in practice reduced to infrequent and token visits to the polling booth – in any case a dubious indicator of democratic participation, given the dramatic decline in electoral turnout in

many countries, not least the USA. Citizenship was equated with government and the bad old ways before the neoliberal revolution. The individual could express his or her identity much better through consumption, went the unsaid argument. While production, under the old industrial capitalism, had served as a marker of identity and class divisions, now consumption came to the fore. Clearly consumption in the new global market serves a vital economic need, but it also makes for a cultural restructuring of society. The whole consumer process – from conception to sale, through advertising, marketing and fashion building – has fragmented identities and made them more fluid as consumption is continuously revolutionised. The public space of politics is seen as more static and as not fulfilling the needs of the citizen-become-consumer.

As Unger puts it, 'The form of politics preferred by . . . neoliberalism is relative democracy: democracy but not too much' (Unger 1999, p. 68). The new democracy is thin and anaemic, it is restricted and delegative at best. Personal freedoms hitherto submerged by the weight of the state were highlighted by neoliberalism's ideologies, but democracy as a system of political representation was devalorised. The rules of the market would apply also in politics. Behind the hostility expressed towards bureaucracy and the desire to deprofessionalise politics there was a profoundly anti-democratic intent. Money became the key to political influence as never before, and politics became packaged and marketed like any other commodity. Not surprisingly, many citizens lost interest in politics and a general mood of disenchantment if not alienation in regard to the whole political process became common. Political choice became far more restricted insofar as the neoliberal economic agenda became the shared underpinning of most political parties and political differences were flattened.

Neoliberalism also managed to subvert traditional democratic concepts such as 'civil society' and introduce new conservative concepts such as 'social capital' into the democratic lexicon. Under the authoritarian regimes of the South and the East during the 1970s, it was in the domain of civil society (a terrain between the state and the economy, following Gramsci) where citizens organised and mobilised for democracy. Since then, 'civil society' has been mobilised by the neoliberal project in its crusade against 'big government'. All non-state actors are encouraged to supplant or rein in the state, from NGOs (non-governmental organisations) to the trade unions. The World Bank in particular has become a champion of a depoliticised 'civil society', for reasons other than a support for democracy. The concept of 'social capital' was then also taken up by the World Bank to codify in neoliberal economic terms what was once known as community organisation. This process of co-option of democratic discourses was a key element in the legitimisation of neoliberalism in the 1990s.

NO ALTERNATIVE?

TINA seemed to be a plausible discourse up to the 1990s, when the hegemony of neoliberalism seemed undisputed. In particular, the architects of the transition to capitalism in the East became fervent supporters of the neoliberal credo, as did many political leaders in the South, even if due to *faute de mieux*. In France,

neoliberalism as a creed was called the *pensée unique*, one system of thinking, one way to see the world, that all parties from right to left agreed on, at least in terms of essentials. Yet in the mid 1990s the World Bank was openly debating how to move 'beyond' the Washington consensus. Beyond the bland new slogan that 'institutions matter', the World Bank seemed to be recognising that the neoliberal revolution was storing up major social problems in terms of the stability of capitalist governance in the long term. Was Polanyi's famous 'counter-movement' coming into play, with society effectively protecting itself from the depredations of an unregulated free market?

First of all, against any 'necessitarian' political theory we need to understand that there are always political alternatives. There is much in Roberto Mangabeira Unger's wide-ranging political philosophy that could help us to develop a more nuanced perspective on economic liberalism than the rather 'necessitarian' approach that currently prevails. Against what he calls the 'mythical history' of democracy, for example, Unger asks us to recognise how many of the economic and political institutional arrangements of democracy are accidental or at least socially constructed. Against the 'deep structure' theorists who find hidden causes for all political phenomena, he shows the limitations of a 'structure fetishism' that denies us the ability to change our formative contexts. Against all kinds of necessitarian assumptions lying behind much social and political analysis, Unger aims: 'to break loose from a style of social understanding that allows us to explain ourselves and our societies only to the extent we imagine ourselves helpless puppets of the social worlds we build and inhabit or the law-like forces that have supposedly brought these worlds into being' (Unger 1999, p. 7). But history can be surprising and social (re)invention can occur even in the most unlikely of circumstances.

Even within the logic of the global neoliberal project, there is what might be called a 'high road' and a 'low road'. Just as there are many varieties of capitalism, so there are different paths to neoliberalism or even through it. Basic consensus around the efficiency of market mechanisms should not mask the considerable debates now ongoing in the corridors of economic and political power on the appropriate mix of market and state regulation. Against a 'low road' based on a low wages/low skill approach, there is a 'high road' based on economic 'growth with equity' as promoted by the neo-structuralist development theorists effectively contesting neoliberal hegemony, especially after the disastrous economic collapse of Argentina in 2002. That event or process was probably as significant for neoliberalism as the collapse of the Soviet Union was for the socialist project. The dominant discourse is not now about how the market can regulate itself, society and politics but is much more focused on how 'governance' needs to be improved, if only to save neoliberalism from itself.

We need always to bear in mind, following Wendy Larner's helpful typology (2000), that neoliberalism is a policy (or set of policies), it is an ideology (or discourse) but it is also fundamentally about 'governmentality'. While neoliberalism may be about promoting less government it does not mean that governance is any less important; on the contrary, perhaps. Governance is often seen as a 'post-political' steering of the political process towards less directive, more networked, modalities than in the past. Governmentality, developed from Foucault's last

writings, is about the institutionalisation of knowledge and the way political programmes are aligned with the neoliberal individual. To envisage an alternative to neoliberalism it is essential to understand it in all its complexity. Neoliberalism is not just a set of economic policies, or even an ideology, as focused on by its critics, but much more a strategy for governance of the complex global world we now live in. Any alternative needs to answer the complex problem of global governance in the twenty-first century.

BEYOND NEOLIBERALISM?

According to Alain Touraine (2001, p. 24), 'The triumph of capitalism has been so costly and intolerable that everyone, on all sides, is trying to find a way out of the "neoliberal transition".' Maybe this statement underestimates the resilience and mutability of neoliberalism and overestimates the crisis it is in, but certainly the political debate is now under way on life 'after', 'beyond' or 'post' neoliberalism. The augmented or revamped Washington consensus now being pursued by the World Bank and others is a tacit recognition that actually existing neoliberalism has to some extent failed. The 'good governance' measures now being extolled are not, however, the same as democratic development, still singularly undeveloped in the majority of the world. While recognising that markets are not self-regulating or self-legitimising, the new neoliberal agenda is still only building institutions to regulate the market (to deal with externalities, for example) and to legitimise the market (social partnerships and social protection, for example).

To develop a progressive and more democratic alternative to neoliberalism we need to go beyond the now accepted truism that 'markets don't take care of everything'. The meaning of democracy itself is at stake in these debates. The problem is that while many are clamouring for an alternative to neoliberalism, the proposals at present are either lukewarm adaptations of the market or piecemeal measures of resistance to it. The main issue facing those seeking to articulate a progressive political alternative to neoliberalism is the construction of a global democratic project. That would need to avoid equally the rather vacuous Western-centred notions of 'cosmopolitan democracy' and the temptation of localist or 'fundamentalist' alternatives that simply reject global neoliberalism. Nor can any alternative political economy ignore the heartfelt need across society for macroeconomic stability and for no return to the days of hyperinflation that caused such social devastation and political instability in the past.

Before this process of debate and renewal, however, it is necessary to consider how it is possible to reverse neoliberalism's deliberate policy of depoliticisation. Only by restoring politics to its proper place in representing people's interests and debating political futures will that be possible. There are some signs of a reactivated public realm, especially at an international level, in, for example, the anti-war mobilisations of 2003. The neoliberal rhetoric of 'participation' and 'self-determination' can be subverted and made to work for a renewed notion and practice of the active citizen. Neither classical social democracy nor neoliberalism seems able to offer solutions to the vastly increased levels of inequality created within and between nations by neoliberal globalisation. From within

civil society – from what might be described as a 'social' left – practical alternatives are now emerging in many spheres, from participatory budgets and local democracy campaigns to global social movement unionism.

In the transition from a narrowly defined 'political' public sphere to a repoliticised civil society, alternatives to neoliberalism will emerge (see Chapter 19). The World Bank certainly understands the importance of civil society in achieving social support for neoliberal globalisation and giving it a 'social' face. What is at stake now is the concept of 'freedom', itself reduced by neoliberalism to the 'free' market. Karl Polanyi argued in his time that '[t]he discarding of the market utopia brings us face-to-face with the reality of society' (Polanyi 2001, p. 267). The dividing line then is seen to be political – the nature of freedom or democracy – and not the relative technical merits of diverse economic theories. The (re)discovery of society marks the potential rebirth of freedom. Freedom in a complex society can only come, following Polanyi, through (political) regulation towards a diametrically opposed political philosophy to 'the market view of society which equates economics with contractual relationships, and contractual relationships with freedom' (2001, p. 266).

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THE SHOCK OF THE ANTHROPOCENE

The Earth, History and Us

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and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz

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CHAPTER 1

Welcome to the Anthropocene

In February 2000, a conference of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme held in Cuernavaca, Mexico, hosted a heated discussion about the age and intensity of human impacts on the planet. Paul Crutzen, an atmospheric chemist and Nobel Prize winner for his work on the ozone layer, stood up and exclaimed: 'No! We're no longer in the Holocene but in the Anthropocene!' This was the birth of a new word, and above all of a new geological epoch. Two years later, in an article in the scientific periodical *Nature*, Crutzen developed his assertion further: the stratigraphic scale had to be supplemented by a new age, to signal that mankind had become a force of telluric amplitude. After the Pleistocene, which opened the Quaternary 2.5 million years back, and the Holocene, which began 11,500 years ago, 'It seems appropriate to assign the term "Anthropocene" to the present, in many ways human-dominated, geological epoch.'[1]

The Nobel laureate proposed a starting date for this new era of 1784, the year that James Watt patented the steam engine, symbolic of the start of the industrial revolution and the 'carbonification' of our atmosphere by the burning of coal extracted from the lithosphere.

From the ancient Greek words *anthropos* meaning 'human being' and *kainos* meaning 'recent, new', the Anthropocene is then the new epoch of humans, the age of man. The Anthropocene is characterized by the fact that 'the human imprint on the global environment has now become so large and active that it rivals some of the great forces of Nature in its impact on the functioning of the Earth system'.[2] This is not the first time scientists have attested to or foreseen such human power over the fate of the planet, whether to celebrate it or as a cause for concern. As recently as 1778, in his *Epochs of Nature* volume of *Histoire naturelle générale et particulière*, Buffon explained that 'the entire face of the Earth today bears the imprint of human power'. This imprint would be particularly exerted on climate. By judiciously modifying its environment, humanity would be able to 'modify the influences of the climate it inhabits, and set the temperature to the level that suits it best'.[3] Following him, the Italian geologist Antonio Stoppani defined man in 1873 as a 'new telluric power', and in the 1920s Vladimir I. Vernadsky, who introduced the concept of the biosphere, emphasized the growing human effect on the globe's biogeochemical cycles.[4]

Nor was this the first time that scientists succumbed to anthropocentrism in making humanity a geological marker: the start of the Quaternary, in fact, was fixed to coincide with the appearance of the genus *Homo* 2.5 million years ago in Africa (*Homo habilis*), and the Holocene or 'recent epoch' was proposed by the geologist Charles Lyell on the basis of the end of the last glaciation but also on the then-believed coincident emergence of humans. The idea of adding the Holocene to the geologic time clock was put forward by Charles Lyell in 1833, but accepted only in 1885. Geologists, accustomed to working on the scale of the Earth's 4.5-billion-year history, have no reason to hurry in

making our entry into the Anthropocene official. Besides, if the history of our planet is reduced to a day of twenty-four hours, *Homo habilis* appeared only in the final minute, the Holocene began in the last quarter of a second, and the industrial revolution only in the two last thousandths of a second. With the Pleistocene counting in millions of years, and the Holocene in thousands, Crutzen's boldness in proclaiming a new Anthropocene dating back no more than a couple of centuries is readily understandable. His proposal will very likely continue to be debated for a while to come. At the 34th congress of the International Union of Geological Sciences, held in Brisbane in 2012, it was decided to establish a task group that would submit its report in 2016.

While awaiting official validation by stratigraphers, however, the Anthropocene concept has already become a rallying point for geologists, ecologists, climate and Earth system specialists, historians, philosophers, social scientists, ordinary citizens and ecological movements, as a way of conceiving this age in which humanity has become a major geological force.

What humans are doing to the Earth

What are the arguments put forward? What imprints do humans make on the planet, albeit in a differentiated way that we shall explore below? For atmospheric chemists such as Paul Crutzen, or climatologists such as the Australian Will Steffen and the Frenchman Claude Lorius, the weapon that put an end to the Holocene is to be found in the air: 'The air trapped in ice is an abrupt indication that the hand of man, by inventing the steam engine, upset the world machine at the same time.'[5] Fingers point to the greenhouse gases emitted by human activity. In relation to 1750, as a result of these emissions, the atmosphere has been 'enriched' in methane (CH_4) to the tune of 150 per cent, nitrous oxide (N_2O) by 63 per cent and carbon dioxide (CO_2) by 43 per cent. As far as the last of these is concerned, its concentration has risen from 280 parts per million (ppm) on the eve of the industrial revolution to 400 ppm in 2013, a level unmatched for 3 million years. New ingredients have also entered the atmosphere since 1945: fluoride gases such as the CFCs and HCFCs particularly emitted by our refrigerators and air conditioners.

All these are 'greenhouse' gases inasmuch as they retain the heat that the Earth, warmed by the Sun, emits into space. And the accumulation of these gases in the atmosphere has not taken long to raise the planet's temperature. Since the mid nineteenth century, the thermometer has already risen by 0.8°C, and the scenarios of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) foresee, depending on the political response they find, a total rise by the end of the present century of between 1.2°C and 6°C. A rise of 2°C in relation to the pre-industrial level, considered by the majority of climatologists as a danger threshold, will be very hard not to breach given the current lack of international political will, and, if the present tendency is not radically modified, climate experts predict a rise of 3.7°C to 4.5°C by 2100, with a whole train of meteorological disturbances and human miseries in its wake. The IPCC's latest report even envisions a rise of 8°C to 12°C by 2300, given a 'business as usual' scenario. The Andean ice cover in Peru has disappeared in twenty-five years, and the polar ice has been melting in the last few years much faster than experts had expected. While the climatologists of the 1980s and '90s conceived the relationship between concentration of greenhouse gases and climate change in a more or less global and linear fashion, systemic approaches and recent advances in modelling show that a small variation in the globe's average temperature can lead to sudden and disorderly changes.

The generalized degradation of Earth's living tissue (the biosphere) is the second element attesting to our swing into the Anthropocene. The collapse of biodiversity is bound up with the general movement of simplification (by anthropization through agriculture and urbanization), fragmentation and destruction of the globe's ecosystems, but it is also accelerated by climate change. An article published in *Nature* in June 2012 indicates that, even in an optimistic scenario, by the end of the twenty-first century, climate conditions on between 12 and 39 per cent of the Earth's surface will be such as present living organisms have never before faced.[6] On top of those extinctions directly caused by climate change, there is the damage to sea life caused by the acidification of the oceans (up 26 per cent in relation to the pre-industrial period), since these absorb a quarter of our CO_2 emissions.[7] In the last few decades, the rate of extinction of species has been from 100 to 1,000 times greater than the geological norm: biologists speak of a 'sixth extinction' since the appearance of life on Earth.[8] Since the Convention on Biological Diversity of 1992, the pace of extinction has in no way slowed down, for lack of action on the main forces of degradation, and it is estimated that the 100,000 currently protected areas in the world will save at best 5 per cent of all species. Three-quarters of the world's fishing zones are at maximum production or over-exploited. The mass of humans (32 per cent), along with that of their domestic animals (65 per cent), now makes up 97 per cent of the total biomass of land vertebrates, leaving only 3 per cent for the remaining 30,000 land-dwelling vertebrate species.[9] At the current rate, 20 per cent of the planet's species will have disappeared by 2030,[10] but many essential 'services' provided to humanity by the biosphere – pollination, carbon capture, protection from erosion, regulation of water quality and quantity, etc. – have already been greatly reduced.

As well as climate change and the collapse of biodiversity, scientists also note other major transformations that attest to our entry into the Anthropocene. These include in particular the biogeochemical cycles of water, nitrogen and phosphate, each as important as that of carbon, which have also come under human control in the course of the last two centuries. The modification of the continental water cycle is massive, with the draining of half the planet's wetlands and the construction of 45,000 dams with heights of more than fifteen metres, together retaining 6,500 cubic kilometres of water, some 15 per cent of the total flow of the world's rivers.[11] These transformations have substantially modified the processes of erosion and sedimentation, without however freeing the greater part of humanity from water insecurity.

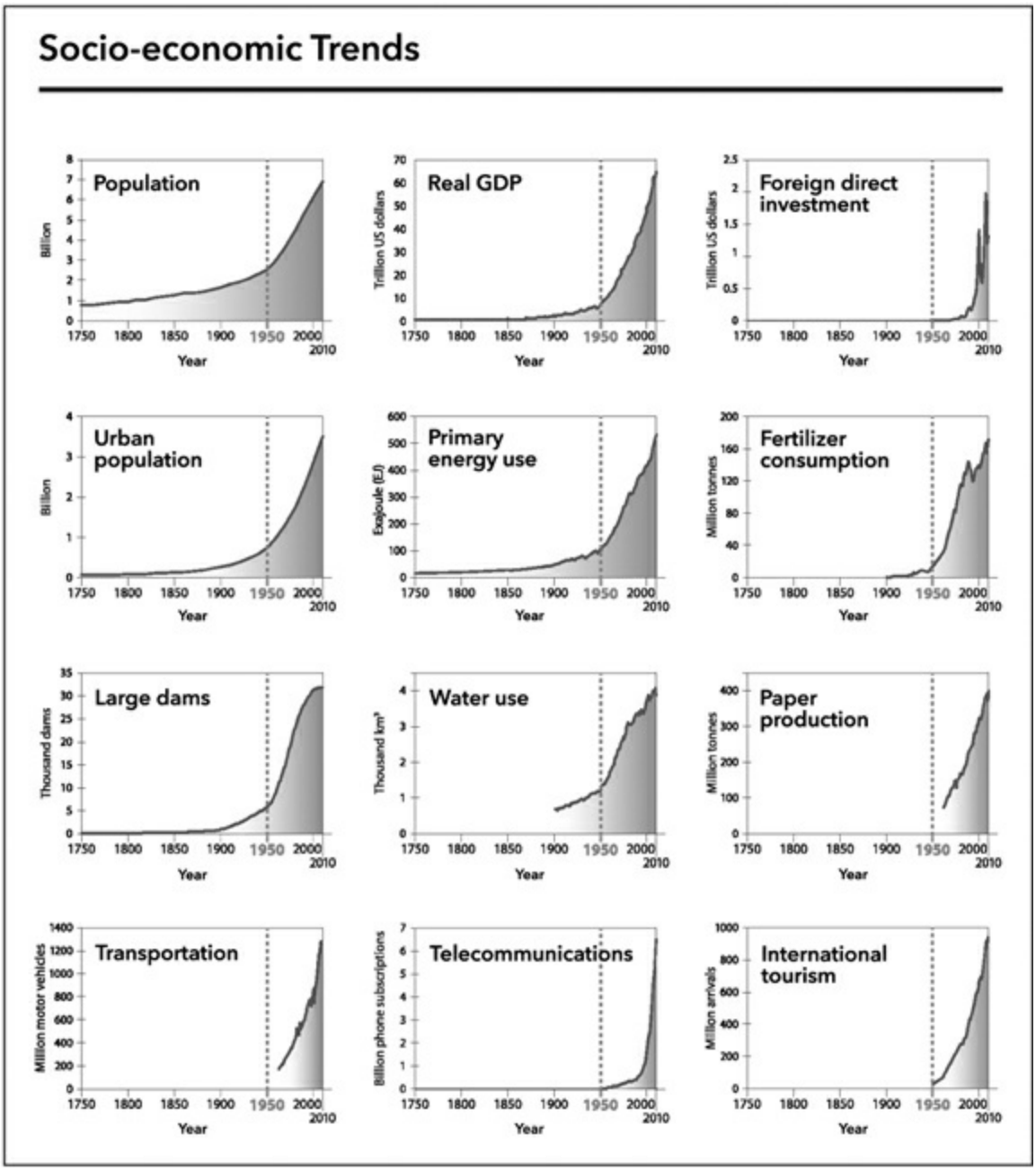
The nitrogen cycle has been radically transformed with industrialization (the burning of fossil fuel releasing nitrous oxides) and the Haber-Bosch process (1913) that converts atmospheric nitrogen into nitrogen suitable for fertilizer. These two phenomena represent nitrogen flows twice as great as the 'natural' flow through the biosphere, basically bound up with biological fixing by bacterial symbiosis.[12] The nitric oxide released by fertilizers accentuates the greenhouse effect, and excess urea and nitrates enter water-tables, rivers and estuaries, causing eutrophication and hypoxia.

The global phosphorous cycle also bears the mark of human domination, with an anthropic flow eight times greater than the natural one. Some 20 million tonnes of phosphorous are extracted each year from phosphate mines in the lithosphere, chiefly to be used for fertilizer. It is estimated that 9 million of these 20 million tonnes end up in the oceans.[13] Scientists have shown that an increase in phosphate level of only 20 per cent in relation to the underlying natural flow was in the geological past one of the causes for the collapse of the oxygen level in the oceans, leading to the massive extinction of aquatic life.

Scientists and geographers have also attempted to estimate the extent to which terrestrial ecosystems have been turned into the artificial ones of pasture, crop-land and cities. It turns out that the human species, having increased from a population of 900 million in 1800 to 7 billion in 2012, takes nearly a third of the production of continental biomass for its own needs (in terms of food, clothing, housing and many less vital things),[14] and consumes each year one and a half times what the planet can annually produce on a sustainable basis. This means that 'we' – meaning above all the 500 million most well-off inhabitants of the globe – are not only consuming the fruits of the tree on which we sit but also sawing through its branches.[15]

The Anthropocene is characterized by an unprecedented upsurge in energy mobilization: first with coal, then with hydrocarbons and uranium, which increased energy consumption by a factor of forty between 1800 and 2000.[16] This leap in energy has served to transform the planet with multiplied power, to plough up, urbanize and domesticate ecosystems. Pasture, crop-land and cities, which represented 5 per cent of the Earth's land area in 1750 and 12 per cent in 1900, today cover close to a third. Including partially anthropized biomes, it is estimated today that 84 per cent of the ice-free land surface of the planet is under direct human influence.[17] Ninety per cent of photosynthesis on Earth occurs in 'anthropogenic biomes', that is, ecological ensembles modified by human beings. As the geographer Erle Ellis concludes, the new model of the biosphere 'moves us away from an outdated view of the world as "natural systems with humans disturbing them" and towards "human systems with natural ecosystems embedded within them"'.[18]

Figure 1 gives a dashboard display of the Anthropocene, showing the evolution of twenty-four parameters of the Earth system since 1750. For the nine most important of these, a team of scientists from the Resilience Centre in Stockholm studied possible tipping points affecting biodiversity (the risk of collapse of certain 'services' that nature performs for us, such as pollination), air and atmosphere pollution, the intensification of biogeochemical cycles and the anthropization of land. They then set for each of these nine parameters a limit not to be crossed. For four of these, however, the limit (danger threshold of a sudden tipping of the Earth system into a catastrophic state) has already been approached (or passed): nitrogen cycle, greenhouse gas emissions, extinction of biodiversity and phosphate cycle.[20]


Socio-economic Trends
Population
Billion
Real GDP
Trillion US dollars
Foreign direct investment
Trillion US dollars
Urban population
Billion
Primary energy use
Exajoule (EJ)
Fertilizer consumption
Million tonnes
Large dams
Thousand dams
Water use
Thousand km³
Paper production
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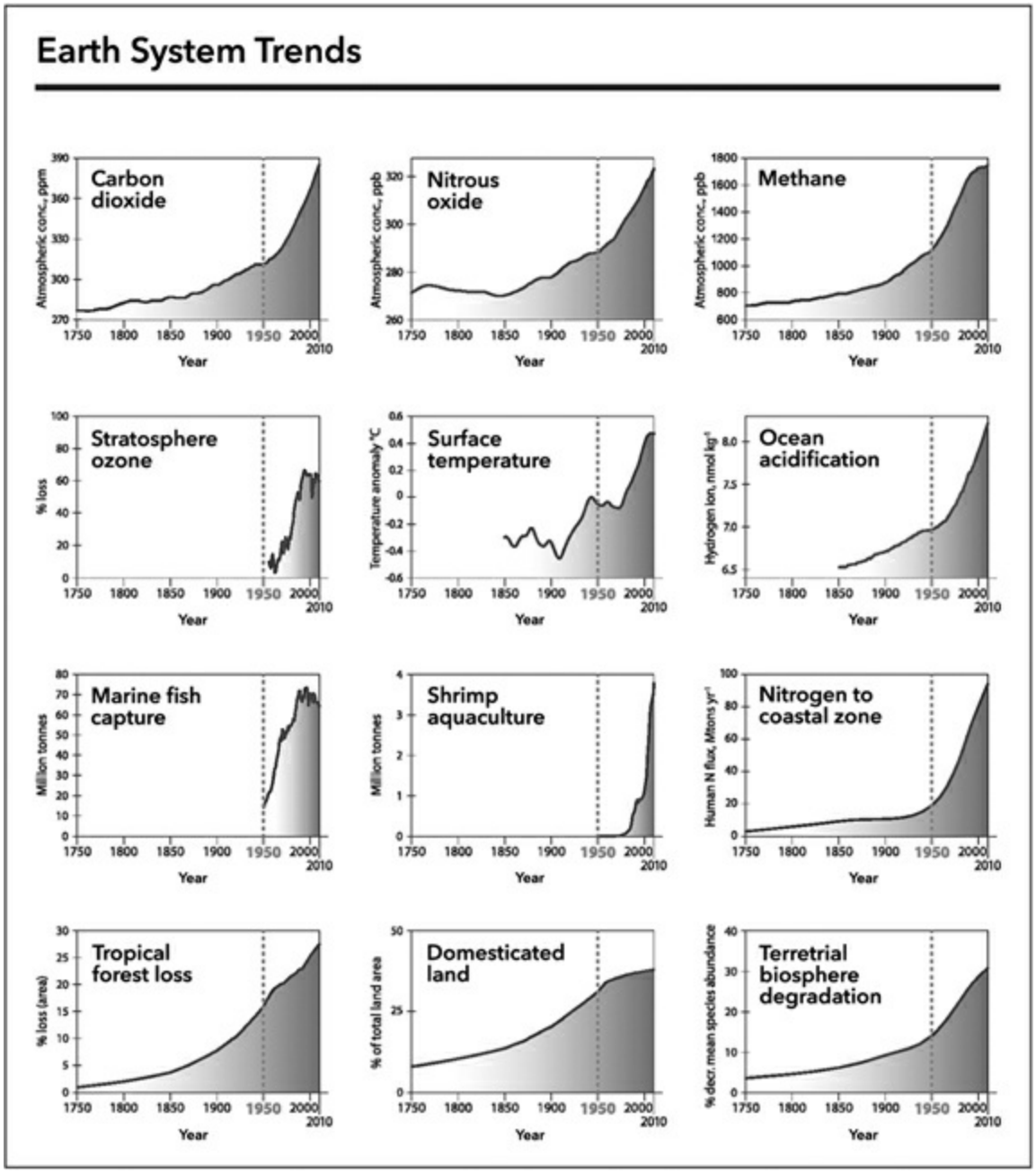

1b

Figure 1 (1a and 1b on facing page): *Dashboard display of the Anthropocene For these twenty-four parameters of the Earth system, a take-off can be observed around 1800, and a 'Great Acceleration' after 1945.*[19]

In order to agree to inscribe the Anthropocene in the series of geological epochs, however, stratigraphers are not content with models or predictions. What they need is something solid – sediment, a stratigraphic division that can be seen and measured here and now. Three arguments can be given here in support of the Anthropocene.

First of all, the level of atmospheric carbon dioxide has not been equalled for 4 million years (Pliocene), and future warming will lead the Earth to states unknown for 15 million years. The extinction of biodiversity is taking place with a suddenness matched only by five other episodes in the entire 4.5 billion years of life on Earth. The last extinction, which did away with the dinosaurs among others, goes back 65 million years and has left stratigraphic markers of the clearest kind. These phenomena, therefore, have the dual property of being caused by humans and being of a scale rarely noted in the geological past.

Secondly, the anthropic changes in the composition of the atmosphere have left traces even in the

Antarctic ice cores. Extinctions and modified distributions of species (explosive invasions in the last few centuries, migrations bound up with climate change or the anthropization of biomes) cannot fail to leave fossil traces in the sediments. The transformations of lake-side and coastal fauna and flora caused by the human forcing of nitrogen and phosphorus cycles have also left a specific mark. As for the biomass of the 7 billion humans and their domestic animals, this makes up the predominant share of the overall biomass of terrestrial vertebrates, which will certainly appear remarkable to future palaeontologists.[21] Finally, the stratigraphic indication left by urbanization, dams, industrial production (the world automobile stock has reached 1,000 billion tonnes)[22] and mining and agricultural activity is notable and unique in the history of the Earth. It has even been recently shown that global warming, by modifying the volumes of glaciers, has an effect on volcanic and tectonic activity.[23]

Finally, entirely new substances deposited in the planet's ecosystems over the last 150 years (synthetic organic chemistry, hydrocarbons, plastics, some of which form a new type of rock,[24] endocrine disturbants, pesticides, radionuclides dispersed by nuclear tests, fluoride gases) constitute a typical signature of the Anthropocene in the sediments and fossils in the course of formation.

In a few million years from now, therefore, it is probable that geologists (if this profession typical of the Anthropocene survives), examining the rock deposits left by our epoch, will detect a transition as sudden as certain past somersaults in the Earth's billion-year history, such as the famous transition between the Cretaceous and the Tertiary 65 million years ago, when a meteor that hit what is now Central America led to the disappearance of three-quarters of the planet's species, including the dinosaurs. Yet today's geologists do not possess the strictly stratigraphic proof carved in the rock that they generally seek. Nonetheless, even if stratigraphers leave until later its validation in the official series of geological epochs, the Anthropocene thesis remains more robust in its wider geological definition, in terms of the sciences of the Earth system, than those of stratigraphy alone. This interdisciplinary field views the Earth as a complex system, from its core up to the high atmosphere, with subsystems (atmosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere, pedosphere, etc.) that are pervaded and connected by constant flows of matter and energy, in immense feedback loops. In this perspective, as Jan Zalasiewicz, head of the Anthropocene Working Group of the International Commission on Stratigraphy explains, 'The Anthropocene is not about being able to detect human influence in stratigraphy, but reflects a change in the Earth system.'[25]

When did the Anthropocene begin?

If it is not the end of the world, it is certainly the end of an epoch: that of the Holocene, in which we have been living for the last 11,500 years. But at what time by the geological clock was the crime committed? Do we have to incriminate *Homo sapiens*, who appeared in Africa 200,000 years ago and went on to colonize Eurasia, the Americas and the Pacific islands? Did this species not bring about the disappearance of the megafauna (reptiles, birds and giant marsupials, the sabre-toothed tiger, the American lion, the European mammoth) by fire and hunting, everywhere that it settled? These transformations have left traces detected by geologists and archaeologists. Or should we locate the beginning of the Anthropocene just a few thousand years after that of the Holocene, as proposed by William Ruddiman, paleoclimatologist at the University of Virginia? Ruddiman argues that some 5,000 years ago humans had already emitted sufficient greenhouse gases – by deforestation, rice

cultivation and stock-raising – to modify the Earth's climatic trajectory. These emissions and the warming they produced delayed the moment of entry into a new glacial episode. So, according to this controversial hypothesis, human action would already have contributed from the Neolithic age (as Buffon boasted in 1778!) to make the Holocene the longest interval of climate stability for 400,000 years (Figure 2). It was even this stabilization of the climate by human action in the Neolithic age that permitted the development of civilizations.

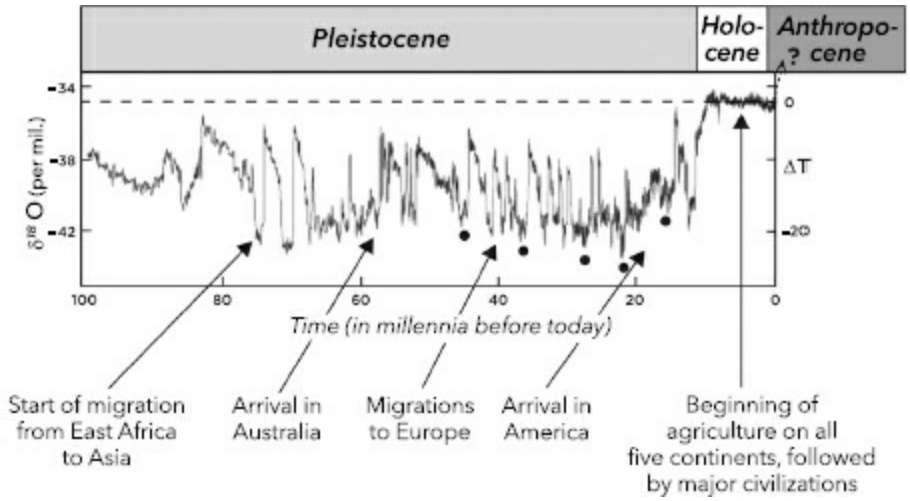

Figure 2: *Temperature and human history over 100,000 years.*
Note the remarkable stability of climate during the Holocene.

The problem with Ruddiman's thesis is that by focusing on the (slow) rise in CO_2 and methane emissions, on the deforestation and agricultural practices of the Neolithic age, it does not take into account the changes of scale brought about by the industrial revolution. For Erle Ellis, who at one time supported this argument before rejecting it, it is only since the nineteenth century that humans have transformed the majority of biomes on the planet.[26]

At the end of the day, Ruddiman's evidence does not contradict that of an Anthropocene beginning with the industrial revolution. After having stabilized the Holocene climate in the Neolithic age (if this hypothesis is confirmed), since the nineteenth century humanity has started to bring the Earth out of the Holocene, entering an Anthropocene marked by sudden swings.

The British geographers Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin have recently proposed starting the Anthropocene with the European conquest of America. This major historical event, so fateful for the Amerindian people and foundational for a capitalist world-economy, did indeed leave its mark in our planet's geology. The unification of the flora and fauna of the Old and New Worlds caused an upheaval in the agricultural, botanical and zoological map of the globe, newly mingling in a biological globalization forms of life separated 200 million years earlier with the break-up of Pangaea and the opening of the Atlantic Ocean. The demographic collapse of the Amerindian population (from between 54 and 61 million in 1492 to just 6 million in 1650, following the wars of conquest, infectious diseases brought by the Europeans, and forced labour) also had the effect of an urban and agricultural retreat and the reforestation of more than 60 million hectares of the American continent, which, by capturing CO_2 , reduced the carbon concentration in the atmosphere from around 279 to 272 ppm between the start of the sixteenth century and 1610.[27] But if this low tide of atmospheric carbon is an ominous stratigraphic marker of one of the most terrible events in human history, the variation does not lie outside the general Holocene range of 260 to 284 ppm.

It was around 1809, under the effect of emissions caused by the growing use of coal, that the

concentration of CO_2 reached the Holocene maximum (284 ppm), going on to reach 290 ppm by the mid nineteenth century. This time the break was of geological amplitude and not simply historical: the terrestrial atmosphere emerged from the Holocene in the early nineteenth century, and it was with the power of fossil fuels that human activities so profoundly transformed the Earth system's biology and geology (Figure 1), thus supporting Paul Crutzen's proposal of beginning the Anthropocene with the industrial revolution.

Other authors, such as the geologist Jan Zalasiewicz, chair of the Anthropocene Working Group, see unambiguous traces of a change of geological epoch in the mid twentieth century. The new radionuclides emitted into the atmosphere from 16 July 1945, when the first atom bomb was exploded in the Nevada desert, the novelty of petrochemical products and the sudden expansion in the use of synthetic nitrate fertilisers, all present very clear stratigraphic signals. The exponential acceleration of human impacts since the Second World War reinforces this hypothesis. The advantage of having the Anthropocene start at this time is that the type of proof sought by stratigraphers can be adduced right away (for example, the presence even at the poles of radioactive isotopes non-existent in nature).[28]

Other members of the community of Earth system scientists, as well as that of the human and social sciences, stand by Paul Crutzen's initial proposal to begin the Anthropocene at the end of the eighteenth century. For if 1945 presents an appropriate stratigraphic signal and indicates a destructive intensification of the Anthropocene, this belated date masks deeper causes and processes, and obscures the major rupture, both environmental and civilizational, of the entry into thermo-industrial society based on fossil fuels. In the present book, while discussing the importance of the conquest of America (Chapter 10) and the 'Great Acceleration' after 1945, our focus will be on the last quarter of a millennium.

Let us sum up. Succeeding the Holocene, a period of 11,500 years marked by a rare climatic stability (apart from the 'little ice ages', significant only on the scale of human history), a period of blossoming agriculture, cities and civilizations, the swing into the Anthropocene represents a new age of the Earth. As Paul Crutzen and Will Steffen have emphasized, under the sway of human action, 'The Earth currently operates in a state without previous analogy.'[29]

The advances in Earth system sciences presented in this chapter offer a new and fundamental regard on the Earth as a complex and fragile system, non-linear and ultimately highly unpredictable. By demonstrating the telescoping of the short timescale of human action and the long timescale of the Earth, these sciences have also opened a new field of investigation that is absolutely fundamental, at the intersection of the natural sciences and the humanities.

Contrary to the end of the Cretaceous period, or Lars von Trier's film *Melancholia*, the Anthropocene shock is not the result of a foreign body that strikes the Earth from outside and derails its geological trajectory. It is our own model of development, our own industrial modernity, which, having claimed to free itself from the limits of the planet, is striking Earth like a boomerang.

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CHAPTER 5

Thermocene: A Political History of CO_2

We are all familiar with the curve that is the very emblem of the Anthropocene, tracing the exponential growth of carbon dioxide emissions over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But no matter how famous this is, the curious fact is that we lack any history of it – a history sufficiently precise, for example, to distinguish the share of responsibility of different technological choices for the climate crisis: Have cars emitted more or less CO_2 than artificial fertilizers? How many times more CO_2 does road freight represent compared with rail and river freight?

Or again, what are the main institutions that have set us on the road to climate cataclysm? What are the great historical processes (imperialism, wars and war preparations, economic globalization, automobiles, Fordism, suburbanization, etc.) that are most important in relation to this curve? These questions currently remain unanswered and constitute the object of what we propose to call the 'history of the Thermocene'.[1]

Political reflection and public debate suffer from this lack of history. For want of precise knowledge, the spontaneous narratives of the environmental crisis are lost in unfocused criticisms, incriminating capitalism in general, or, worse still, modernity. As for the anthropocenologists, we have seen their tendency to propose infra-political narratives that emphasize demography or economic growth.

A history of additions

In what way does the history of the Thermocene that we are aiming at differ from energy history as currently practised?

Because of the climate crisis, energy history is experiencing a revival of interest. According to certain historians, examination of the 'energy transitions' of the past makes it possible to elucidate the conditions that will permit the advent of a renewable energy system.[2] Energy history thus questions the focus of the present debate on production. In past transitions, in fact, demand was the determinant factor: the automobile created the oil industry, the filament lamp created electric power stations, and not the other way round. Energy history also argues for a long-term public support for renewable energies: the first entrepreneurs to adopt a new source of energy played a crucial role in developing engines and improving their performance, and this incremental process could only take place in a niche situation. For example, the first steam engines in England had such poor performance that they were only viable at the mouth of coal mines. Finally, this history questions the pertinence of the present objectives of energy efficiency. On the one hand, in relation to the tendency measured since

1880, they do not seem particularly ambitious;[3] on the other hand, energy history confirms William Stanley Jevons's great discovery about steam engines: by becoming more economic with coal, machines became more profitable, their use spread and the national consumption of coal finally increased. Historians have thus observed rebound effects in several sectors. In Great Britain, for example, between 1800 and 2000, the price of light (measured in lumens) fell by a factor of 3,000, but consumption increased 40,000 times.[4] According to goods and their price elasticity, the rebound effect varies, but on the whole, energy efficiency has been more than outbalanced by economic growth.

Despite these practical results, energy history with a managerial approach is actually based on a serious misunderstanding: what it studies under the name of 'energy transition' actually corresponds to the very opposite of the process that needs to be fostered today in the context of the climate crisis and peak oil.

The bad news is that, if history teaches us one thing, it is that there never has been an energy transition. There was not a movement from wood to coal, then from coal to oil, then from oil to nuclear. The history of energy is not one of transitions, but rather of successive *additions* of new sources of primary energy. The erroneous perspective follows from a confusion between relative and absolute, local and global. If, in the twentieth century, the use of coal decreased in relation to oil, it remains that its consumption continually grew; and on a global level, there was never a year in which so much coal was burned as in 2014.

Energy history must therefore free itself first of all from the concept of transition. This was promoted in the space of politics, media and science precisely so as to spirit away worries bound up with the 'energy crisis', an expression that was then still dominant. Between 1975 and 1980, the term 'energy transition' was invented by think-tanks and popularized by powerful institutions: the US Department of Energy, the Swedish Secretariat for Futures Studies, the Trilateral Commission, the European Community and various industrial lobbies. In most cases, this talk of 'transition' served to indicate an indispensable recourse to so-called 'alternative' fuels: nuclear in particular,[5] but also gas and shale oil, coal and synthetic fuel.[6]

To say 'transition' rather than 'crisis' made the future less generative of anxiety, by attaching it to a planning and managerial rationality.[7] The further success of the notion of transition, as understood particularly in ecological milieus (see the 'solar transition' of the 1980s), also drew on a conception of technology developing in great radical shifts.

On the one hand, however, the notion of transition obscures the persistence of old systems, while on the other hand it overestimates technological determinants to the detriment of economic arbitrage. For example, world coal consumption grew from 7.3 to 8.5 billion tonnes between 2008 and 2012.[8] If China made up the greater part of this growth (from 3.0 to 4.1 billion), there are sectors in which Europe could experience a 'return' to coal. For instance, because of the development of shale gas in the United States, the price of US coal fell so much that it was profitable to substitute it for Russian gas. In Britain, the proportion of electricity produced from coal grew from 30 to 42 per cent between 2011 and 2012; in France, the consumption of coal for electricity generation leapt by 79 per cent.[9] In this sense, coal is not an 'older' energy than oil, but looks more likely to be its successor.

An example drawn from the book by Kenneth Pomeranz, *A Great Divergence*, clarifies the issue for the writing of history. Take two technologies: the steam engine and the Chinese furnace, more economic on energy than its European counterpart. How should we judge their historical importance?

Why does the first seem worthy of historians' interest, while the second is generally unknown? It is only the abundance of coal that makes the capacity to draw more energy from combustibles appear more determinant, and relegates Chinese furnaces to a footnote.[10] If the English coal mines had shown signs of exhaustion from 1800 on, the hierarchy would have been reversed. The oil peak and climate change thus raise the question of direction in the history of technology, forcing us to reconsider its objects and envisage a 'disoriented' history.

If it is to dispense with the idea of transition, energy history should abandon its classic terrain and study past historical situations in which societies were forced to reduce their energy consumption. The crisis of the 1930s offers some interesting cases: carbon emissions in the United States fell from 520 to 340 million tonnes, and in France from 66 to 55 million. In the latter case, this reduction was not just bound up with the recession, but also with the differential evolution of prices: that of coal rose by 40 per cent during the crisis, while the general price index stagnated. It was also in the 1930s that wood fuel experienced a peak, before a definitive decline after the Second World War.[11] A historian of energy degrowth could also study the case of post-war Germany (from 185 to 32 million tonnes of carbon), or, nearer our own time, the fall of the Soviet Union (606 million tonnes in 1992, 419 million in 2002). In each of these cases, production fell sharply (the GDP of the former USSR falling by half between 1992 and 2002).[12]

The examples of North Korea or Cuba after the fall of the USSR allow us to give a concrete meaning to what may lie concealed behind the pleasant euphemism of 'energy transition'. Between 1992 and 1998, deprived of Soviet oil, North Korean agriculture based on mechanization and chemical inputs saw its yields of maize, wheat and rice fall by half. The North Korean state prioritized fuel supply to the army, leaving between 600,000 and a million of its citizens (3 to 5 per cent of the population) to succumb to famine before deciding to call for international food aid.

In the same period, deprived of Soviet oil and under American embargo, the Cubans confronted for a ten-year *periodo especial*, a situation that presents certain similarities with that awaiting our industrial societies. In order to save on energy, working hours in industry were reduced, domestic electricity consumption was rationed, the use of bicycles and car pools was generalized, the university system was decentralized, solar energy and biogas were developed (supplying 10 per cent of electricity). In agriculture, the cost of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, very greedy in terms of energy, led the Cubans to innovate: biological control of pests by insect predators, organic fertilizers, and urban horticulture that enabled the recycling of organic waste. Finally, food was strictly rationed.[13] Cuban bodies were significantly modified by the special period. In 1993, when the crisis was at its worst, the daily ration was reduced to 1,900 kilocalories. Cubans lost an average of five kilos per person, which had the benefit of reducing cardiovascular disease by 30 per cent.[14] What is most disturbing, given the efforts made by the Cuban population, is that the reduction in CO_2 emissions was in the end rather modest, falling in ten years from 10 million to 6.5 million tonnes, much less than the 40 to 70 per cent reduction of world emissions by 2050 called for by the IPCC that would cap global warming at a two-degree celsius increase.

Nor should we fall prey to illusion as to our technological capacity to reduce the energy shock. The French nuclear power programme of the 1970s and '80s offers a vivid demonstration of this: despite colossal public investment (in the order of 400 billion francs at 1990 prices), French CO_2 emissions continued to rise during these two decades, from 90 million to 110 million tonnes per year.

A history of inefficiency

In relation to energy history, the history of the Thermocene also needs to free itself from two abstractions that overdetermine results: GDP and the very concept of energy.

The exponential growth curves traced by historians are based on nineteenth-century thermodynamics, that is, an intellectual project that brings every form of work (from brain to blast furnace) into a generalized equivalence, on the hypothesis of a general substitutability of energy sources. The main difficulty is that this history depends on statistics of energy production. It counts the energy theoretically available from a kilogram of coal or oil, rather than the services actually performed by combustion. This has two consequences: since the quantity of energy contained in fossil fuel is immense, it overwhelms renewable energy systems, whether organic or simply economical. The history of energy thus very likely overestimates the upheaval introduced by fossil fuels.

Take the case of gas lighting, for example. This technology, which appeared in London in the 1810s, was extraordinarily inefficient. It consisted in distilling coal – using more coal to heat this – in order to produce a gas designed to light housing or streets. Its energy yield was absolutely disastrous: a third of the coal was burned to produce gas, a third of this gas escaped in pipes that massively leaked, and at the end of the day the light it gave was very poor. Contemporaries had a very clear perception of both the dangers and the waste involved in this technique.[15] In this particular case, the transition from oil lamps to gas lighting, that is, from an organic and locally applied energy to a fossil energy distributed over a network, while massively increasing energy consumption, above all increased the losses.

Secondly, the 'energy consumed per capita' traced by historians actually corresponds to national production of energy divided by population. It includes for example the energy spent on waging wars, running the navy and controlling the empire, as well as the energy dissipated in inefficient technological systems. What we lack is a history of energy services, which would show the energy actually used by different classes of consumers.

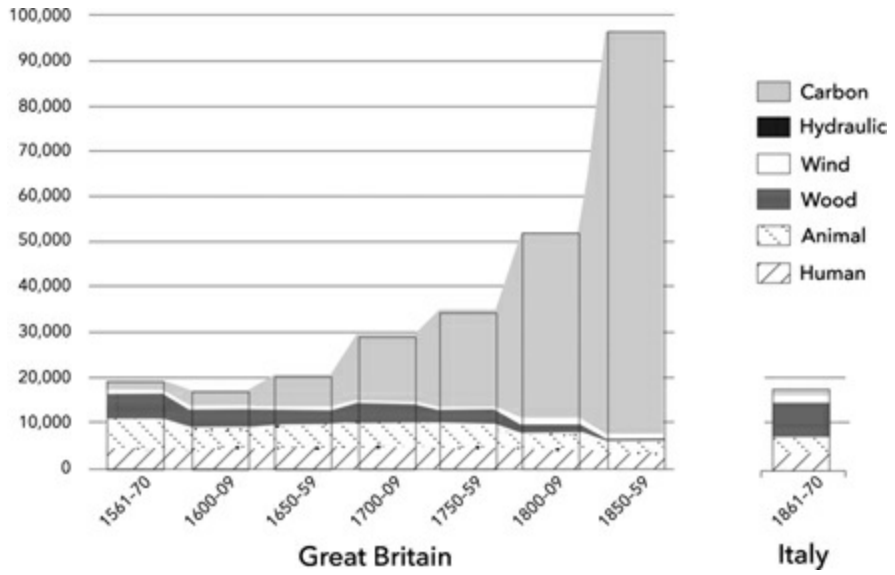

Figure 6: *Annual energy consumption per capita in England and Italy (in megajoules)*

GDP is no less problematic than the concept of energy. In studying the evolution of the ratio between GDP and energy consumed, historians conclude that the energy intensity of industrial economies has steadily decreased from around the 1880s. But what does this result mean?

First of all, it is based on the debatable hypothesis that GDP is a genuine measure of wealth produced. But according to this logic, buying a car that costs £20,000 and does 30 miles per gallon increases the energy performance of the economy more than buying a car that costs £10,000 and does 50 miles per gallon. Secondly, the ratio of GDP to energy aggregates processes that are completely different: the growth in the share of financial services in GDP in the late twentieth century improved energy efficiency only in a completely artificial sense. Thirdly, one of the great lessons of economic analysis in terms of energy, as this was practised in the 1970s, was on the contrary to show the decrease of energy yield in certain sectors, of which the case of agriculture was the best studied. The ecologists David and Marcia Pimentel, for example, showed that the transition from a traditional agriculture to an intensive and mechanized one led to a *fall* in energy yield: more calories (basically derived from oil) had to be used in order to produce each calorie of food. In the case of maize, the shift was from a ratio of ten calories produced for each calorie invested to a ratio of only three to one.[16] The generalization of this type of analysis, that is, a general history of thermodynamic (in)efficiency (taking up Ivan Illich's thesis of counter-productivity), would undoubtedly lead to a far more ambiguous account than that conveyed by energy history and its ascendant curves of energy, wealth and efficiency.

A history of alternatives

Finally, and this is its chief objective, the history of the Thermocene will have to *denaturalize* the history of energy. The latter was not written in advance: its transitions and additions follow neither an internal logic of technical progress (the first steam engines were very expensive and highly inefficient), nor a logic of scarcity and substitution (the United States, which possesses immense forests, resorted to coal on a massive scale in the nineteenth century), nor even a logic that was simply economic.

The history of energy is also and above all one of political, military and ideological choices that the historian has to analyse, by relating them to the strategic interests and objectives of certain social groups. This political reading of energy history is particularly important in the present climate context: recourse to unconventional oil and shale gas shows that it is never 'natural' reserves that are allowed to dictate the tempo of energy transition. According to climate models, at least two-thirds of proven reserves of oil and coal would have to be left in the ground in order to limit the rise in temperature to less than two degrees by 2100.[17] To prevent runaway climate change, it is absolutely necessary to put a political constraint in place before 'price signals' force us to change models.

In this field as in others, however, history has an extraordinary power to denaturalize. Historical analysis dissolves many prejudices as to the supposedly indispensable character of certain technologies. For example, in 1914 coal made up only 2.7 per cent of French GDP, and 6 per cent of British GDP in 1907.[18] The historian Robert Fogel has also shown that, contrary to accepted ideas, without the railways the United States could have had the same very rapid economic development that it had in the nineteenth century. In 1890, the 'social profit'[19] of the railways as compared with the best available alternative (an improvement in canals and carting) represented only between 0.6 per cent and 1 per cent of American GDP. Given the rapid growth of the United States at this time, Fogel concludes that the absence of railways would only have slowed the development of the American economy by a few months!

In the same way, the historian Nick von Tunzelmann[20] calculated that in 1800, in England, the social profit of steam engines represented less than a thousandth of GDP. Induced effects at this time were all but non-existent. For example, the major innovations in textiles (mechanical loom, spinning jenny) *preceded* the application of steam. Tony Wrigley calls England in the age of the industrial revolution an 'advanced organic economy' oriented primarily to agriculture. The number of horses in fact rose from 1.29 million in 1811 to 3.28 million in 1901.[21] Andreas Malm has similarly shown that the energy potential of English rivers was far from being fully exploited. The switch of the cotton industry to coal that took place in the 1830s was not caused by a scarcity of energy or a simple economic calculation. On the contrary, the 1820s and '30s realized large-scale hydraulic projects that combined reservoirs, dams and mills to ensure the industrialists of Lancashire and Scotland a renewable energy at a lower price than steam. Their defeat was due to the industrialists' refusal to submit to the collective discipline that a common management of hydraulic resources would have imposed: how to be sure that the energy needed would be available at the right moment, how to guarantee paying only for one's own motive power, and how to expand a factory easily. All these problems and many others necessitated a collective coordination and centralization to which the entrepreneurs were unwilling to undergo. The steam engine, on the other hand, despite being more expensive, constituted a flexible, modular and individual source of energy that matched very well the ideology of English textile capitalism of the 1830s.[22]

If we consider the case of shipping, wind energy was still largely dominant in the late nineteenth century: in 1868, 92 per cent of British merchant shipping was powered by sail.[23] In the same year, British dockyards produced 879 sailing ships and 232 steam ships. The second half of the nineteenth century was the age of the clippers, large sailing ships that broke speed records to sell their cargoes ahead of their competitors and profit from higher prices. It was not until the early twentieth century that steam overtook sail in global tonnage. The economic globalization of the late nineteenth century, therefore, was carried out for the most part by wind power.

The focus of historians on energy, the industrial revolution and fossil fuel obscures economic transformations that were equally important. For example, the demographic explosion of the English-speaking countries in the nineteenth century was based on a 'non-industrial' revolution: on the energies of wind, water, animals and wood. It would be reductive to term these energies 'traditional'. Thanks to selective breeding, livestock were rapidly improved: the American draught horses of the 1890s were 50 per cent more powerful than those of the 1860s. The trotting record for a mile fell from three minutes to two minutes between 1840 and 1880. Historians estimate that in 1850 horses provided half of all American energy. The number of horses in the United States, in fact, reached its peak at the end of the century: in Chicago and New York, in 1900, there was approximately one horse for every twenty-five people.[24] Likewise, in 1870, thanks to new turbines, hydraulic power supplied 75 per cent of industrial energy.[25]

More generally, the history of renewable energy sources – animal, wind and solar – before these were considered as merely 'alternative', shows a past rich in neglected technological paths and unrealized potentialities. The relatively few works on this subject lead to striking results: at the end of the nineteenth century, 6 million windmills, operating the same number of wells, played the historically fundamental role in opening up the plains of the American Midwest to agriculture and husbandry. These windmills were not pre-industrial but rotors built according to the principles of fluid dynamics, capable of following the wind and produced on a mass scale.[26] In the American farmland, decentralized electricity production (using windmills and battery storage) remained

dominant until the great programmes of rural electrification of the New Deal and post-war years.[27]

In the same way, in the late nineteenth century, solar energy aroused considerable interest on the part of the French government because of an anticipated shortage of coal and the exploitation of tropical colonies. Several technologies were experimented with. In the 1870s, Augustin Mouchot invented the first solar steam engine. He received large subsidies to develop his system in Algeria, a country with no coal resources.[28] In 1885, the engineer Charles Tellier, who had made a fortune in developing refrigeration procedures, developed a solar collector that ran on ammonia.[29] At the start of the twentieth century, in the United States, the Sun Power Company already sold solar engines. Their cost may have been higher than that of classic steam engines, but it was far from prohibitive in appropriate conditions: $164 per horsepower as against between $40 and $90 for coal.[30]

It was in domestic use above all that solar energy almost came to dominate. In California and Florida, the combination of abundant sunshine and distance from collieries explains the rapid development of solar water heaters. In the 1920s, an investment of $20 could save $9 per year in coal.

'Passive house' technologies were developed in the 1930s: making maximum use of orientation, sunshine and shade, large south-facing windows, insulating blind walls to the north and double-glazing (which appeared on the market in 1932). These were in general luxury homes in the American individualist tradition, which sought to free themselves from urban constraints bound up with energy networks.

During the Second World War, the American government financed large-scale research programmes aiming to reduce domestic oil consumption and maximize the share sent to the front. After the war, the fear of exhaustion of resources was an encouragement for solar power. In 1945, MOMA held an exhibition on affordable solar homes (less than $3,000), which seemed at the time the only available option to tackle the country's housing need in the post-war years.[31] In 1948, Mária Telkes, a physicist at MIT, developed a solar home that was 75 per cent self-sufficient in energy. Physicists who had worked on the Manhattan project, such as Farrington Daniels, switched their interest from civil nuclear power to solar. In 1952, the Paley Commission on US natural resources predicted an oil peak in the 1970s and advised the development of solar, wind and biomass. Finally, resorting to simpler technologies, small companies sold hundreds of thousands of solar water heaters. In Florida in the early 1950s, almost 80 per cent of homes were equipped with these.[32]

A political history of CO_2

By relativizing the inexorable character of fossil fuels, history enables us to re-politicize their present domination.

The notions of irreversibility ('lock-in') and path dependency make it possible to grasp the importance of political choices in energy policy.[33] 'Initial conditions' such as the abundance of coal or oil, but also political conditions that encourage one source of energy rather than another, determine technological trajectories over a very long term. These decisions are then perpetuated by regulatory frameworks, by the need to protect investments, by the existence of infrastructures bound up with this energy source, as well as by customs, culture, etc. Analysing in this way the decisions that produced our almost exclusive dependence on fossil fuels dispels the illusion of an optimal and efficient

contemporary technological world.

In Great Britain in 1935, for example, the industry that consumed most coal was gas for lighting, even above steel. It consumed a fifth of English coal production (or 23 million tonnes). Using coal to produce light, however, is very bad business: 728 tonnes were needed to produce £100,000 in profit, as against 240 tonnes in steel-making and only 120 in electricity, the rival technology.[34] Major technological systems such as gas lighting (or nuclear power) have a very great inertia: the volume of capital invested, and the interests involved, explain their survival a half century after the appearance of far more efficient technologies.

Conversely, promising technologies may be killed off at birth. In the 1950s, in the United States, investment in solar energy came to an end with the development of suburbs, the promotion of low-cost prefabricated homes (the famous Levittowns) and very aggressive marketing on the part of electricity companies. In 1968, Congress commissioned a study of these practices. General Electric was even threatening building developers not to connect new estates if they offered alternative sources of power. For such developers, offering only electricity made it possible to reduce construction costs and shift energy expenditure onto the homeowners.[35] This was how, in the 1950s and ’60s, the thermodynamic aberration of electric heating was promoted in the United States without any technological necessity for it.

The suburbanization and motorization of Western societies are certainly the most massive example of a technological and civilizational choice that is profoundly suboptimal and harmful. In the United States between the two world wars, suburbanization was a political project: the one-family house seemed the best rampart against Communism, and President Herbert Hoover deliberately encouraged it so as to stimulate the property instinct. In 1926, in order to protect property values, the Supreme Court legitimized the practice of zoning, separating residential spaces from both industrial activity and ethnic minorities. During the Great Depression, construction and suburbanization were perceived as an essential factor for economic revival.

After the Second World War, an economicist and free-market vision of urban development came to dominate, based on the rational choice of consumers who arbitrated between housing and transport expenditure. In this logic, given that the price of mobility was steadily falling and that of housing relatively stable, town planners were bound to project the development of megapolises in synchrony with mass motorization.[36]

In actual fact, if we look more closely, the choice of the individual car corresponds to processes that are far more contingent than is generally believed. American historians have shown that the dismantling of streetcars and suburban railways, and their replacement by individual cars and buses running on petrol, did not follow any technological or economic logic, but considerably increased the costs of mobility, and in the medium term even slowed this down![37]

In 1902, in the United States, streetcars carried 5 billion people on some 35,000 kilometres of electrified lines. This was a safe and relatively comfortable mode of transport. Given the national rail network, the development of urban and interurban electric trams and the lack of good highways, the individual motor car did not seem a particularly promising technology in America at the start of the twentieth century.

The switch from collective to individual transport, which seemed absurd to many contemporaries, was rooted in an old antagonism that opposed local authorities to the streetcar companies. At the start of the twentieth century, the latter were subject to constant attack by the press and public authorities, which presented their monopoly situation as a restriction on business freedom. At the same time,

Ford's Model T invaded the streets (the number of cars in New York rose from 40,000 in 1915 to 612,000 in 1927), slowing down streetcars and trolley-buses. These cars also increased the running costs of public transport, since in the majority of cities the streetcar companies were responsible for maintaining their routes in good shape – in New York, this cost them 23 per cent of their revenue.[38] On top of this were the charges they paid to the local authority. Paradoxically, the streetcar actually subsidized the automobile.

The concessions granted in the 1880s and '90s no longer corresponded to the new economic situation. The sacrosanct 'nickel fare', for example, had not followed the doubling of the hourly wage during the First World War or the compulsory presence of a second employee in each streetcar. The streetcars' competitors, for their part, were not subject to any of these regulations: the 1920s saw the proliferation of the 'jitney bus', collective pirate taxis that picked up passengers at the streetcar stops. This was the decade when investors turned away from the streetcar companies. Streetcars and trolley-buses seemed to be obsolete technologies.

The second act in the tragedy of the streetcars took place in the 1930s. Two great corporations, General Electric and Insull, now owned the majority of the streetcar companies, their interest being to smooth out consumption peaks and optimize the production of their power stations. In 1935, the Wheeler-Rayburn Act compelled local electricity companies to sell their streetcar divisions. Suddenly, hundreds of small and unprofitable companies were placed on the market. General Motors, Standard Oil and Firestone dealt them the final blow, allying themselves with two small transport businesses, the Rapid Transit Company and Yellow Coach, to purchase the streetcar companies in some fifty American cities at rock-bottom prices. Once in control, they closed down the streetcar lines or replaced them with petrol buses, in order to create new outlets for the automobile industry. In 1949, a court decision against General Motors, Firestone and Standard Oil fined them a derisory $5,000.[39]

In the 1930s, in both France and the United Kingdom, cities had a free-market approach to urban transport: trams were compelled to be profitable and could not be subsidized. Companies adopted a Malthusian policy, concentrating on profitable lines and delaying investment. With the economic crisis, many lines closed, and by the 1950s, the majority of cities had lost their networks.[40] The comparison with Weimar Germany is instructive, confirming the importance of politics in the definition of modes of transport. First of all, given the central position of the coal-rail industrial complex and the relative weakness of the automobile industry, the German government had no interest in encouraging suburbanization and motorization. On the contrary, in 1927 the ruling Social Democratic Party (SPD) chose to tax motor cars heavily in order to finance public transport. The creation of the public rail company Deutsche Bahn in 1920, along with the municipalizing of the majority of tram companies, was likewise an element in a social policy aiming to reduce the cost of transport for workers.[41]

The Anthropocene is an Anglocene

The eminently political nature of energy additions is confirmed by the historical statistics of CO_2 emissions: Great Britain and the United States made up 60 per cent of cumulative total emissions to date in 1900, 57 per cent in 1950 and almost 50 per cent in 1980. From the standpoint of climate, the Anthropocene should rather be called an 'Anglocene'.

Comparison between France and Great Britain is instructive. In 1913, the British GDP per capita was 20 per cent higher than the French, while cumulative British emissions were four times that of France (6 billion tonnes of carbon as against 1.5 billion). During the long nineteenth century, therefore, the British emitted four times as much CO_2 to reach a standard of living not much greater than France. The great historiographical thesis of the plurality of paths of industrialization and the 'soft industrialization' of France, long preserving a dispersed industry inserted into the rural fabric and based on human, animal and hydraulic energy,[42] is thus entirely confirmed by the very different responsibilities of the two countries for the present climate crisis. In 2008, France's cumulative emissions made up 4 per cent of the world total, while those of Great Britain constituted 10 per cent.

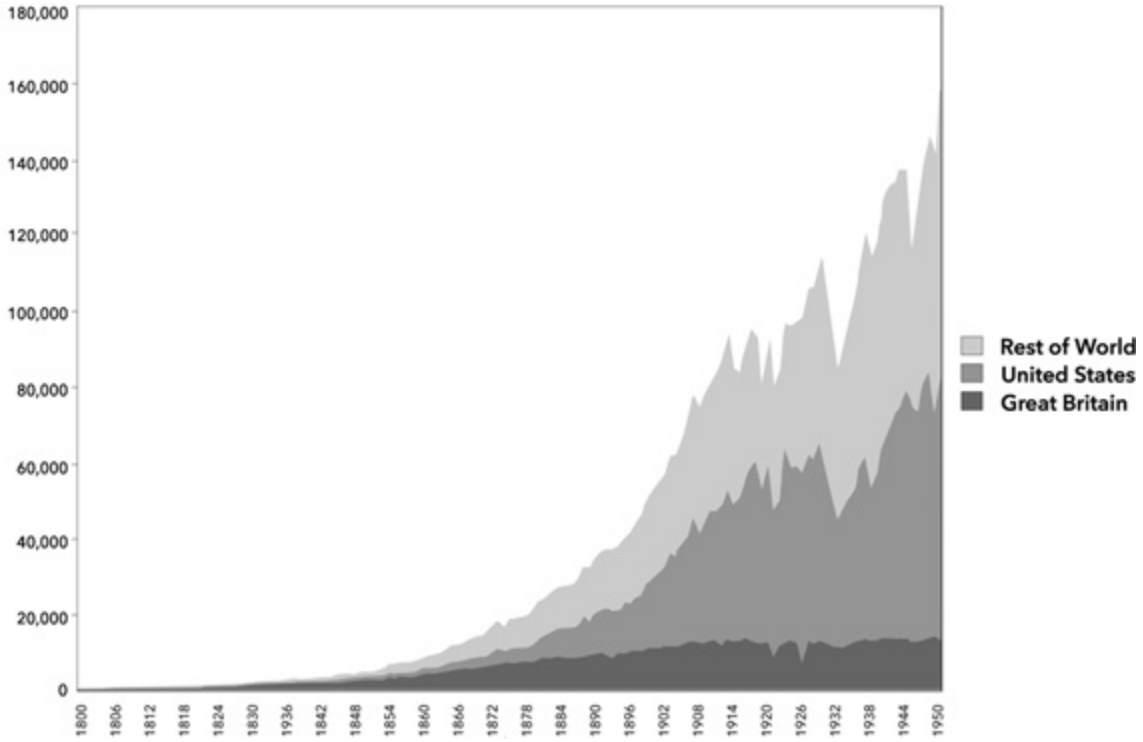

Figure 7: *Annual emissions in thousand tonnes of carbon*

The overwhelming share of responsibility for climate change of the two hegemonic powers of the nineteenth (Great Britain) and twentieth (United States) centuries attests to the fundamental link between climate change and projects of world domination.

Coal was indeed the fuel of British hegemony. Besides those territories directly under Westminster's control, Great Britain possessed an immense 'informal empire' based on the export of people, capital, technologies and engineers, an empire founded on free trade, which systematically worked to its advantage thanks to its control of economic circuits. Coal exports made it possible to fill the holds of ships leaving England[43] and contributed to the exceptional profitability of the British Merchant Navy.

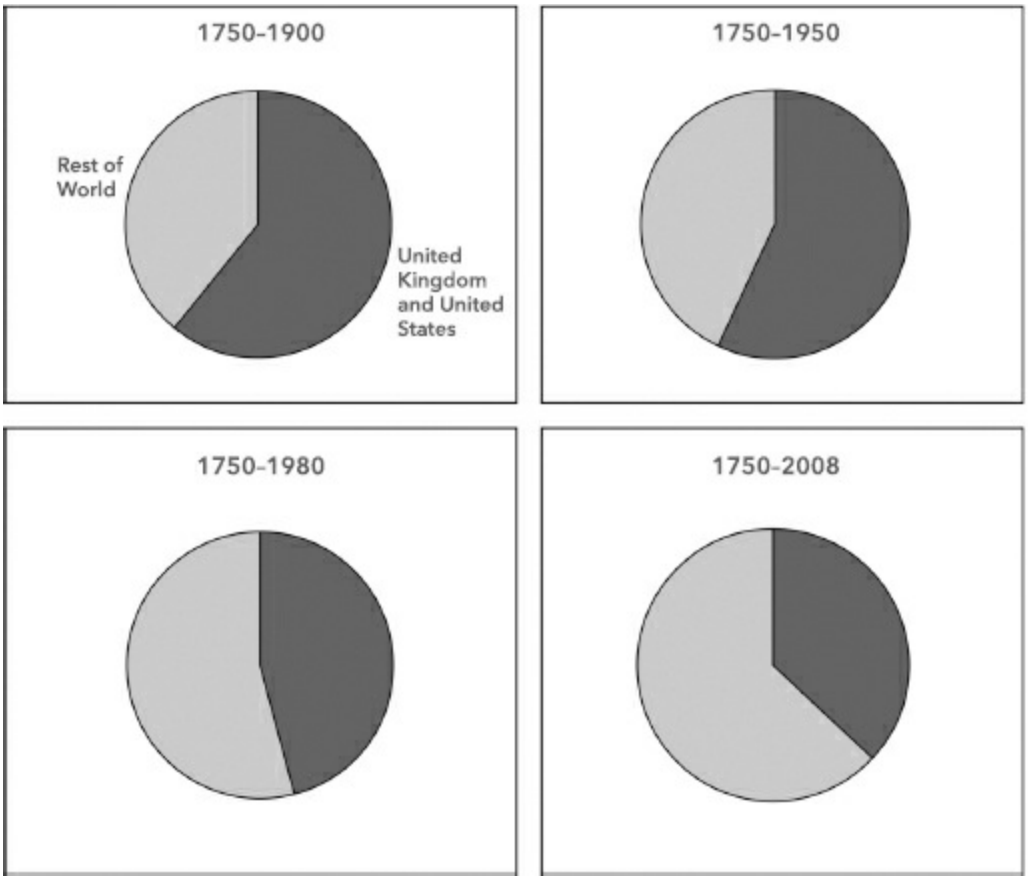

Figure 8: *UK and USA's share in global cumulative CO_2 emissions*

Between 1815 and 1880, five-sixths of the British capital invested abroad was outside the formal empire, chiefly in activities that were high emitters of CO_2 (see Chapter 10 on the 'Capitalocene'). Let us take a concrete example that shows the link between the British informal empire and the globalization of coal. After the Napoleonic wars, the British government imposed bilateral trade agreements on the newly independent countries of South America. From the 1820s, British traders and engineers flocked there in droves and bought up many mines, particularly copper mines in Chile and Peru. The city of Swansea in Wales, already specialized in the refining of ore from Cornwall, became the world capital of copper. This was an unprecedented historical phenomenon: raw material was shipped to the other end of the world to be transformed and sometimes re-exported to its country of origin.

Coal lay at the heart of this globalization. Swansea had a competitive energy source in the coal mines of South Wales and an expertise in smelting with coke, while the exported coal served as cargo for the voyage to South America.[44] The export of British expertise led to a new interest in coal throughout the world.

US hegemony in the twentieth century was based similarly on carbon. The energy intensity of American development has been explained in terms of the colonial origins of the country. In the early nineteenth century labour was scarce, while raw materials, wood and coal, were found in great abundance. Employers thus had an interest in reducing the need for labour and using machines instead, irrespective of their productivity in terms of energy.

The historians Bruce Podobnick and Tim Mitchell have recently introduced a new argument into this familiar story. Throughout the twentieth century, oil was constantly more expensive than coal – far more so in Europe, and a little more in the United States.[45] How then are we to explain its extraordinary rise from 5 per cent of world energy in 1910 to more than 60 per cent in 1970?

In their view, social history provides the key to this enigma. In contrast to oil, coal has to be extracted from mines piece by piece, loaded onto conveyors, transported by rail or boat, then again loaded into furnaces that have to be fuelled, overseen and cleaned. The weight of coal gave miners the power to interrupt the energy flow that fuelled the economy. Their demands, after long being suppressed, had finally to be taken into account: from the 1880s, great miners' strikes contributed to the emergence of trade unions and mass political parties, the extension of universal suffrage and the adoption of social insurance legislation.

Once the historical connection between coal and the democratic advances of the late nineteenth century is brought into the equation, the petrolization of America and then Europe gains a new political meaning. It corresponds to a political project, which the United States facilitated in order to defuse working-class movements. Oil is far more capital-intensive than labour-intensive; its extraction is done on the surface and thus easier to control, requiring a great variety of skills and a labour force that fluctuates greatly in numbers. All that makes the creation of powerful trade unions difficult.

One of the objectives of the Marshall Plan was to encourage recourse to oil in order to weaken the miners and their unions, and thereby anchor the European countries to the Western bloc. As with every emergent technological system, oil needed to be massively subsidized. The funds of the European Recovery Program served for the construction of refineries and the purchase of generators. In the post-war decade, more than a half of the petrol supplied to Europe was directly subsidized by the ERP.

Thanks to its fluid nature, oil made it possible to bypass transport networks and the workers who operated these. Pipelines and tankers, by reducing loading breaks, created an energy network that was far less intensive in labour, more flexible and decidedly international. In the 1970s, 80 per cent of oil was exported. With a supply that was now global, industrial capitalism became far less vulnerable to the demands of national labour forces. Finally, the oil network was centred on a few key points (wells, refineries and terminals), and thus readily controllable.[46]

Historians have analysed in the same fashion the 'green revolution' of the 1960s, connecting it with the Cold War and the American policy of stemming Communist influence. The US government, with the aid of the Ford and Rockefeller foundations, then the World Bank, set out to win the hearts of the rural masses of Asia and Latin America by modernizing their agriculture and assuring their food security. The green revolution was based on hybrid varieties of rice and maize, along with the use of machines, pesticides and chemical fertilizers, consumption of which rose from 30 million to 110 million tonnes between 1960 and 1980. As a strategy for increasing production, the results were incontestable: production of wheat, rice and maize rose considerably, from Mexico to India. But this agricultural model did not meet the needs of small peasants and led to countless environmental side-effects: water tables were exhausted and polluted, soils salinized and compacted, etc.[47] The green revolution, very demanding in terms of energy, also completed the petrolization of the world.

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1 Jacques Grinevald and Alain Gras introduced the concept of 'thermo-industrial civilization'. See Alain Gras, *Le Choix du feu. Aux origines de la crise climatique*, Paris: Fayard, 2007. We owe the 'Thermocene' neologism to Thierry Sallantin.

2 The journal *Energy Policy* recently devoted an issue to this theme. See Arnulf Grubler, 'Energy Transitions Research: Insights and Cautionary Tales', *Energy Policy*, 50, 2012: 8–16; Charlie Wilson and Arnulf Grubler, 'Lessons from the History of Technological Change for Clean Energy Scenarios and Policies', *Natural Resources Forum*, 35:3, 2011: 165–84; Vaclav Smil, *Energy Transitions: History, Requirements, Prospects*, Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010.

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CHAPTER 10

Capitalocene: A Combined History of Earth System and World-Systems

If, as Fredric Jameson put it, 'it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism',[1] this is because capitalism has become coextensive with the Earth. The last three centuries have been characterized by an extraordinary accumulation of capital: despite destructive wars, this grew by a factor of 134 between 1700 and 2008.[2] The dynamic of capital accumulation gave rise to a 'second nature' made up of roads, plantations, railways, mines, pipelines, wells, power stations, futures markets and container ships, financial positions and banks that structure flows of matter, energy, goods and capital on a world scale. It is this profit-oriented technostructure that swung the Earth system into the Anthropocene. The change in geological regime is the act of the 'age of capital' (Eric Hobsbawm), rather than simply the 'age of man' as the dominant narratives claim.

Marx saw capitalism as a mechanism for the self-production of money (the formula M–C–M'), resulting from a mode of production that aimed no longer at the manufacture of useful objects but rather that of commodities sold to increase capital. This became an 'automaton subject', to the detriment of human freedom and the integrity of the Earth, hence Marx's metaphor of the Moloch that demands that the whole world be sacrificed to it. Following him, Marxist writers have analysed ecological degradation as a metabolic rift specific to the intrinsic logic of capitalism.[3] They have described the inability of capitalism to reproduce not only the worker, but also the environment, as its 'second contradiction'.[4] But the mobilization of the world by capitalism has taken extremely diverse forms according to place and time, from the agrarian and rent-seeking capitalism that still prevailed in the British countryside in the nineteenth century, based on the differential fertility of soils (and thus on their relative maintenance), through to the fossil, mining and oil capitalism that drilled its wells across the world as resources were exhausted – from the slave trade to nanosecond trading. Thus, instead of the great universals of 'capital' or the 'human species', this chapter sets out to analyse the historical metabolisms of the capitalist 'world-systems' of the last quarter millennium and their effects on the Earth system in a way that illuminates both the history of capitalism and the genesis of the Anthropocene.

The notion of world-system was developed by the work of Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein[5] as a way of grasping historically the globalization of the economy and the perpetuation of economic inequalities between regions of the world.[6] In 400 years of accumulation since the fifteenth century, four successive world-systems can be distinguished, centred on four successive hegemonic powers: the Italian cities (which financed the American expansion), Holland, Great Britain (from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century) and the United States.

The notion of world-system has the double advantage of being not only historical and dynamic, but also systemic and global, making it possible to open a constructive dialogue with the sciences of the Earth system that are likewise systemic and global.[7] Vis-à-vis a transformed Earth system we no longer have an undifferentiated 'anthropos', but rather historical systems of domination that each organize in a distinct fashion flows of matter, energy, commodities and capitals on a global scale. As Wallerstein emphasizes, these systems are structurally inegalitarian: the hegemonic nations accumulate capital, guaranteeing the middle classes a certain standard of living and thus maintaining the domestic social order and financing infrastructure, education, health, mobility and innovation. These states, and above all the businesses that they protect, have the economic power and the military strength to extract raw material at low cost in the peripheral countries, to exploit there if necessary a low-paid labour force, to export outdated goods and to pollute their environments.

The notion of world-system is currently being revisited from the perspective of flows of matter and energy, thermodynamics and ecological footprint.[8] These studies have revealed the existence of successive world-ecologies[9] co-generated by each phase in the history of the world-economy. These equally show that the prosperity of the rich countries is constructed by way of a monopolization of the benefits of the Earth and an externalization of environmental damages by the phenomena of dispossession and 'unequal exchange'.

In *Capital*, Marx already noted that the economically subjugated position of Ireland meant that 'for a century and a half, England has indirectly exported the soil of Ireland'.[10] This asymmetry is produced not only in predation (the concept of 'appropriation by dispossession' proposed by David Harvey)[11] and unequal exchange in terms of embodied labour,[12] but also through the ecological or energy content of the goods exchanged. Exchange is said to be ecologically unequal when the territories of the periphery export products of high ecological use-value against products that have a lesser ecological use-value. This ecological value can be measured in terms of the acreage needed for the production of different ecosystemic services, of 'ecological footprint',[13] of embodied energy or 'emergy' in international exchange,[14] of matter,[15] entropy,[16] or of the waste and damage generated.

For example, on the basis of Georgescu-Roegen's thermodynamic analysis of the economy, André Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein have envisaged the world system as a dissipative structure. In each of its phases, the systems of production and exchange export entropy into the Earth system and distribute this entropy unequally across the planet.[17] This new accounting in terms of the hectares, energy, greenhouse gas, entropy or matter (water, biomass, mineral ores, etc.) embodied in world economic exchange has triggered a mushrooming of new statistical methods and series that provide a new and rematerialized understanding of the history of societies by illuminating their metabolism, and the successive world-ecologies that they produce and of which they form part.

At a time when millions of poor people are affected by climate disturbance and come to swell the tide of migrants, this ecological reading of the history of world-systems also has a resonance in terms of the major issues of geopolitics and environmental justice. Shortly before the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, while the Climate Convention was being negotiated, two Indian ecologists put forward the idea of a historic debt of the rich countries in ecological terms.[18] They proposed to attribute to each inhabitant of the planet an emission right that took account of the past emissions of their fellow-citizens. A senior Chinese leader asserted in 2009 that

> the climate crisis is the result of the very uneven pattern of economic development that evolved over the past two centuries, which allowed today's rich countries to attain their current levels of income, in part through not having to account for the

environmental damage now threatening the lives and livelihoods of others.[19]

It is in response to this kind of instrumentalization of the notion of a 'common but differentiated responsibility' that certain historians, such as Dipesh Chakrabarty, have sought to disconnect the history of capitalism from that of the Anthropocene. For him, 'it is thanks to the poor (that is, thanks to the fact that development is unequal and unjust) that we do not emit still higher amounts of greenhouse gases into the biosphere'. He continues, 'Those who link climate change exclusively to historical origins, or to the formation of inequalities of wealth in the modern world, raise questions about historical inequalities' that are not pertinent to cast light on the historical genesis of the new state of the Earth that the Anthropocene is.[20] It is remarkable that after having proclaimed the encounter between human history and that of the Earth as characteristic of the Anthropocene,[21] Chakrabarty now postulates a separation, a mutual 'indifference', between the history of dominations and inequalities among humans and that of the ecological and geological disturbances inflicted on the Earth. This paradox enables him to conclude that 'from a logical point of view, the climate crisis is not in itself the result of economic inequalities'.[22]

If the argument seems 'logical' from a static point of view (the poorest do indeed have a lighter ecological footprint), in historical terms it is highly questionable. For two centuries, the development of industrial countries has generated a great divergence of incomes between their populations and those of the poor countries: in 1820, the poorest 20 per cent on the planet obtained 4.7 per cent of world income, falling to only 2.2 per cent in 1992.[23] As we shall see in this chapter, the industrial development model and its metabolism in terms of matter and energy, which altered the geological trajectory of our Earth, is inseparable from the history of capitalist world-systems, of unequal ecological exchange, of colonialism and imperialism, of exploitation and underdevelopment.

The rise of industrial capitalism and the swing into the Anthropocene: a global reading

The standard account of the Anthropocene offers a very Eurocentric history, in which global disruption is supposedly a secondary effect of a European wave of innovations leading the world towards growth. Thinking the Anthropocene as a 'Capitalocene' forces us to reconsider the pertinence of this starting-point and propose a more global reading. It was indeed in the early nineteenth century, with the start of the industrial age, that the entire Earth system was affected and humanity became a geological rather than simply a biological force, yet to begin the Anthropocene around 1800 obscures the essential fact that industrial capitalism was intensely prepared for by the 'mercantile capitalism' that begun in the sixteenth century, not least in its destructive relationship to nature. To speak of a 'Capitalocene'[24] signals that the Anthropocene did not arise fully armed from the brain of James Watt, the steam engine and coal, but rather from a long historical process of economic exploitation of human beings and the world, going back to the sixteenth century and making industrialization possible.

The industrial revolution took place in a world that was already capitalist and globalized. Until well into the nineteenth century, British capitalism was far more mercantile, globalized and extraverted than a history focused on production might lead us to believe. Finance, the management of public debt and international trade generated fortunes far larger than those from mining or the textile industry. British imperialism, and the economic globalization of the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries, was fashioned by an assembly of aristocrats, bankers and merchants.

This class of 'gentleman capitalists' acquired a politically preeminent power from its financing of the wars against France. For Britain, the main object of the War of Austrian Succession, the Seven Years War and the American wars was the domination of the Atlantic trading space and the conquest of global hegemony. The financing of the war and the public debt (which for England in 1815 was twice the GDP of the time) rested on the income from global trade, hence the key role for the British state of the East India Company, which channelled tribute from India, of the Navigation Acts that promoted London's import-export activity, and the 'invisible' revenue from shipping and insurance. The importance of mercantile and financial capitalism for the British state can be read from the major political orientations of the nineteenth century: free trade above all, which made London the global entrepôt, then the reduction of public expenditure, which, at the price of increasing poverty, strengthened the pound (which returned to the gold standard in 1819) and thus aided the 'gentleman capitalists' to export their capital across the world.[25]

The transatlantic trade was undoubtedly the 'spark'[26] that triggered the industrial revolution. Its value quadrupled during the eighteenth century, coming to represent two-thirds of English trade. Similarly, Saint-Domingue made up two-thirds of French international trade at this time.[27] London became the turntable of world trade, with re-export activity (85 per cent of tobacco and 95 per cent of coffee were re-exported to Europe in the 1770s) paying for the import of raw materials from northern Europe: wood, tar, potash.[28] In 1810, for example, Great Britain imported the alkaline ash from wood burning needed for its soap and glass industries from the Baltic countries and North America. This ash was equivalent to 25 million cubic metres of wood per year, or far more than the annual wood production at home.[29] Added to this were the invisible incomes (those not passing through British customs) from the slave trade, Brazilian gold, Mexican silver,[30] and the multilateral trade assured by the British Merchant Navy. The transatlantic commercial revolution stimulated naval construction and thus the metal industry. Copper for the navy provided a key market for the Cornish mines, a crucial sector in the early days of the steam engine.[31]

Transatlantic trade also accelerated the development of financial institutions, the use of letters of exchange and commercial credit, facilitating the growth of the money volume; it explains the emergence of marine insurance (Lloyds was founded in 1688) and fire insurance (the first companies, Phoenix and Sun Fire, were established to cover risks associated with sugar refining in London). The colonial trade created banking communities in Bristol, Glasgow and Liverpool (the Heywood and Leyland families), central to the financing of manufacture in these industrial regions.[32]

Finally and above all, it ensured a demand for manufactured products that was determinant for the take-off of English industry in the late eighteenth century. This exponential demand was drawn from the demographic explosion in North America, where the white population grew from 300,000 in 1700 to 6 million in 1800. In 1784, textiles represented 57 per cent of British exports, rising to 82 per cent in 1800.[33] In 1801, America absorbed 60 per cent of Lancashire's textile production.[34] This constantly expanding market explains the efforts for greater productivity and rapid mechanization of cotton from 1760 onwards (the spinning jenny, Arkwright's water frame, Crompton's spinning mule).

In 1745, Malachy Postlethwayt described the British Empire as 'a magnificent superstructure of American commerce and naval power on an African foundation'.[35] The centrality of transatlantic trade in the industrial revolution turned on that of the African slaves that formed the fundamental pivot of the world-system then dominated by Great Britain. Firstly, the revenue from the slave trade, which

has aroused so many debates among historians, has recently been revised upward: Joseph Inikori estimates the profit rate of the more successful traders of the late eighteenth century at 50 per cent.[36] These profits represented around 40 per cent of British commercial and industrial investment after 1750.[37] Secondly, the sugar produced by slaves was by far the most lucrative trade. In the early nineteenth century, the British colonies produced 177,000 tonnes of sugar per year, as against 33,000 tonnes for the French colonies that remained after the loss of Saint-Domingue.[38] British consumption rose in the eighteenth century from an annual one pound per person to twenty-five pounds, providing a substantial calorie input (4 per cent of the total in 1800) that increased the productivity of British workers. (Rice was a further element.) Thirdly, cotton, produced in the slave-worked South, was by far the main outlet of the British textile industry. Fourthly, until the early nineteenth century, the number of Africans who crossed the Atlantic was higher than the number of Europeans. Agricultural products from North America, and cod from Newfoundland, were imported to the monoculture Caribbean islands to feed the slave population, which kept the white colonies solvent and enabled them to buy British manufactured products. In the late eighteenth century, the slave trade and the plantation system thus formed the foundation of a very hierarchical world-system, with economic satellites entirely organized for the economic needs of the British power.

The fundamentally global nature of what is too simply called the 'industrial revolution' can also be grasped by way of the productive capacity of the spaces that it connected. The historian Kenneth Pomeranz, in *The Great Divergence*, set out to explain why England pioneered the path of industrialization, rather than the Chinese region of the Yangzi Delta.[39] In 1750, the two societies presented a more or less equivalent level of economic and technological 'development' and were faced with similar pressures on their resources of land and wood. In Britain, the price of fire-wood rose by a factor of eight between 1500 and 1630, and by the late eighteenth century forest cover was down to between 5 and 10 per cent of the country's total area. Complaints about the exhaustion of the soil intensified, and the use of clover (Norfolk rotation) failed to resolve the problem.

According to Pomeranz, a doubly favourable 'contingency' explains the English road. First of all, the availability of coal. English mines were relatively easy to exploit and close to centres of consumption, whereas in China these were more than 1,500 kilometres from Shanghai. In 1820, British coal consumption amounted to the equivalent of over 8 million hectares of rationally managed woodland, or more than ten times the country's forest cover. Secondly, Britain's imperial situation, which enabled it to drain resources crucial to its industrial development. In 1830, sugar from the West Indies was equivalent to 600,000 hectares of good land put to cereals, cotton from North America to more than 9.3 million hectares of sheep pasture, and wood (from North America and the Baltic) to more than 400,000 hectares of domestic woodland. In total, even leaving out coal, the total comes to more than 10 million 'ghost hectares' to fuel British machines and workers – the equivalent of two-thirds of the usable agricultural surface of England and Wales. On top of this were the vast areas of land and sea that made possible the capture of carbon dioxide thanks to photosynthesis, Great Britain being responsible for 80 per cent of world emissions by 1825.[40]

Besides, as Alf Hornberg has shown, this exchange was certainly ecologically unequal: in 1850, by exchanging £1,000 of textiles manufactured in Manchester for £1,000 of American raw cotton, Britain gained 46 per cent in terms of embodied labour (unequal exchange) and 6,000 per cent in terms of embodied hectares,[41] thus releasing its own domestic space from the environmental constraint of having to produce that much fibre, which would compete with other needs of grain, wood and animal fodder. The case of the Yangzi Delta also attests to the importance of this type of

asymmetry for British industrialization. In the eighteenth century, the Pearl River Delta imported immense quantities of primary goods and raw cotton from the upper Yangzi and northern China. But, as opposed to the peripheral regions of the Atlantic world-system, in this century these regions turned towards textile production, depriving the delta of outlets for its production and cheap raw materials. The Chinese economic world, more homogeneous than the Atlantic imperial space, did not permit the ecological and capitalist accumulation that ensured British industrial take-off. Without the empire, the industrial revolution would have been physically impossible. Werner Sombart saw the shortage of wood due to deforestation, and the exhaustion of European soils, as a 'threat of an end to capitalism' around 1800, or even to 'European culture' itself.[42] Pomeranz, without going as far as that, writes that 'without the dual boon of coal and colonies, Britain would have faced an ecological impasse with no apparent internal solution'.[43]

If the externalization of the environmental constraint relieved Great Britain, it overturned the ecologies of the periphery. The availability of immense spaces, 'empty' thanks to the elimination of 90 per cent of the Amerindian population between 1492 and 1700, initiated a relationship to the environment far more predatory than in Europe. Tobacco cultivation, for example, exhausted the soil so rapidly (after only three or four harvests) that in the course of the eighteenth century production had to move from Maryland and Virginia towards the Appalachians.[44] The transformation of the Caribbean into a sugar monoculture led to deforestation, erosion and exhaustion of the soil.[45] Sugar-cane plantations introduced yellow fever into the American tropics; the terra-cotta vessels needed for drying molasses meant a proliferation of stagnant water and proved excellent incubators for the yellow-fever-carrying *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, imported from Africa.[46] As for the fabled silver mines of Mexico and Peru, these were exhausted in only a few decades, leaving intensely polluted environments. Two hundred thousand tonnes of mercury had been used here by 1900, the greater part of which evaporated into the atmosphere.[47] We could also mention the virtual extinction of the beaver, the American bison and the bowhead whale by the late nineteenth century, also bound up with industrialization, as bison skin made excellent transmission belts, and whale oil an excellent lubricant for machines.[48]

In 1999, the African World Reparations and Repatriation Truth Commission demanded payment from the Western powers of $777 trillion to compensate Africa for the slave trade and the wealth plundered during the colonial period.[49] Whatever the magnitude of this sum, it will never make up for the fact that the West is in debt to Africa, as well as to America and Asia, for its industrial rise. The latter, and thus the entry into the Anthropocene, were made possible by ecologically unequal exchange with these regions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The world-ecology of the British world-system

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the development of two closely linked phenomena: on the one hand, the infrastructures of economic globalization were established, while on the other hand, massive economic gaps appeared between Europe and North America on one side, and Asia on the other.

The world-system then centred on Great Britain was based on an unequal world-ecology: by dramatically increasing the economic metabolism of the industrial countries, coal correspondingly

amplified the demand for organic materials from the tropical world. Besides, in the last third of the nineteenth century, the industrialized countries embarked on a new cycle of capital accumulation bound up with the second industrial revolution: organic chemistry, electricity, then the automobile. If they were self-sufficient in energy and in iron,[50] the technologies that lay at the root of their prosperity depended on certain key products drawn from the peripheral countries: ores such as tin from Malaysia for the processed-food industry, as well as mineral oil; copper from the Andes and the Congo for electrification; gutta-percha for the telegraph network; rubber for mechanical industries (transmission belts, sealants for steam engines, etc.) and then for automobiles.[51]

In the same way, maintaining soil fertility in Europe and America depended on the extraction of guano from Peru, Bolivia and Chile[52] (where reserves were exhausted in a few decades), as well as phosphates from Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria. Before the First World War, the rich countries already imported 41 per cent of their phosphate consumption, or 2.9 million tonnes per year.[53] Despite these contributions, agricultural productivity in the United Kingdom stagnated in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, and to feed its population at low cost the country was importing more than 60 per cent of its foodstuffs in 1900, as against 15 per cent in 1850.[54] The ghost hectares that fed the British population were as large as the country's agricultural surface.[55]

If Great Britain exported coal and industrial goods, it was an importer of mineral ore between 1850 and 1939 (the deficit being 12 million tonnes on the eve of the First World War), and above all, of biomass (the deficit rising from 5 million tonnes in 1855 to more than 30 million by the late 1930s).[56] No other industrial country has had a development model so dependent on biomass from the rest of the world.

These elements substantially qualify the thesis of Paul Bairoch, according to whom the industrialized countries scarcely needed products from the peripheral countries before 1940. This unequal world-ecology was bound up with a very outward-turned capitalism. The economy was financialized and globalized in the context of a stable international monetary system based on the pound sterling (and thus on the gold standard). Limited liability (the Companies Act of 1862, the reform of *sociétés anonymes* in France in 1867, the German law of 1892 establishing GmbH) made shareholding less risky,[57] particularly for firms operating outside the national territory. The generalization of stock-exchange quotation further oiled the cogs of finance capitalism. This legal stabilization of capital led to a massive shift from the state to private companies. In 1860s, British Treasury bills made up half of London capitalization, but the figure fell to less than 5 per cent by 1914.

European finance capital turned massively towards overseas investment. In 1913, equities made up 40 per cent of French national wealth, with nearly half of this total invested abroad.[58] Between 1870 and 1913, Great Britain invested 4.5 per cent of its GDP abroad each year. In 1913, these stocks (£3.8 billion) represented 40 per cent of the nation's wealth,[59] and half of all direct investment abroad. Capital of this kind played a key role in the Anthropocene: Great Britain projected fossil capitalism onto the whole world.[60] In 1913, railways represented 40 per cent of British foreign direct investment, followed by mines (more than a thousand mining companies were quoted on the London Stock Exchange in 1898), gas lighting, water supply and tropical plantations.[61] These foreign investments were both highly profitable and self-generating: between 1870 and 1914 the revenue they yielded (5.3 per cent of GDP) was greater than the value of capital exported (4.5 per cent of GDP).[62] In this way, Great Britain could compensate for a balance of trade that was heavily in the red, attract

the raw materials it needed and maintain the pound sterling as the pillar of the international monetary system.[63]

This financial capitalism was embodied in technologies that were high emitters of CO_2, reorganizing flows of matter, energy and goods on a world scale. Trans-continental canals, railways, steam ships, docks, grain silos and telegraph lines constructed a second nature of planetary dimensions, penetrating to the interior of the peripheral countries and mooring them to the world-economy. These networks reduced the cost of coordination and strengthened the power of the giant firms that managed them.

Whereas in the eighteenth century it had taken six months to travel from London to Calcutta, it took only two weeks by the end of the nineteenth century. The cost of sea transport fell steeply. The world merchant fleet rose from 9 to 35 million tonnes between 1850 and 1900, 60 per cent of it being under the British flag. This hegemony was favoured by the massive export of coal (25 per cent of British production): British ships were then alone in being able to carry full cargos on both legs of their voyage.

The world telegraph network was likewise established in the main by British firms. It facilitated the governing of empires and improved the speed and reliability of commercial information, which in turn made the trade in bulky cargo more profitable, as a marginal difference in price here could play a major role. In the 1860s, the practice of 'tramping' was established: cargos were dispatched without an advance destination and travelled from one port to another as a function of commodity prices.[64] Correlative with this, the last third of the nineteenth century saw the creation of a world market. Prices converged: in 1870 wheat was sold 57 per cent higher in Liverpool than in Chicago, but the difference fell to 15 per cent by 1914.[65] This was due to a general process of marketization and the integration of local economies into world trade.

The world railway network, which grew from 100,000 to 1 million kilometres between 1860 and 1920,[66] was chiefly financed by private capital, very often British. In 1860, for example, the engineering firm Peto, Brassey and Betts employed 100,000 workers on five continents, building lines in Russia and South America, Algeria and Canada.[67] By the late nineteenth century, foreign direct investment was galvanized by mineral and agricultural resources. In Africa, South America and Asia, railways were systematically associated with mineral extraction or the transport of agricultural cargos for the international market: the draining of copper and guano from Peru and Chile, of cotton from India, coffee from Brazil, meat from Argentina, bananas from Central American monoculture, peanuts from Senegal, etc. The countries of the periphery provided not only raw materials but also cheap labour: workers 'engaged' by mines and plantations in a state of semi-slavery, in particular Chinese coolies fleeing the civil wars caused by the Opium War and the Taiping Rebellion, were exploited on railway construction across the whole world.[68]

This infrastructure placed the countries of the Third World in a situation of outward orientation, specialization and economic dependence. Whole countries could now be strangled by the cutting of credit, preparing their economic or political subjugation. As Tim Mitchell has shown for the case of oil, the hierarchy of the world-system depends on a carefully chosen distribution of technological mechanisms: for example, drilling wells without building storage and refining facilities ensures the dependence of the producing countries. Capitalism's second nature precipitated the integration of the peripheral regions into the world-system, as well as the disintegration of pre-capitalist economies now transformed into a de-industrialized periphery. The post-colonial states of the twentieth century inherited this infrastructure, making a more harmonious development of their economies a difficult

task.

In the course of this establishment of a world market, a great reversal took place between 1850 and 1900: famine definitively disappeared from Western Europe but spread with devastating effects in the colonial world. Two series of famines between 1876 and 1898, linked to an El Niño climate episode, caused between 30 and 50 million deaths across the world, principally in China and India. Neither of these countries had previously known a disaster such as this. Similar droughts in eighteenth-century China had been satisfactorily managed by the Qing dynasty, thanks to the system of imperial granaries, long-distance transport by the Grand Canal linking north and south China, and emergency grain distribution.

To understand the human impact of this climate episode, therefore, we need to look beyond natural causes: the vulnerability of both Indian and Chinese societies was due to the dislocation of systems of resilience and assistance. China was emerging from the two Opium Wars and the terrible Taiping Civil War (due largely to the weakening of the Middle Kingdom under the hammer blows of European colonialism). As for India, the aim of British policy was to increase its agricultural exports despite famine. This great disaster must therefore be understood as the combination of a regular and quite commonplace climate phenomenon with the construction of the world cereals market centred on London and Chicago (Indian harvests being already purchased on a futures market), and finally, the dismantling of Asian societies by colonialism.[69] Thus, in the midst of the famine, an ever-greater share of India's agricultural products was destined for export: jute, cotton and indigo, but also wheat and rice for the world market. Rice exports in particular grew from less than 700,000 tonnes to over 1.5 million tonnes in the course of the last third of the nineteenth century.[70]

The ecological consequences of the second industrial revolution in the peripheral countries were equally dramatic. The gutta-percha tree disappeared from Singapore in 1856, then from several Malaysian islands.[71] At the end of the nineteenth century, the stampede for rubber took hold of Amazonia, causing deforestation and massacres of Indians. In the early twentieth century, rubber production moved from Brazil to Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Sumatra and then Liberia, where British and American companies (Hoppum, Goodyear, Firestone) established immense plantations. These destroyed millions of hectares of indigenous forest, causing the exhaustion of the soil and introducing malaria.[72] In the Congo in the 1920s, the development of rubber plantations, mining exploitation and railways caused the first regional spread of HIV.[73]

It was in this way, in the last third of the nineteenth century, that 'underdevelopment' was born. The massive economic gap between Europe and North America on the one hand, and Asia on the other, dates from this time. Between 1800 and 1913, European per capita income rose by 222 per cent, that of Africa by 9 per cent and that of Asia by only 1 per cent.[74] The last third of the nineteenth century, and the beginning of the twentieth, finally saw the emergence of rival powers that undermined British hegemony. The United States first of all, but also Germany, France and then Japan. The rise of competition accelerated imperial projects: in 1800 the European powers controlled 35 per cent of the Earth's surface politically, 67 per cent in 1878 and no less than 85 per cent in 1914.[75] Empire played a key role in world economic development, keeping the British world system afloat. India in particular constituted an immense captive market, becoming the leading importer of British products. Without Asia, which generated 73 per cent of British commercial credit in 1910, this country would have been forced to abandon free trade with its commercial partners (the United States, the white dominions, Germany and France), which would have then experienced a loss of outlets and a slow-down in economic growth. The world economy would have fragmented into autarchic trading blocs,

similar to what happened in the wake of the 1929 economic crisis.[76]

The unequal world-ecology of the Great Acceleration

After two world wars and a great economic depression, the world entered a period of historically exceptional growth after 1945, marking the 'Great Acceleration' of the Anthropocene. Whereas in the first half of the twentieth century, an annual increase of 1.7 per cent in the use of fossil fuel was required for an economic growth rate of 2.13 per cent, between 1945 and 1973 an annual rise of 4.48 per cent in fossil fuels (not to mention uranium) corresponded to an economic growth rate of 4.18 per cent. Between 1950 and 1970, the world population grew by 46 per cent, world GDP by 2.6 times, the consumption of minerals and mining products for industry by 3.08 times, and that of construction materials 2.94 times.[77] By substituting mineral resources for biomass in construction, petroleum products for animal energy and fertilization in agriculture, and synthetic products for vegetable dyes and agriculture fibres for clothing, it was only the consumption of biomass that grew more slowly than economic growth, a sign of the globalization of a switch from an organic economy to a fossil one. The number of humans who moved from the metabolism of an agricultural society (annual energy consumption per capita of about 65 gigajoules) to an industrial metabolism based on fossil energies (223 gigajoules per capita) grew from 30 per cent of the world population in 1950 to 50 per cent by 2000.[78]

The Great Acceleration was thus not a uniform phenomenon of accelerated growth, but a qualitative change in lifestyle and metabolism, tying strong world growth to an even stronger growth in fossil fuels (especially oil, which dethroned coal) and mineral resources, and so representing a loss of matter and energy efficiency on the part of the world economy. This process was also unequal geographically and socially, shaped by the dynamic of a world-system that was now dominated by the United States in the context of the Cold War. Emerging from the Second World War, American power was at its apogee. While the European economy was ruined, the GDP of the United States had more than quadrupled since 1939, and the country possessed immense currency reserves. At the end of the 1940s, the US made up 60 per cent of world industrial production, produced nearly 60 per cent of world oil (and consumed as much) and made up a third of world GDP, whereas Great Britain at its apogee in 1870 had only a 9 per cent share.[79]

In the immediate post-war years, the US government was concerned to create conditions favourable to the expansion of its economy, and to the growth of the Western camp in general. It was in this context that a new international economic order was established, based on free trade and growth: the Bretton Woods Agreements of 1944 established the dollar as world currency, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) liberalized trade in 1947, coupled with the Marshall Plan and the fourth point of the Truman Doctrine on development aid. This world order made it possible to find outlets for the United States's gigantic industrial and agribusiness production and ensured full employment and social pacification after the great strikes of 1946. It also aimed to stabilize the Western camp socially by drawing it into growth. The Fordist and consumerist social compromise was then viewed as the best rampart against Communism.[80] It was also the goal to 'develop' the Third World so as to avoid its turn to Communism, while ensuring cheap raw materials for the United States and its industrialized allies. In the 1950s and '60s, a gigantic exploitation of natural and human resources enabled the Eastern bloc to put up a good show in the arms race, in space, in production

and even in consumption, which was by no means the least important terrain of Cold War confrontation (see Chapter 7). To outrun the Communist camp, the OECD (heir to the Marshall Plan) constituted the strategic arm of the Western camp's growth policies.

The creation of abundance in Europe and Japan, and the Pax Americana, depended on a key product, oil, to which 10 per cent of Marshall Plan funds were devoted. This oil aid greatly enriched the US oil majors (Standard Oil, Caltex, Socony-Vacuum Oil, etc.) from whom three-quarters of the oil financed by the Marshall Plan was bought, at higher-than-world-market price.[81] But oil was also a major geopolitical weapon, by disempowering left-wing European workers' movements tied to coal (Chapter 5) and stimulating the growth of the Western allies.

The Soviet Union, for its part, could not provide its allies with fossil fuels but instead drew on the resources of Eastern Europe. Oil also transformed European agriculture, which adopted tractors, chemical fertilizer and pesticides. This 'petro-farming' proved highly costly in terms of energy: the rate of energy return from agriculture (number of calories obtained in food per calorie used in its production) fell in Britain from 12.6 in 1826 to 2.1 in 1981, in France from 3 in 1929 to 0.7 in 1970, and to 0.64 in the United States and Denmark by 2005.[82]

Whereas in the age of empires Western Europe had to import grain, meat and oilseeds, a new world 'food regime' set in after 1945. Stimulated by cheap oil and supported by state policy and export aid (the US Public Law 480 of 1954), the agriculture of the industrial countries (including continental Western Europe) became an exporter of agricultural products to the Third World, cereals in particular. This transformation promoted a rural exodus and a low labour cost in the countries of the South seeking a path of industrialization, while the agribusiness multinationals conquered the world and shifted eating habits.

The geopolitical and economic success of this growth-oriented Pax Americana was equalled only by the enormity of its ecological imprint, weighing on the entire planet. The indicator of global human ecological imprint[83] rose from 63 per cent of the planet's bioproductive capacity in 1961 to 97 per cent in 1975,[84] reaching today a level of 150 per cent, or a consumption of 1.5 planets per year. Imports of materials, measured in tonnes and aggregating all products together (minerals, energy carriers, biomass, construction materials and manufactured goods) rose by 7.59 per cent per year between 1950 and 1970 in the Western industrial countries – North America, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.[85] Almost self-sufficient in iron, copper and bauxite during the first half of the twentieth century, by 1970 the Western industrial countries presented a negative balance of 85 million tonnes of iron, 2.9 million tonnes of copper and 4.1 million tonnes of bauxite.[86] In total, measured in tonnes, the imports of these countries rose from 299 million tonnes in 1950 to 1,282 million tonnes in 1970.[87]

If we consider the evolution of the balance of trade in materials (Figure 14) between the different parts of the world, it seems that the basic ecological difference between the Communist and the capitalist systems lay in the fact that the Communist camp, for its development, exploited and degraded its own environment above all, whereas the Western countries built their own growth on a gigantic draining of mineral and renewable resources from the rest of the non-Communist world, emptying this of its high-quality energy and materials.

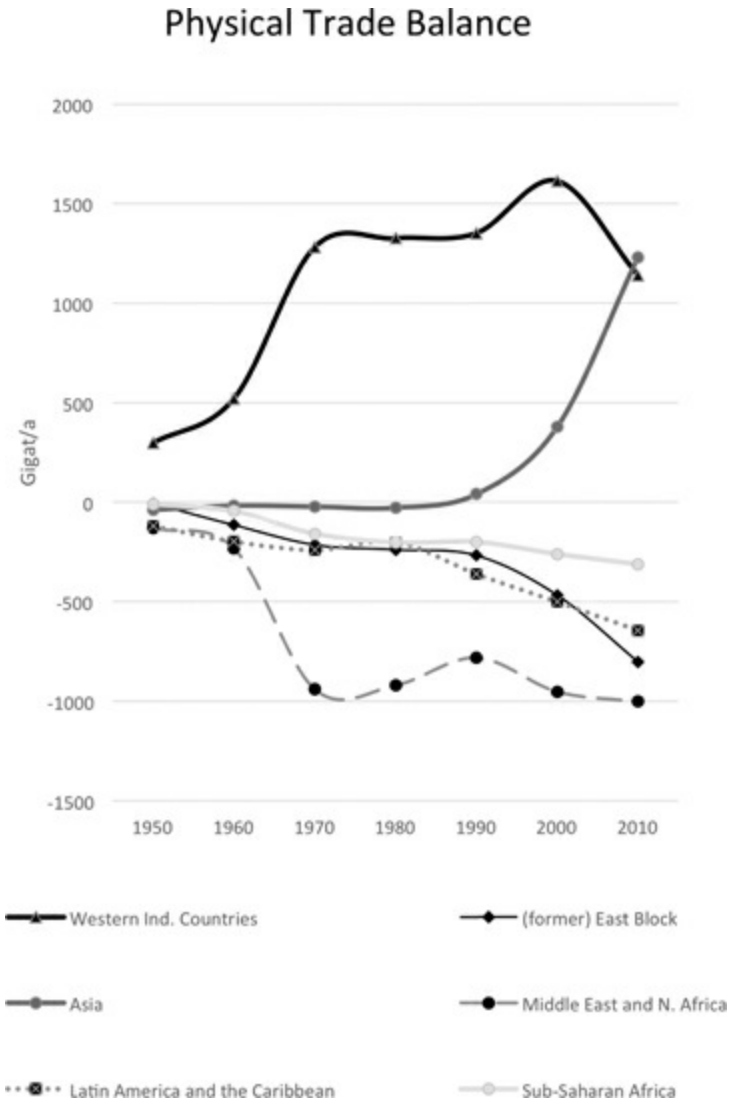

Figure 14: *Material balance of six major groups of countries since 1950*

This colossal extraction of material from the peripheral regions of the world-system was the object of a deliberate strategic attention on the part of the US political leaders. In May 1945, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes wrote to President Roosevelt: 'It is essential … that we fulfill the Atlantic Charter declaration of providing access, on equal terms, by all [Western] nations to the raw materials of the world'.[88] Continuing the supply logic of wartime, access to such crucial resources as uranium, rubber and aluminium (as the key ingredient for modern aircraft) now became a matter of state, with policies implemented to secure energy and access to resources, from Venezuelan and Middle Eastern oil to Indian manganese and Congolese uranium. Whereas its rise in economic power between 1870 and 1940 was largely based on the intensive use of its own domestic resources (wood, coal, oil, iron, copper, water, etc.), after the war the United States moved from the position of net exporter of raw materials and energy to one of net importer: Congressional reports and commissions (the Paley Commission of 1951–52), backed up by private think-tanks (Resources for the Future), now proposed the mobilization of world resources to secure the West while preserving American resources for the future.

The United States supported the movement of decolonization as a means for securing its supplies by direct access to resources without the mediation of the European colonial powers. It initiated the 'UN Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Natural Resources' (UNSCCUR, 1949). Representatives of forty-nine countries called for the inventory and 'rational use' of the planet's natural resources that were as yet unexplored or underutilized for lack of adequate

technologies, or (in rare cases) deemed overexploited for want of scientific knowledge. The United States and the UN's Western experts thus set themselves up as masters of world resources and guardians of their 'right use'.[89]

US corporations also played a predominant role in the reorganization of world metabolism. With the advantage of more advanced know-how (particularly in connection with oil, atom and chemical technologies, but also in marketing techniques) and solid networks in the Pax Americana, the globalization of US corporations was fostered by the Second World War and ensuing Cold War. During the Second World War, the US Army was deployed on every continent, bringing with it the great supply corporations. The construction of military bases was alone worth $2.5 billion in contracts, to the profit of Morrison-Knudsen, Bechtel, Brown & Root, and the like. Added to this were the enormous needs in food and oil supply, logistics, etc. These companies developed the capacity to project themselves across the world and produce on a large scale, as well as the connections with military and political decision-makers that would transform them after the war into great multinationals. They established military bases, oil installations, pipelines, dams, refineries or petrochemical installations, nuclear power stations and mines, as well as factories for cement, fertilizers, pesticides and food products.[90] Between 1945 and 1965, US corporations were responsible for as much as 85 per cent of the world's new foreign direct investment.[91]

The control gained in this way permitted access to world resources in highly favourable conditions. While according to Paul Bairoch, the terms of trade improved for the Third World between the end of the nineteenth century and 1939, the striking phenomenon of the post-war years is the clear deterioration for those 'developing' countries that were exporters of primary products to the industrial countries and importers of manufactured goods from these: a deterioration of nearly 20 per cent between 1950 and 1972. For the oil producers, this phase came to an end with the oil shock of 1973, but it continued until the 1990s for the countries exporting mining products or renewable raw materials.[92] Economic growth and the social model of the Western industrial countries would have been impossible without this unequal exchange. Economists have recently shown that two-thirds of the growth of the Western industrial countries has been due simply to an increasing use of fossil fuel, with only one-third resulting from sociotechnical progress.[93] The incomes of states and their ability to finance investment and social redistribution were also based on oil. In 1971, when the oil majors agreed with OPEC to raise the price per barrel from $2 to $3, the refined product was being sold in Europe at $13, 60 per cent of which went in tax to the consuming country. That means that on each barrel of oil sold the European states received three times more than the OPEC producers.

This economically unequal exchange was also ecologically unequal. Among the three great countries rich in resources, the USSR reached 100 per cent of its biocapacity in 1973, and China reached this level in 1970 (and has continued to grow since, arriving at 256 per cent in 2009), whereas the US footprint was already 126 per cent of its territory's biocapacity in 1961 and reached 176 per cent in 1973.[94] Comparable figures for 1973 are 377 per cent for Great Britain, 141 per cent for France, 292 per cent for West Germany and 576 per cent for Japan, while many Asian, African and Latin American countries had a ratio below 50 per cent at that time, showing that the driving phenomenon of the Great Acceleration embarked on in 1945–73 was the tremendous ecological indebtedness of the Western industrial countries. These literally emptied the rest of the world of its materials and high-quality energy, a phenomenon that is the key to the Cold War (Figure 14). With access to these cheap resources, they embarked on an unsustainable model of development, with their massive emissions of pollutants and greenhouse gases dependent on the restorative capacities of the

rest of the world's ecosystemic functioning.

The Great Acceleration thus corresponds to a capture by the Western industrial countries of the ecological surpluses of the Third World. It then appears as the construction of an ecological gap between national economies that generated a great deal of wealth without subjecting their own territories to excessive impacts, and the countries of the rest of the world whose economies were burdened by a heavy footprint on their territory. Figure 15 gives a striking representation of this.[95]

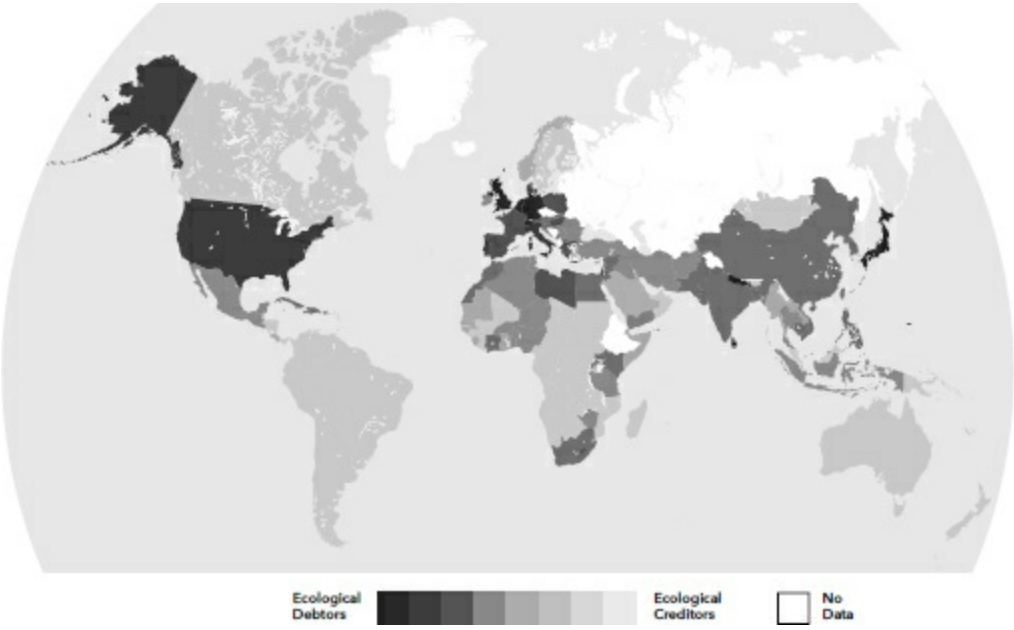

Figure 15: *Creditor and debtor countries in terms of ecological footprint in 1973*

This map illustrates the unequal relations of ecological credit and debt that set in with the Great Acceleration. A team from the University of California at Berkeley has measured both the unequal ecological footprints of nations and the regions that these footprints especially burdened. It showed that the poorest countries have a small footprint, with very little effect on the spaces of the rich countries, whereas the rich countries have a large footprint with a heavy burden on the spaces of the poorest countries.[96] For one dollar of GDP today, Mali and Bolivia, for example, have to extract twenty times more material from their territory than does the United States, and India and China ten times more.[97]

Take for example the situation of the forests during the Great Acceleration. Since the last glaciation, 10 million square kilometres of the world's forest cover have been lost (forty-three times the area of Great Britain), half of this in the twentieth century alone, reducing the planet's capacity for capturing carbon dioxide and increasing the risk of major climatic disturbance, as well as transforming the soil equilibrium and rainfall of the regions affected.[98] But whereas the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw a major deforestation in Western Europe (continuing until 1920 in the United States), in the twentieth century, and especially since 1945, there has been an increase in forest cover in Western Europe and a quasi-stabilization in the United States – meaning that the 5 million hectares of forest lost in the twentieth century has been all in the economically poorest countries,[99] generating forest and agricultural products consumed largely in Europe and the United States, which in this same period have improved the ecological quality of their own territories.

In conclusion, there would be many heuristic and explanatory advantages in speaking of a 'Capitalocene' rather than an Anthropocene. This particularly means that the rich countries would neither have succeeded in industrializing nor attained the post-war affluent society without the

possibility of unequal ecological exchange with the rest of the world, and that unequal ecological exchange is indeed a major explanatory factor for the combined genesis of the asymmetries of wealth characteristic of the historical dynamic of capitalism, and the rise of human impacts that caused the geological derailment of the planet in the Anthropocene. A rematerialized and ecologized history of capitalism appears as the indispensable partner of the Earth system sciences in order to understand our new epoch.[100]

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1 Fredric Jameson, 'Future City', *New Left Review*, 21, 2003: 76.

2 A calculation in 1990 dollars on the basis of data from Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014, Supplementary Figures and Tables, Table S12.4, 'Private capital in the world, 1870–2100', piketty.pse.ens.fr, and personal communication. From a Marxist perspective it is wealth that is accounted here, rather than capital in the strict sense, which is only a part of this.

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6 In the course of each of these, we find alongside the hegemonic power that stabilizes and governs the world economic order, drawing the greatest share of profits from this, a small group of countries in key beneficial positions (such as France and Germany during the British century, Europe and Japan in the second half of the twentieth century during the American century), semi-peripheral countries, and finally the peripheral ones that are dominated both politically and economically. Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Time*, 2nd ed., London: Verso, 2010.

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12 Following the studies of Raúl Prebisch, Arghiri Emmanuel and Samir Amin, unequal exchange is characterized by unfavourable terms of trade for the countries on the periphery of the world-system, i.e., the fact that they have to export an increasing amount of goods (typically raw materials) to obtain the same quantity of imported goods (typically industrial goods), so that the number of hours of labour thus exchanged are increasingly unequal.

13 In the 1960s, the Swedish biologist Georg Borgström introduced the idea of 'ghost acres', as the terrain captured by certain countries that consumed more than their own territory's bioproductive capacity by importing products from other regions of the world. This approach influenced the historian of the industrial revolution Kenneth Pomeranz (see below), as well as William Rees and Mathis Wackernagel, who have developed the concept of 'ecological footprint' as a new indicator of sustainability. See William Rees and Mathis Wackernagel, *Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing Human Impact on the Earth*, Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers, 1998. For the method and recent results, see footprintnetwork.org.

14 Proposed by the great ecologist Howard T. Odum, 'emergy' estimates the work of the ecosystems embodied in a product measured in terms of the energy mobilized by the ecological processes that contributed to its formation.

15 Specialists in 'material and energy flow analysis' measure world trade in terms of its mass (in tonnes) or energy content. See the pioneering article by researchers from the Institut für Soziale Ökologie in Vienna: Marina Fischer-Kowalski and Helmut Haberl, 'Tons, Joules and Money: Modes of Production and Their Sustainability Problems', *Society and Natural Resources*, 10:1, 1997: 61–85.

16 According to the law of entropy, any economic undertaking transforms natural resources (of low entropy) into products and waste of a higher entropy, thus presenting an entropic cost that is always higher than that of the product alone. In the case of the Earth as an open system, part of this entropy is reduced by the living world, which reconstitutes a more ordered matter (negentropy) by using solar energy (photosynthesis). The transition to a fossil economy that dissipates the free energy of underground stocks more rapidly than this is reconstituted annually in the biosphere thus appears as an entropic marker of the Anthropocene. See Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971.

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59 A. K. Cairncross, *Home and Foreign Investment 1870–1913*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953, 104.

60 Only 6 per cent of this investment was made in Europe, with 45 per cent in the English-speaking world, 20 per cent in Latin America, 16 per cent in Asia and 13 per cent in Africa.

61 Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 112–20.

62 Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, London: Penguin, 2003, 245.

63 Even if the age of the 'gold standard' was also based on the exploitation of the subsoil: the 'gold rushes' in California and South Africa enabled the central banks of the great powers to restock their reserves.

64 Daniel Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850–1940*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, 18–45.

65 Berger, *Notre première mondialisation*, 18.

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67 Marc Linder, *Projecting Capitalism: A History of the Internationalization of the Construction Industry*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994, 35–42.

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75 Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century*, 54.

76 Ibid., 271; Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, 324–6.

77 For GDP and population, see the Maddison Project, ggdc.net/maddison; for consumption of materials and energy, see the Institut für Soziale Ökologie, 'Growth in Global Materials Use, GDP and Population during the 20th Century: Online Global Materials Extraction 1900–2009 (Update 2011)', uni-klu.ac.at/socec.

78 Marina Fischer-Kowalski, Fridolin Krausmann and Irene Pallua, 'A Sociometabolic Reading of the Anthropocene: Modes of Subsistence, Population Size and Human Impact on Earth', *Anthropocene Review*, 1:1, 2014: 8–33.

79 Christopher Chase-Dunn et al., 'The Trajectory of the United States in the World-System: A Quantitative Reflection', *Sociological Perspectives*, 48:2, 2005: 233–54.

80 Björn-Ola Linnér, *The Return of Malthus: Environmentalism and Post-war Population–Resource Crises*, Isle of Harris: White Horse Press, 2003.

81 David Painter, 'Oil and the Marshall Plan', *Business History Review*, 58:3, 1984: 359–83, especially 362–3.

82 Gilles Allaire and Benoit Daviron, 'Agriculture et industrialisme', in *Transformations et transitions dans l'agriculture et l'agro-alimentaire*, Versailles: Quae, forthcoming.

83 This indicator is based on an estimate of the area of land or sea needed to produce the resources consumed by a given population

and absorb its waste (particularly including greenhouse gases). This area is measured in 'bioproductive hectares', calculated by taking account of the functioning of different environments across the globe. See footprintnetwork.org.

84 Global Footprint Network, 'National Ecological Footprint and Biocapacity for 2007: Results from the National Footprint Accounts 2010 Edition', footprintnetwork.org.

85 Anke Schaffartzik et al., 'The Global Metabolic Transition: Regional Patterns and Trends of Global Material Flows, 1950–2010', *Global Environmental Change*, 26, 2014: 87–97.

86 Bairoch, *Mythes et paradoxes*, 97 and 102–3.

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88 Quoted by Linnér, *The Return of Malthus*, 29.

89 Thomas Robertson, '"This Is the American Earth": American Empire, the Cold War, and American Environmentalism', *Diplomatic History*, 32:4, 2008: 561–84; Yannick Mahrane and Christophe Bonneuil, 'Gouverner la biosphere. De l'environnement de la guerre froide à l'environnement néoliberal', in Dominique Pestre (ed.), *Le Gouvernement des technosciences. Gouverner le progrès et ses dégâts depuis 1945*, Paris: La Découverte, 2014, 133–69.

90 Linder, *Projecting Capitalism*, 126.

91 Geoffrey Jones, 'Multinationals from the 1930s to the 1980s', in Alfred D. Chandler Jr. and Bruce Mazlich, *Leviathans: Multinational Corporations and the New Global History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 81–103, especially 88.

92 Bairoch, *Mythes et paradoxes*, 161.

93 Gaël Giraud and Zeynep Kahraman, 'How Dependent Is Growth from Primary Energy? Output Energy Elasticity in 50 Countries (1970–2011)', parisschoolofeconomics.eu.

94 The statistical series for different countries' footprints are taken from Global Footprint Network, *National Footprint Accounts 1961–2010* (2012 edition), available online at footprintnetwork.org. (It should be noted that the revised data from the Global Footprint Network differ slightly from those from another source: storymaps.esri.com/globalfootprint.)

95 This map represents an ecological balance in bioproductive hectares, but it is also possible to estimate this unequal ecological exchange in dollars. This has not yet been done for 1973, but a map of this kind can be found for the year 2000, a kind of balance of unsettled ecological payments. Paul C. Sutton et al., 'The Real Wealth of Nations: Mapping and Monetizing the Human Ecological Footprint', *Ecological Indicators*, 16, 2012: 11–22.

96 U. T. Srinivasan et al., 'The Debt of Nations and the Distribution of Ecological Impacts from Human Activities', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA*, 105:5, 5 February 2008: 1,768–73.

97 'Visualizing Global Material Flows', materialflows.net.

98 McNeill, *Something New under the Sun*, 213; Michael Williams, 'A New Look at Global Forest Histories of Land Clearing', *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 33, 2008: 345–67, 354.

99 Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite*; Michael Williams, *Deforesting the Earth: From Prehistory to Global Crisis*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002; Williams, 'A New Look at Global Forest Histories of Land Clearing'.

100 A history of this kind should go on to analyse the transformations of the world-system since the 1970s, after the oil shocks and the age of cheap petrol, in the age of the financialization of capitalism, the neoliberal and neoconservative revolution as an attempt to maintain US hegemony, the problematic 'uncoupling' of the Western industrial economies, the rise of China as potential centre of a new world-system in still embryonic competition with the United States, the enormous flows of toxic and electronic waste to the poor countries, and the increased geopolitical tensions over resources and atmosphere. Some elements of this can be found in Harvey, *The New Imperialism*; Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*; Andrew K. Jorgenson and Brett Clark, 'Are the Economy and the Environment Decoupling? A Comparative International Study, 1960–2005', *American Journal of Sociology*, 118:1, 2012: 1–44; Andrew K. Jorgenson, 'The Sociology of Ecologically Unequal Exchange and Carbon Dioxide Emissions, 1960–2005', *Social Science Research*, 41:2, 2012: 242–52.

The Invention of World Religions

Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism

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5

Philology and the Discovery of a Fissure in the European Past

By the closing decades of the eighteenth century, there were already soundings of novel ideas about European origins. In the nineteenth century, two distinct sources of "Europeanness" came to be recognized as fundamentally separate and, in certain respects, dichotomous. Matthew Arnold, for example, gave an iconic representation of this duality in a well-known series of essays eventually published as *Culture and Anarchy* (1869).[1] Arnold terms the two sides of Europe's bifurcated taproot "Hellenism" and "Hebraism." Following his cue, one may delineate the dual origin of Europe and its supposed bipolarity in this manner: the mellifluous cultural inheritance of ancient Greece (or, in Arnold's own phrase that has since turned saccharine, "sweetness and light") and the austere spiritual inheritance of ancient Israel, a somber religion of commandments, sin, expiation, and redemption. The Hellenic legacy purportedly includes such vital and felicitous endowments as the capability for comprehensive theoretical knowledge (science), aesthetic sensibility and creativity (art), the spirit of freedom and ennobling will for self-determination (democracy), whereas the Hebraic influence defines a stalwart morality, an unflinching ethics of duty and obedience, and frugality in all other aspects.

It is useful to remember that Arnold was particularly concerned about what he saw as the excess of Hebraism in his own historical moment. In the face of this imbalance, his principal aim in *Culture and Anarchy* is to warn of the peril brought on by this excess, and to restore the ameliorating influence of Hellenism. He repeatedly emphasizes, it is true, that Hebraism and Hellenism are equally "august" and "invaluable," both vitally necessary "*contributions* to human development." (He has little to say, however, as to how peoples elsewhere, remote from these traditions, might participate in "human development.") Yet the particular historical conditions of his time move him to speak as an advocate for Hellenism. According to Arnold, the periodic infusion and

1. The following discussion cites Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 93/157. I refer here to the version edited by Samuel Lipman in 1994, which also indicates the pagination of the 1869 edition. The first number refers to the 1994 edition, the second to that of 1869.

the consequent preponderance of Hebraism is nothing new: Hebraism first surged into the arena of European history when Europe first turned Christian, expressly in reaction to the overripe and decadent extravagance of Hellenism in the last days of the Roman Empire. A millennium later, the pendulum swung once again to extreme Hellenism in the wake of the Renaissance—which, in its quintessential form, was largely a Mediterranean phenomenon. Europe saw the resurgence of Hebraism in the form of the Northern Protestant Reformation, whose rippling effects could be seen for centuries thereafter, in Puritanism and, most closely at home for Arnold, in the vociferously sectarian temperament of various Nonconformist churches, a disposition perfectly in concert with the strident industrial modernity of his time.

An implication of arguments such as Arnold's—to name but the most obvious and pressing—is that, somehow, the *religious* heritage of European peoples was genealogically distinct and separate from all other aspects of their heritage. To put it simply, it suddenly appeared that Christianity could be at odds with the rest of what it meant to be European, rather than being its defining characteristic. This may be as much as to say that the very idea of Europe—or, as we say today, the West—was struggling to emerge as an entity apart from the hitherto defining notion of Christendom.

Once the stage had been set in this new way, other questions stood waiting in the wings, the most unsettling of which might be this: Was the synthetic composition of European civilization ultimately providential? Was specifically *Christian* Europe preordained and therefore bound to last until the end of time, or was it essentially contingent and temporary, and the collaboration of Hellenism and Hebraism that had endured for nearly two millennia, however useful and beneficial, fated to expire?

Another way of casting this conundrum—in fact, the one that proved dominant—was to saddle Christianity itself with a composite, split heritage, or at least an apparent split. After all, was not Christianity a messianic Jewish reform movement at its beginning? At the same time, could it not also be said with justice that Christianity became what it is by crossing over from the Jewish to the Gentile world? Was this crossover a merely historical, contingent fact, or was it in the very nature of the new religion to grow beyond the bounds of Judaism, a Semitic religion? If the latter should be the case, perhaps there would be no pressing need for Europe to rethink its relation to what had been its traditional religion. Instead, it would seem, it was high time to reenvision Christianity in relation to its traditional kin, the monotheistic brethren, and to reposition itself among all other historical religions, since there were suddenly so

many, and so much about them was rapidly becoming known. As we saw in chapter 2, these were the cardinal concerns that comparative theologians of the nineteenth century were attempting to address and to resolve, in one form or another.

Wherever the fault line, the task at hand for us, then, is to examine whence comes the whole idea of the bifurcated legacy of Christian Europe that seems to have preoccupied the leading men of faith, and how this new idea determined the ways in which nineteenth-century scholars were to classify "other religions."

Neither Hebraism nor Hellenism was an established concept prior to the nineteenth century. They were not in any way elements traditionally considered to be constitutive of Europe—assuming for now, at least, that there was a notion roughly corresponding to Europe in the way we think of it today.[2] They were indeed conceptual novelties, arguably the most important ones to emerge from the provenance of the newly prominent science of philology. Summarily put, it was philological scholarship that generated a new type of distinction among peoples and nations in terms of language groups; the most immediately critical in this context was the distinction between Indo-European (or Aryan) and Semitic language groups. The impact of this scholarship was manifold. The idea of the dual legacy of Europe was only one of its many ramifications that became visible in the course of the nineteenth century.

1. The Discovery of the Indo-European Past

It is now customary to count as one of the founding moments of Oriental philology an epoch-making pronouncement by William Jones in 1786.[3] By then already an acclaimed author of some poetic works, Jones was a serious Orien-

2. This binary should not be confused or conflated with the Christian versus pagan dichotomy that personally troubled St. Augustine so much before his conversion. One could conceivably map this dichotomy also onto the Semitic versus the Indo-European only retroactively, that is, anachronistically. Certainly in Augustine's time, there was no equivalent conception of the duality in such a way that one or the other, or both, were constitutive of any specific cultural or racial identity. We would do well to remember that the saint, though he did go to Rome to be baptized, was from Hippo, a North African city.

3. J. P. Mallory, however, returns part of the credit to James Parsons's 1767 study, *The Remains of Japhet, Being Historical Enquiries into the Affinity and Origins of the European Languages*: "Had this work been much shorter, its author might be better remembered. Unfortunately for Parsons, this rather tedious book ensured his obscurity and subsequent neglect in histories of Indo-European studies, a neglect not entirely deserved" (Mallory, *In Search of the Indo-Europeans* ([1989], 10).

talist and prominent colonial official of the East India Company residing in Calcutta. He was one of the first Europeans to learn to read Sanskrit from native Brahman pundits.[4] But even more to Jones's credit was his discovery of the close affinity between the languages of ancient India and Persia on the one hand and the classical languages of Europe on the other. In the celebrated third presidential address to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Jones declared:

> The *Sanscrit* language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the *Greek*, more copious than the *Latin*, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists.[5]

This oft-quoted proclamation heralded the vogue for not only Sanskrit studies but a broad range of philological scholarship. Possibly because he was a well-known figure and the founder of the first Asiatic Society, or conceivably on account of his prominent position as an established literary figure, or perhaps just because the time was right, Jones's address inspired and captured the

4. This is not to forget, however, the interesting career of Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656), an Italian Jesuit missionary to India in the early seventeenth century, who taught himself not only Sanskrit but also Tamil and Telugu and wrote numerous erudite treatises on religious and philosophical topics of India, where he lived nearly half a century (see Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe*[1988], 38–43). While he dutifully forwarded these works to Rome, they had little impact, and the learned men of the church seemed more worried about Nobili's accommodating himself too much to the Indian natives than they were interested in the wealth of scholarly material that he collected and the analyses that he produced. As Max Müller put it in 1861: "'Accommodation Question,' as it was called, occupied cardinals and popes for many years; but not one of them seems to have perceived the extraordinary interest attaching to the existence of an ancient civilization so perfect and so firmly rooted as to require accommodation even from the missionaries of Rome. At a time when the discovery of one Greek MS. would have been hailed by all scholars of Europe, the discovery of a complete literature was allowed to pass unnoticed. The day of Sanskrit had not yet come" (F. Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language, first Series* [1862; 6th ed., 1880], 156–57).

Also mentioned in this context, both by Müller and by Halbfass, is the scholarly labor of another Jesuit, Father (J. F.) Pons, who, Halbfass speculates, was the author of a Sanskrit grammar written in Latin (circa 1733). See also Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance* (1984), 147–48.

5. *The Works of Sir William Jones* (1807), quoted by Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (1997), 38. The same passage, though somewhat shorter, is also quoted in Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, 41.

imagination of the educated classes of Europe, and he thus proved critical in disseminating the classical literature of India—religious and legal, as well as literary.[6] Thereafter, in a matter of few decades, one could witness regular and prolific discourses on such sonorous "classics" as *Shakuntala*, *Hitopadesha*, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Oupnek'hat (the Upanishads). Assuming, as many people then did, that an affinity between languages entailed an affinity, proximity, and probable kinship between the peoples who spoke them, it is not surprising that this discovery of the common origin of languages generated an altogether new quota of energy, stimulating the investigation into what had been until then a rather remote and foreign subject matter. At the same time, the historical, empirical, and scientific study of languages—as philology was and has since been understood to be—opened a new venue to explore and to scrutinize Europeans' own past and future destiny.

It is useful to recall here that it was in the context of this new awareness of Europe's ancestral relation to India and Persia that the word "Aryan" first came to be adopted by the Europeans. As present-day authorities would concur, *ārya*—meaning, roughly, "noble"—was originally a self-referential term used by ancient Persian and Sanskrit speakers, who presumably did not know or could not have cared much about their possible kinship with the uncouth inhabitants of the distant European peninsula (to borrow a provocative phrase from none other than Max Müller). Millennia later, in the first half of the nineteenth century, "Arya," or more commonly "Aryan," became the accepted nomenclature among European scholars to designate the group of languages

6. Jones was by no means the first modern European to undertake a serious study of Indian and Persian literature. However, earlier translators of Indian literature, such as Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, Alexander Dow, and John Zephaniah Holwell, did their work from Persian translations. This is true also of Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805) who translated four Upanishads (Oupnek'hat), whereas this indomitable scholar's lasting fame may rightly depend on his first European translation of the Zend-Avesta, the sacred literature of Zoroastrianism.

For an interesting and informative account of Anquetil-Duperron's work on the Avesta, William Jones's response to Anquetil, and other competitive and contentious exchanges among the eighteenth-century Orientalists often colored by their nationalistic interests, see James Darmesteter's introductory essay to *The Zend-Avesta* (1880), which constitutes volume 4 of *The Sacred Books of the East* (general editor, F. Max Müller), xi-cii, especially xiv-xxv.

For a useful and succinct discussion of early Indology, see Halbfass, *India and Europe*, 54–68. For a detailed and comprehensive documentation, see parts 1 and 2 of Schwab's *Oriental Renaissance*, 11–128. As an extensive study of the cultural history of Sanskrit scholarship, Trautmann's *Aryans and British India* is incomparable.

recognized as a family of sorts, also called the "Indo-European," "Indo-German," or "Indo-Celtic" language group. Thus, although initially a term referring to a certain cluster of languages, "Aryan" increasingly was taken to mean an ethnic or, purportedly, racial grouping of peoples.

It is singularly ironic that by the time the name "Aryan" had taken on the virulently racist connotation familiar to us today, the noble Persians and Indians of yore were all but expunged from its meaning, as the term came to signify a certain idea of European identity, that is, the "whiteness" that excluded, above all, the Jews, who in turn were deemed—though not for the first time—"Oriental." This ironic turn, however, was not without a certain tortuous logic, for one of the most significant corollaries of the discovery of the Indo-European language group was the parallel recognition of another set of languages constituting an analogous but separate family. Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic, Phoenician, Akkadian, among others—these languages are now called "Hamito-Semitic" or, more simply, "Semitic." As we know, this category, too, did not remain a merely linguistic grouping but soon came to be understood in ethnic and racial terms.

Of course, it is a matter of opinion whether Jones's own achievements should be credited or blamed for being the true beginning of Indo-European philology. For one thing, it is uncertain whether an apprehension of the family resemblance among languages really amounted to the recognition of a particular language group—that is, a group of historically and genealogically related languages in contradistinction to some other language groups.[7] For some, rather than generating a new system of difference and classification, this discovery presaged a new, scientific confirmation of an old monogenist idea sanctioned by the Bible: the original unity of all humankind. Indeed, there is much to suggest that the excitement generated by Jones and other early Orientalists could have had just as much to do with the possibility that there was a broader unity

7. The principal import of Jones's statement was the affinity, and possible family resemblance, between these languages hitherto thought unrelated, rather than a clear distinction of this particular group from another, namely, Semitic languages. At the same time, we should remember that the above quoted speech by Jones continues as follows: "There is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the *Gothick* and the *Celtick*, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the *Sanscrit*; and the old *Persian* might be added to the same family, if this were the place for discussing any question concerning the antiquity of *Persia*." Léon Poliakov notes that, earlier than Jones, first Leibniz, then Ludwig von Schlötzer (1735–1808) made a distinction between the Semitic and Japhetic family of languages, and included in the latter Armenian and Persian (Léon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth* [1974], 189).

of nations, that is, the possibility that all languages of the world could eventually be shown to form one single, very large and populous, family.[8] Moreover, some would argue that Jones's discovery was at bottom merely fortuitous, an accidental find of certain similarities of words across different languages, rather than an apprehension of the true structural similarity between the languages. For these reasons and perhaps a few others besides, philologists of later generations as well as cautious historians today seem to prefer to grant him a kind of ceremonial laurel as the honorary originator of Sanskrit studies, while reserving the more substantive position of the founding of comparative philology to a later generation of scholars who clearly discerned the basis of comparison on more solid grounds.[9]

There is no doubt, however, that Jones's discovery in fact served as a launching pad for a torrent of activities, scholarly and speculative, that engaged some of the most remarkable European minds and intellects of the nineteenth century. Regardless of whether the basis of his comparison was sound and scientific or merely intuitive and haphazard, his assertion itself—and its most apparent implication, namely, the probable kinship of India, Persia, and Europe—was approvingly accepted by most aspiring Orientalists of his day. Among the subsequent generation of Orientalists who played crucial roles in the development of the nineteenth-century philology, the most conspicuous and consequential was Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829).

A philologist with a grand spiritual ambition and a profound enthusiasm for India, Schlegel received Sanskrit instructions in Paris from a British naval officer and scholar, Alexander Hamilton, formerly of the East India Company and one of the founding members of the Asiatic Society in Bengal.[10] Thenceforth Schlegel contributed immensely to the future development of Oriental phil-

8. Some enthusiasts in this direction of thought—including Jones himself—were liable to extend the family to include Hebrew, Arabic, and even Chinese.

9. Cf. Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, 189–90. For a more detailed and critical historical account of how later generations viewed the accomplishments of the early Orientalists such as Jones, Humboldt, and Schlegel, see Sebastiano Timpanaro, "Friedrich Schlegel and the Beginnings of Indo-European Linguistics in Germany," in Friedrich Schlegel's *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (1977), xi-lvii.

10. Schlegel had the good fortune to be in Paris when Hamilton was there also, having been detained while on research, owing to an outbreak of hostility between the host country and his own in 1803. In return for a more kindly treatment than could have been expected under the circumstances, Hamilton gave what amounted to an intensive course of Sanskrit lessons to a handful of scholars, including, in addition to Schlegel, the classicist Jean Louis Burnouf, the father of Eugène.

ology, especially in Germany. His influence, however, was not as a language instructor but rather as a highly visible exponent and emblem of Orientalism as a lofty spiritual mission. To be sure, there had already been a great deal of imaginative musing and wistful fantasizing about things Indian among German intellectuals, and this tendency had been particularly strong among Schlegel's illustrious Romantic circle of friends, which included Novalis (1772–1801); his own elder brother, August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845); and Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853), to whom he famously wrote in 1803: "Here is the actual source of all languages, all the thoughts and poems of the human spirit; everything, everything without exception comes from India."[11]

It is safe to say that this cultural climate rosily predisposed toward the ancient Orient and especially toward India as the land of origin was what had caused Friedrich Schlegel to travel to Paris in the first place. Upon his return, he gave a series of university lectures at Cologne in 1803 and 1805, but it was above all his treatise *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians* (*Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*), published in Heidelberg in 1808, that elevated the prestige of and fanned the enthusiasm for Indology. The work was instrumental in turning a glorified literary fashion into something more substantive: a spiritual mission and, eventually, a rising science.

The enormous influence of this work can be discerned from a wide range of historical facts. At the same time, its driving force appears to have come from something very personal. In his acclaimed historical study first published in 1950, *Oriental Renaissance*, Raymond Schwab draws particular attention to what he calls Schlegel's "double conversion to Calcutta and Rome," namely, the fact—in Schwab's view, far from coincidental—that the publication of the historic analysis was contemporaneous with its author's conversion (together with his wife, Dorothea, née Mendelssohn) to Catholicism. For Schlegel, the study of classical Indian language and literature certainly was not a matter of mere knowledge for knowledge's sake; nor was it motivated by the sort of practical interests that initially moved the British colonial government to condone or even encourage some of its officials—such as Jones and Hamilton—to expend their company time on scholastic pursuits. In Schwab's words:

> It was Schlegel who made what could have been no more than a pastime into a vital reality, who created a general cultural movement out of one particular field of knowledge. And he was able to do this because he, alone among all the others, saw this first and foremost as a spiritual event. The convergence of three essential factors in his mind predestined the outcome: his background as a responsible German historian, his romantic veneration for a prevenient Orient whose precedents would determine the literary future of Europe, and, above all, his faith, which led him to choose to relate everything to religious interests.[12]

For this very reason, Schwab expressly and singularly names Schlegel as "the inventor of the Oriental Renaissance." In the preface to *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians*, Schlegel seems to testify to the justice of this assessment:

> The study of Indian literature requires to be embraced by such students and patrons as in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries suddenly kindled in Italy and Germany an ardent appreciation of the beauty of classical learning, and in so short a time invested it with such prevailing importance, that the form of all wisdom and science, and almost of the world itself, was changed and renovated by the influence of that re-awakened knowledge. I venture to predict that the Indian study, if embraced with equal energy, will prove no less grand and universal in its operation, and have no less influence on the sphere of European intelligence. And wherefore should it be otherwise?[13]

What was at stake, then, in promoting the study of the Orient was nothing less than the rejuvenation of Europe, not by means of a return to what had been, however, but by mining the hitherto untapped resources for the purpose of charting a new course, for the sake of an unprecedented future for Europe.

11. Quoted in Halbfass, *India and Europe*, 75. Regarding this circle, as Friedrich Schlegel himself remarks in the last paragraph of the preface to his famous essay *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians* (1808), there was yet another Schlegel brother who was also an aspiring Indologist, Karl August Schlegel, "who died at Madras on the 9th of September, 1789, having in the latter years of his life made many journeys into the country, and had much intercourse with the natives, had commenced a study of the country, the literature and genius of the Indian people, which was prematurely terminated by his early death."

12. Schwab, *Oriental Renaissance*, 72.

13. I cite E. J. Millington's translation from *The Aesthetic and Miscellaneous Works of Frederick von Schlegel* (1849), 427–28; cited in the text by page number hereafter.

2. The Birth of Comparative Grammar

Among those who heeded the clarion call of the Oriental Renaissance was the young Franz Bopp (1791–1867). Following in Schlegel's footsteps, Bopp sought knowledge of the East in Paris. He crowned his four years of education abroad with a year of Sanskrit study under the tutelage of Antoine-Léonard de Chézy (1773–1832), recently appointed to the new chair of Sanskrit at the Collège de France, the first such position in a European university.[14] Bopp's application to his studies resulted, in 1816, when he was only twenty-five, in the publication of the rather prosaic and didactic title *On the Conjugation System of Sanskrit Language in Comparison with Those of Greek, Latin, Persian and German Languages* (*Über das Conjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache in Vergleichung mit jenem der griechischen, lateinischen, persischen und germanischen Sprache*)—a work generally deemed "definitive" in the establishment of the science of comparative grammar. Indeed, Schwab calls it "the first work in which William Jones's lucky intuition became a method."[15]

In this fashion, the general outlook of the most distinguished philologists of Europe—among whom we should also count H. H. Wilson (1786–1860), Christian Lassen (1800–76), and Eugène Burnouf (1801–52)—turned decidedly scholastic and technical. At the same time, the romance of India did not abate. For these scholars India's immediate and vital relevance to the question of the European past and future was not in doubt. Most conspicuous in its regard for the East was the German-speaking world, though the cultural-linguistic domain of "Germany" itself still lacked unified nation-statehood. Notwithstanding this political disability (or possibly because of it), in various principalities and kingdoms of the Germanic world, particularly in the emergent state of Prussia, the leading men of science and of the affairs of state made concerted attempts to become conversant with Orientalist scholarship. Thus such philo-

14. Schwab informs us that Bopp's initial intention was "to learn Persian with [Antoine Isaac Silvestre de] Sacy and to pursue Semitic studies with [Étienne Marc] Quatremère," but he remained one more year to study with Chézy, who had just been appointed to the Sanskrit chair (Schwab, *Oriental Renaissance*, 78).

15. Ibid., 178. A truly monumental work that was to determine Bopp's position in history, *Comparative Grammar of Sanskrit, Zend, Greek, Latin, Gothic, and German* (*Vergleichende Grammatik des Sanskrit . . . und Deutschen*) first appeared in Berlin in 1833; the posthumously published third edition (1868–71) added to the above list of languages Armenian, Lithuanian, and Old Slavic. In "Friedrich Schlegel and the Beginnings of Indo-European Linguistics in Germany," Timpanaro notes, in addition to Bopp, another German scholar often credited with being an important founding figure of scientific philology: Rasmus Kristian Rask (1787–1832).

sophical luminaries as Hegel (1770–1831), Schelling (1775–1854), and Schopenhauer (1788–1860) regularly consumed the latest output of a rising generation of Orientalist scholars often less than half their age.[16] The same held true for those intellectuals in high positions of power; perhaps most consequential of all was the Prussian minister, diplomat, farsighted educational reformer, and classical scholar in his own right, Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835).

Though Humboldt had been a serious student of world languages since his youth, his deep interest in Sanskrit was awakened when, in 1817 in London, he met Franz Bopp, who had left Paris to study further with the British Sanskritists Charles Wilkins (1749–1836), translator of the Bhagavad Gita, and Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765–1837). It was from Bopp and August Wilhelm Schlegel—who like his younger brother Friedrich had received Sanskrit instructions in Paris, and likewise had come to London—that Humboldt learned Sanskrit. Shortly thereafter Humboldt returned the favor, so to speak, by establishing

16. As Urs App has shown in some detail, Schopenhauer's interest in Orientalist scholarship goes back to his youth. See Urs App, "Notes and Excerpts by Schopenhauer" (1998), 11–33.

An emblematic episode in regard to the general interest of German intellectuals in the new field of Oriental studies may be the curiously mutual pedagogic relation that developed between Schelling, then in his sixties, and the twenty-year-old Max Müller—already in professional command of Sanskrit—who had lately arrived in Berlin to study philosophy with the legendary professor, as well as to study more Sanskrit with Franz Bopp. From the beginning of their acquaintance, Schelling took the opportunity to interrogate the young man on various points of arcane Indological knowledge and had him translate one of the Upanishads expressly for him. See Müller's *Life and Letters*, edited by his wife Georgina Max Müller (1902), 1:20–25. Later, Müller rendered similar Sanskritic services to Alexander von Humboldt, Christian Bunsen, and others among his benefactors.

In a letter to his mother, translated and included in the *Life and Letters* (23), Müller describes his first meeting with Schelling thus: "I went to announce myself. He receives people at four o'clock. I had not expected much, for I had heard how he had dismissed Jellinick, but I was more fortunate. I asked him if he would continue to lecture next term on the Philosophy of Revelation. He said he could not decide yet, therefore probably only a private lecture again. Then I spoke to him of my time in Leipzig, of Weiss and Brockhaus, and then we came round to Indian Philosophy. Here he allowed me to tell him a great deal. I especially dwelt on the likeness between Sankhya and his own system, and remarked how an inclination to the Vedânta showed itself. He asked what we must understand by Vedânta, how the existence of God was proved, how God created the world, whether it had reality. He has been much occupied with Colebrooke's *Essays*, and he seemed to wish to learn more, as he asked me if I could explain a text. Then he asked where I was living, knew my father [Romantic poet Wilhelm Müller] as Greek poet and a worker on Homer, and at last dismissed me with 'Come again soon,' offering to do anything he could for me."

"the first chairs of Sanskrit in Germany in 1818, one created especially for Bopp at Berlin, and the other for Wilhelm Schlegel at Bonn."[17]

While he thus did much to assist the careers of others professionally engaged in Sanskrit studies and to promote the institution of Indology generally, Wilhelm von Humboldt's involvement in Oriental philological scholarship was by no means merely derivative or vicarious.[18] Throughout his life he took opportunities, as they arose, to study languages as far removed and as wide-ranging as those of the Basques, Native Americans, and South Pacific islanders. At the time of his death in 1835, he was preparing a three-volume work on Kawi, a highly specialized language of Java greatly influenced and reshaped by Sanskritic elements brought onto the island with "Hindu and Buddhist" cultures from India.[19]

Humboldt had planned a monograph-length essay as a substantial introduction to the compendium—hence often known as the "Kawi Introduction." The actual title of the essay testifies to its ambitious goals: *On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and Its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species* (*Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaus und ihren Einfluss auf die geistige Entwicklung des Menschengeschlecht*, 1836).[20] He makes clear in this introduction his intention to carry out a far-reaching study of comparative philology. The import of comparison was for him far from merely technical. Indeed, the value Humboldt conferred upon the aim of comparative philology is expressed in words no less stirring, and even more profoundly universalistic, than those of Friedrich Schlegel:

17. Schwab, *Oriental Renaissance*, 179. Schwab also relates in this context: "Humboldt was . . . the man who later uttered a resounding shout about the *Bhagavad Gita* and with whom Chateaubriand nearly spoke Sanskrit at the dinner table."

18. It should be noted also that his no less illustrious brother, Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859)—whose five-year voyage of scientific exploration to the Spanish Americas, the West Indies, and the United States at the turn of the century made him arguably the most celebrated scientist of the early nineteenth century—was also keenly interested in Indology. Max Müller's letters from the 1840s and later recollections document several critical occasions in which the elder scientist—then working on his last grand opus, *Kosmos*, and himself quite impecunious, having exhausted his considerable patrimony on scientific expositions and the publication of the results—personally did much to facilitate the young man's pursuit of the Rig Veda project.

19. His younger brother Alexander edited and published Humboldt's work on Kawi posthumously.

20. I use here Peter Heath's English translation, *On Language* (1999); cited in the text by page number hereafter.

> The division of mankind into peoples and races, and the diversity of their languages and dialects, are indeed directly linked with each other, but are also connected with, and dependent upon, a third and higher phenomenon, the *growth of man's mental powers* into ever new and often more elevated forms. . . . This revelation of man's mental powers, diverse in its degree and nature, over the course of millennia and throughout the world, is the highest aim of all spiritual endeavour, the ultimate idea which world history must strive to bring forth clearly from itself. (21)

This conception of the spiritual mission of the comparative study of language sets Humboldt and his goals at a considerable distance from the resolutely empirical objectives of those technophilological Orientalists exemplified by Bopp.[21] At the same time, it is impossible to overestimate the degree to which Humboldt's powerful conviction of a direct connection between the study of languages and the world historical destiny of a nation and ultimately of the human race fostered, legitimated, and glorified the young science and its practitioners, no matter how tediously particular and prosaic their actual scholarly activities. As Humboldt himself puts it: "The *comparative study of languages* . . . loses all higher interest if it does not cleave to the point at which language is connected with the shaping of the *nation's mental power*" (21). Needless to say, the exaltation of comparative philology was made incomparably consequential because it was issued by Humboldt, who at a certain critical period was in the position to put the power of the Prussian state behind it. As already mentioned, he single-handedly caused professorial chairs in Sanskrit to materialize in two German universities, whose prestige in Oriental studies was to endure for generations thereafter.

Despite the obtuseness of his prose, the depth of Humboldt's assumptions deserves some attention. First, he maintains that languages are worth studying comparatively because the differences among languages correspond to the

21. This tension, if not to say opposition, between the more spiritual/speculative aim and the technical/empirical objective of philology manifests itself frequently in Humboldt's text, while he always seems to resolve the matter in terms of the necessary sequence and hierarchy of purposes. For example, this passage: "It is precisely the highest and most refined aspect that cannot be discerned from these disparate elements [or 'infinity of *details*' that constitute the material being of any language], and can only be perceived or divined in *connected discourse*; which is all the more proof that language proper lies in the act of its real production. It alone must in general always be thought of as the true and primary, in all investigations which are to penetrate into the living essentiality of language. The break-up into words and rules is only a dead makeshift of scientific analysis" (Humboldt, *On Language*, 49).

differences among "peoples and races"—not so much peoples who might happen to (or learn to) speak them, but the people who originally generated them. For Humboldt, a language is not a natural environmental formation that spontaneously occurred in a given locality by happenstance; nor is it an instrument that was accidentally discovered by a particular people. Rather, he claims that the relation between a people and their language is essential, vital, and mutually formative. He clearly believes that language formation is a "task" that each people or nation must "resolve"; it is an accomplishment of a people, an expression of their intrinsic nature.

> The *bringing-forth of language* is an *inner need* of human beings, not merely an external necessity for maintaining communal intercourse, but a thing lying in their own nature, indispensable for the development of their mental powers and the attainment of a world-view, to which man can attain only by bringing his thinking to clarity and precision through communal thinking with others. (27)

In short, for Humboldt, "*Language* . . . is the organ of inner being. . . . It therefore strikes with all the most delicate fibres of its roots into the national mentality; and the more aptly the latter reacts upon it, the more rich and regular its development"(21). It is "the outer appearance of the spirit of a people" (46).

Second, Humboldt definitively asserts that those different peoples, distinguishable by different languages, manifest their unique essences in different times and places, and the totality of these innumerable manifestations, taken together and considered as a single universal historical process, will amount to the collective destiny of the human race (*Menschengeschlechts*).[22]

Obviously, it is in the context of this second assumption that the groupings of peoples and languages become extremely important. But Humboldt's interest here is not the classification of languages as such; rather, he considers the diversity of languages important "as a necessary foundation for the *progress* of the *human mind*" (90). He seeks to sort languages of the world into groups, not

22. "It may well be assumed that the language-making power in man does not rest until, either in individuals or as a whole, it has brought forth that which answers the most and most completely to the demands to be made. In the light of this assumption, therefore, we may be able to discover, even among languages and linguistic families that betray no historical connection, an advancement in varying degrees of the principle of their formation. But if such be the case, this connection of outwardly unlinked phenomena must lie in a common inner cause, which can only be the evolution of the force at work" (ibid., 27).

just to establish a taxonomy, but in order to construct a historical narrative of the advent and the vicissitudes of human race as a whole. The case of Kawi is a particularly useful focal point for such deliberations because, in his view, the island of Java in the course of its long history experienced an extraordinary commingling of languages, cultures, and religions. In other words, he saw in Java what were beginning to be recognized as the three major language groups playing their respective, and rather unequal, parts: the native Malay language (belonging to the noninflecting group of languages, later to be called the "agglutinative," or, by Max Müller and others, the "Turanian" group), Sanskrit brought from India (a fully inflecting language of the Indo-European family), and Arabic (a Semitic language with limited inflection). This commingling, however, is not merely a historical after-effect, but instead, it somehow represents the state of plenum at the origin of all things. And insofar as Humboldt, like Schlegel, saw the origin of Europe ultimately in India, it is not surprising to find him referring, even if rather vaguely, to Asia as the "very part of the world from whence proceed the greatest and most remarkable linguistic phenomena, from the unisyllabic nature of Chinese to the wealth of forms in India, and on top of that again the uniformly fixed pattern of the Semitic language-structure" (22).

There is no strong evidence that Humboldt's posthumous publication on the Kawi language, voluminous as it was, had a scholarly influence of any great significance or an inspirational impact comparable to that of Schlegel's sensational essay of three decades earlier.[23] This notwithstanding, if I dwell on the "Kawi Introduction" at some length here, it is not only because of the unique position of its author as a patron saint of the future commonwealth of philological scholarship in Germany. Even more important, it is because this ponderous dissertation contains, or rather, officially inaugurates, some of the most fundamental, enduring, and gravely consequential assumptions concerning the typology of languages and their hierarchical order. Humboldt's

23. In addition to the Kawi project, Humboldt's other notable foray into the domain of Orientalism included his lectures on the Bhagavad Gita delivered in 1825 and 1826 at the Royal Prussian Academy of Science in Berlin. The lectures were subsequently published in the *Proceedings of the Historical Philological Section of the Berlin Royal Academy* in 1827, and were later reprinted in his collected works (1850–52), under the title *Über die unter dem Namen Bhagavad-Gītā bekannte Episode des Mahābhārata*. Shortly after Humboldt's original lectures, a much disturbed Hegel interrupted the revision of his *Encyclopaedia* (1817) and wrote a two-part response longer than Humboldt's text, published first in 1827 and recently in translation as *On the Episode of the Mahābhārata Known by the Name Bhagavad-Gītā by Wilhelm von Humboldt* (1995).

summary description of the three language groups makes this apparent. Throughout the essay runs a veritable dithyramb in praise of the "Sanscritic family" (later to be called the "Indo-Germanic," "Indo-European," or "Aryan" family of languages):

> It is marvellous to see what a long series of languages, equally happy in their structure and equally stimulating in their effect upon the mind, has been engendered by that language which we must place at the summit of the Sanscrit family. (182)

Predictably, this high estimation of the Sanskrit family and the concomitant denigration of non-Indo-European languages lead to a self-congratulation of modern Europe. As facile as this logic may be, and undeserving of his robust intelligence, Humboldt articulates it plainly enough, without a hint of irony.

> In the history of nations, the question may well have been raised as to what would have happened in the world if Carthage [a Semitic nation] had defeated Rome and conquered the European West. One might equally well ask what the present state of our culture would be if the Arabs [a Semitic race] had remained, as they were for a time, the sole possessors of scientific knowledge, and had spread throughout the Western world. A less favourable outcome seems to me, in both cases, beyond doubt. It is to the same causes which produced the world-dominance of Rome, namely the *Roman spirit and character*, rather than to external and more accidental circumstances, that we owe the powerful influence of this world-dominion upon our civil institutions, laws, language and culture. Through the turn toward this culture, and through inner kinship, we became genuinely receptive to the Greek mind and language, where the Arabs only adhered, for the most part, to the scientific results of Greek inquiry. Even on the basis of the same antique heritage, they would not have been capable of erecting the edifice of science and art which we may justly boast today. (182)

How, one might ask, does he know this to be true? As he and many fellow metaphysicians of language of his time and thereafter would readily agree, the truth lies in the very nature of the respective languages; such nature is revealed in the language's grammatical *structure*. According to this theory, prevalent at the time, the "spirit and character" of the Semitic language, in comparison to that of the Sanskritic family, is "fixed," "rigid," and inimical to *Bildung* (growth, development, culture).

Much of the text of *On Language* is in fact devoted to a deeply metaphysical contemplation on the origin and development of human language and its diversification. At issue is the process of development from certain rudimentary "sound forms" to language as a system, that is to say, from the first articulation of protowords, or roots (*Wurzeln*)—a root as a primordial utterance that is at once a sound and a signification—to words proper, that is, linguistic units capable of constituting a syntax. At its best, this development occurs from within, as the root word evolves outward, generating its syntactical capabilities out of its own essential being. The resulting grammatical form is *inflection*. Since the development of inflection is an intrinsic self-evolution of the root, this efflorescence is free and prolific yet remains true to its origin; and the development follows its own logic, therefore it is rational. Alternatively, lacking this inner development characteristic of inflection, root words may be contrived to form a language system synthetically, as it were, by a particular sequencing of root words and by artificially inserting additional exterior components or particles to piece them together into syntax. This latter mode of language formation is *agglutination*. While no language is said to be entirely devoid of one or the other of the two types of syntax formation, what Humboldt calls the "Sanscritic family" defines one end of the spectrum, while Chinese, quintessentially, marks the opposite end; the Semitic language family is situated between the two opposing poles, representing the type of languages with *delimited inflection*. Even though he would allow that each type of language formation has its own potential for perfectibility, this taxonomy is not value neutral. In sum, Humboldt maintains that the most authentic and perfect language formation is inflection.

3. The Supremacy of Inflection

On the cardinal point of the supremacy of inflection, Humboldt's speculations are much too abstruse and protracted to lend themselves to succinct and lucid summary; nor is a comprehensive overview of his version of the theory necessary for our present purpose. In fact, when it comes to the relative valuation of inflection over agglutination, he is not entirely original; the gist of his argument had already been laid out by Schlegel in *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians*.[24] At the beginning of the chapter entitled "On the Division of

24. This may be as good an occasion as any to remember that the scholarly credit-debt relation between Schlegel and Humboldt was mutual. Indeed, the relation should be extended to include the Schlegel brothers (Wilhelm and Friedrich) as well as the even more famous Humboldt brothers (Wilhelm and Alexander). In *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians*, Friedrich

Languages into Two Principal Branches, Founded on its Internal Structure," Schlegel indicates that his objective is to elucidate the "peculiar principle" predominating in the Sanskritic family of languages, marked by "astonishing simplicity," in contrast to "most other languages," whose governing principle he claims is "completely opposite" in nature. He explicates the difference between the opposing types thus:

> Secondary determinations of meaning [*die Nebenbestimmungen der Bedeutung*] may be produced either by inflection, [that is,] internal alterations of the root-sound [*durch inner Veränderung des Wurzellauts*],[25] or by annexing to it a certain peculiar particle [*durch ein eignes hinzugefügtes Wort*], which in themselves indicate the past, the future, or any other circumstance. On these two simple methods we found our distinction between the two principal branches of language. (447)

Schlegel illustrates this contrast with specific examples:

> The Chinese presents a remarkable instance of a language almost without inflection [*Flexion*], every necessary modification being expressed by separate monosyllabic words, each having an independent signification. The extraordinary monosyllabic form, and perfect simplicity of its construction, make the consideration of it important as facilitating the comprehension of other languages. The same may be said of the grammar of the Malay language. The singular and difficult dialects of America illustrate the most important peculiarities of this entire branch. (447)

In the context of this binary system, Semitic languages occupy a position in-between, part inflectional and part agglutinative, for the reason that their inflection is delimited and constrained. This is because, Schlegel speculates, the inflectional development of these languages began not originally and directly from the root sounds but instead from primitive words already compounded with particles, thus already turned partially agglutinative:

Schlegel duly acknowledges and thanks "the distinguished author, A. von Humboldt, for his kindness in procuring . . . various vocabularies and dictionaries," and anticipates "from the elder von Humboldt, a copious and more especially, a distinct and intelligent analysis of that remarkable language [Basque]" (447).

25. Here, I have modified the translation slightly. In Millington's translation, it reads: "modifications of meaning, or different degrees of signification" and "internal variations of the primitive word" respectively.

> An appearance of inflection is sometimes produced by the incorporation of the annexed particles with the primitive word. In the Arabic language, and those related to it, the first and most important modifications, as, for example, the persons of the verbs, are formed by the introduction of single particles, each bearing its own appropriate signification, and in these the suffix not being easily distinguished from the original root, we may conclude a similar incorporation to have taken place in other instances, although the foreign particles inserted may be no longer traceable. (448)

In effect, Schlegel is claiming that, in the case of Semitic languages, the inflectional capability—hence linguistic freedom and mental/spiritual (*geistige*) creativity—was compromised from the start, owing to the incipient agglutination that had already occurred.

In terms of the principles governing various language groups, then, the hierarchy delineated here seems unambiguous enough, descending from the highest (inflected) to the lowest (agglutinative), with a kind of hybrid (partially inflected/agglutinative) in the middle. But when it comes to evaluating actual, specific languages, and the question as to whether any of them are absolutely superior in comparison to another, there are significant qualifications to be noted. For one thing, Schlegel suggests that the agglutinative languages, though crude and artless at the beginning, tend toward gradual refinement in the course of time, "as the subjoined particles become incorporated by degrees with the primitive words"; in contrast, inflectional languages are susceptible to later corruption, as "the first beauty and symmetry of their construction [is] gradually defaced by an attempt to simplify and elucidate it, as may be seen by comparing various dialects of the German, Romantic, and Indian languages, with the original type from which they were framed" (451–52).

To complicate the matter further—and this is even more consequential for our concern—it is not clear whether the mixed and compromised formation of the Semitic languages should necessarily cause them to rank higher in the scale of linguistic excellence than the agglutinative languages. Repeated reference to the alleged rigidity and the stunted growth of the Semitic languages seems to imply that these languages are in fact doubly constrained, unable to evolve or refine, thus unable to develop in either direction. At the same time, the delimited nature of the Semitic languages is sometimes seen as ennobling, as a source of their faithfulness and immunity from change, and therefore as the very characteristic that elevates Hebrew and Arabic above some of the inflectional languages in certain respects. Giving these considerations their due,

implicitly or explicitly, Schlegel cautions against presuming any simple evaluative scheme:

> It must not . . . be supposed that I desire to exalt one chief branch of language exclusively, to the neglect or disparagement of the other. The sphere of language is too comprehensive, rich, and grand, and has been too highly developed and investigated for one sweeping decision to accomplish any such object. Who can deny the lofty power and energy of the Arabic and Hebraic languages? (451)

None of these circumspections, however, appears to have altered the basic presumption of the categorical superiority of inflection. Schlegel puts the matter not so much as absolutely axiomatic but simply as self-evident. His statement on this matter is beguilingly cautious and treacherously vague: "It must undoubtedly be admitted, after adequate investigation and comparison, that languages in which the grammar is one of inflexion are usually preferable, as evincing higher art in their construction" (451).

Wilhelm von Humboldt was by no means the sole inheritor of this hierarchical valuation of linguistic structures that placed the Sanskritic family of languages at the top—Sanskrit itself above all, then classical Greek as a close second. What is also notable is that to claim Indo-European superiority always seems to lead not so much to a disdain for the peoples speaking agglutinative language but instead to a peculiarly pointed and dismissive judgment against the Semites, and against the Arabs in particular. To cite but one such example, Léon Poliakov, in his renowned study first published in 1971, *The Aryan Myth*, reports that Christian Lassen, "pupil and *protégé* of the Schlegel brothers," asserted the superiority of the Indo-Europeans over Semites with these condescending words: "All [the Semites] have done is to borrow from the Indo-Germans, and it was only the Arabs who did this. Their views and notions so absorb their intelligence that they are unable to rise with serenity to the contemplation of pure ideas. . . . In his religion the Semite is egotistical and exclusive."[26]

The view articulated by Lassen was to prove rather typical of the century and perhaps beyond: the notorious "rigidity" of the Semitic language structure directly corresponded to the limitation of the Semites' mental capacity and to their intellectual inflexibility. Lacking the inherent power of creativity characteristic of Sanskritic peoples, they could not generate original ideas on their

26. Lassen, *Indische Altertumskunde* (1847), quoted in Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, 197.

own. And whatever they "borrowed," they might contain but could not assimilate; nor could they foster its further growth and efflorescence. The meanness of their mental/spiritual endowment was such that whatever fell into the hands of the Semites from without, their custody would prove an iron cage for the inherited treasure, if not a veritable deathbed and a grave. A philosophical idea might be preserved by them intact, but at the cost of sterilization and ossification; the life goes out of it.

To return now to where we left Humboldt's Kawi treatise, the supremacy of inflectional languages was expected to be obvious enough to any reader who had followed the exposition in *On Language* without dissent. Counting on such a sympathetic reading, Humboldt continues:

> Assuming this [theory of inflection] to be correct, we may ask whether such a preeminence of the peoples of *Sanscrit origin* is to be sought in their intellectual endowments, or in their language, or in more favourable historical circumstances. It is obvious that none of these causes can be regarded as working alone. *Language* and *intellectual endowment*, in their constant interaction, admit of no separation, and even *historical destinies* may not be so independent of the inner nature of peoples and individuals, for all that the connection is far from being evident to us on every point. Yet this superiority must be discernible from example of the Sanscrit family, [so] we must look into the question of why one language should possess a stronger and more variously creative *life-principle* than the rest. As is plainly visible here, the cause lies in two points, namely that we are speaking of a *family of languages*, not a single one, and beyond that in the individual make-up of the *language-structure* itself. (182–83)

Here, while no unilateral causality is assumed, it is evident that much has been inferred from the perceived excellence of a particular group of languages. It is significant that such a definitive statement of so tenuous an idea—which was to prove extremely powerful and consequential in the centuries to come—was issued by as authoritative a figure as Humboldt, even if he was not the first one to propose it. The articulation in this instance indeed allows us to observe with some clarity the fundamental forces underwriting the European investment in "India" and "Orient" for their own interests. The stress on the divisions between different families of languages (and the concomitant deemphasis of

the internal differences within the related languages) leads the way to some of the cardinal assumptions that were to render the Indo-European idea enormously useful.

Most immediately, a "family" of languages implies a distinct genealogy, apart and separate from other families and their respective lines of descent. The notion of linguistic families thus had the effect of suspending and transferring to another plane the controversy that was soon to erupt over the single versus multiple origin(s) of the human species. Philological theories of language groups, such as Humboldt's, effectively preempted this debate from taking place in its own arena, it seems, while implicitly favoring polygenesis over monogenesis.[27] To be sure, comparative philology itself might never reveal the biological beginning of the species, but insofar as this science suggested that several distinct types of languages emerged more or less independent of one another, and that the "spirit" of a people was coterminous with the type of language they generated, it seemed reasonable to infer that the division of the races—here, understood not in terms of differences discernible in bodily features but in terms of spiritual, mental, and intellectual qualities—was fundamental and, in effect, original, since the differences went back all the way to the earliest traceable moment of (pre)history.

This deep division of the "races" implied, conversely, commensurability and commutability of peoples, languages, "geniuses," and "spirits" belonging to the same "family," even if they were separated by a great distance in space or in time. Thus the nineteenth-century Englishman could presume that there was an essential tie between him and an Athenian of the fourth century BCE, whereas a medieval Mohammedan from North Africa, for all his knowledge of Aristotle, presumably could not claim the same kinship. Similarly, an ancient Persian could be claimed by a contemporary Prussian as kin, on account of their presumed common spiritual ancestry, even if there was no subsequent historical relation—let alone relation of descent—directly connecting them.

27. It is necessary to remember, however, that not all philologists of the nineteenth century were unaware of certain political uses and abuses to which their theories were being put, and some even publicly denounced such applications. Most notably, Max Müller made the following public statement in 1861: "In modern times the science of language has been called in to settle some of the most perplexing political and social questions. . . . in America comparative philologists have been encouraged to prove the impossibility of a common origin of languages and races, in order to justify, by scientific arguments, the unhallowed theory of slavery. Never do I remember to have seen science more degraded than on the title-page of an American publication in which, among the profiles of the different races of man, the profile of the ape was made to look more human than that of the negro" (*Lectures on the Science of Language*, 22).

Another implication of the concept of language family seems to be the capacity to isolate any instances of historical—meaning, "accidental"—transmission of language and keep such cases separate from the question of genealogy or descent. Mere transfer of languages from one group of people to another, which might occur because of proximity, conquest or commercial intercourse, for example, would leave intact the original distinctions separating different "families" of people. By this reckoning, learning another's language, or being born into a language of another, would not alter one's inherent identity. An American of African descent growing up speaking English, or even more ironically, generations of Jews speaking Yiddish, the language of their own and of no one else for centuries, would not be considered Indo-European even though their birth languages undoubtedly were. These languages, in fact, would be forever a borrowed tongue for them. In contrast, Germans speaking English or Russians speaking French were merely circulating among their own family, so to speak, and by the same token, the modern European might rightfully claim classical Greek or Sanskrit as his own, as his birthright.

From Schlegel to Humboldt, it is conspicuous that the theory of language groups placed an overwhelming emphasis on grammatical structure. The virtue of any given language is to be assessed ultimately by the nature of its syntax. According to this theory, all other linguistic properties and endowments that might be regarded as meritorious and deserving of attention—such as opulence of vocabulary, sonority and lyricism of diction, intelligence and intricacies of rhetorical figures—are decidedly secondary. For nineteenth-century philologists, nothing seems to have mattered more than grammar and its perceived rationality.[28]

We, on the other hand, are left incredulous that this sweeping hegemonic idea of Indo-European language, culture, and, eventually, "race" could be based

28. It may be variously speculated as to why nineteenth-century philologists put nearly exclusive emphasis on the grammar. That the Greeks, and even more, the ancient Indians valorized grammar undoubtedly influenced or legitimated their views. On Sanskrit grammarians, Max Müller writes: "The Hindús are the only nation that cultivated the science of grammar without having received any impulse, directly or indirectly, from the Greeks. . . . There is no form, regular or irregular, in the whole Sanskrit language, which is not provided for in the grammar of Pânini and his commentators. It is the perfection of a merely empirical analysis of language, unsurpassed, nay even unapproached, by anything in the grammatical literature of other nations. Yet of the real nature, and natural growth of language, it teaches us nothing" (ibid., 116).

on such arcane and seemingly tenuous grounds as the superiority of inflection over agglutination. Nor does it seem to us warranted to draw, as brusquely as the pioneering philologists did, an immediate equation between the nature of syntax and the cultural character of a people or their religious dispositions. But regardless of what we might think about such theories today, it apparently became feasible, even inevitable, to represent the religions of the Semites—particularly Islam—in the shadow of an overwhelming prejudgment that proclaimed their essential inflexibility, which stemmed from, and was unmistakably reflected in, their language. Thence it came to be widely held that, no matter how richly various its worldwide spread, Islam was in its very essence rigid, invariably intolerant and exclusive, incandescently purist, with an inherent tendency toward fanaticism.

Concurrent with this turn of events is a marked change in the image of Muslims. Once represented in earlier centuries by the figure of a languid, indulgent, and dissolute "Mussulman"—epitomized by the fabulously rich, corpulent Ottoman pasha wrapped in silk, lounging in his harem surrounded by all manners of pleasure-giving accoutrements—the quintessential "Mohammedan" now turned into a fierce zealot, a sword-wielding, camel-riding desert nomad; he is an Arab. Here, one might be suitably reminded that, in the nineteenth century, just as now, the total population of the Afghani-, Persian-, and Hindustani-speaking Muslims (who therefore were Indo-Europeans) combined with the Ottoman Turks and other agglutinative language-speaking Muslims of China, Indo-China, and the East Indies, were together far more numerous than Arab Muslims. From this point on, however, in the European mind, this overwhelming majority population of the non-Arab Muslims no longer represented the essential character of their religion.

It is also noteworthy that, in the course of the nineteenth century, the efficacy and the value of this philologically based taxonomy was significantly transformed, or as the case might have been, the hidden logic that had been there from the beginning became overt and pronounced. It became more apparent that the most widely consequential outcome of the classification of language groups was not really the relative value of inflection over agglutination (which separated the Indo-European from most others), but the distinction between languages with full inflection and those with limited inflection, that is, between the Indo-European and the Semitic. By the same token, not surprisingly, the very import of the "Indo-European," and its virtual synonym, "Aryan," increasingly became a matter of defining Europeanness. It might be fairly said that the notion of "Aryan" was part of the new conceptual apparatus contrived

to represent the European heritage as a direct descendent of Greco-Roman antiquity, with a definitive emphasis on the Greek portion of the hyphenation. In due course, it became customary among Europeans, in speaking of "the Aryans," to set aside the Persians and the Indians altogether, and to use the term to refer to and distinguish themselves from "the Semites"—above all, from the Arabs (now equated with Muslims) and the Jews.

It may be useful to note in this connection that Wilhelm von Humboldt is remembered today not only for his contribution to Oriental scholarship; he is more famously recognized as a founding father of the science of classical antiquities, or *Altertumswissenschaft*. The emerging science of antiquity was above all predicated on the unique and incomparable status attributed to the Greeks. Ancient Greece was now recognized as the absolute origin of nearly everything that constituted Europe; at the same time, Greek civilization attained a status that was at once suprahistorical and nearly supernatural. This novel idea—a metaphysical doctrine, to be sure, brazenly flying in the face of sound historical science—is epitomized by the following unapologetic statement by Humboldt, which dates back to his youthful, pre-Sanskritic period:

> For us the Greeks step out of the circle of history. . . . We fail entirely to recognize our relationship to them if we dare to apply the standards to them we apply to the rest of world history. Knowledge of the Greeks is not merely pleasant, useful or necessary to us—no, in the Greeks alone we find the idea of that which we ourselves should like to be and produce. If every part of history enriches us with its human wisdom and human experience then from the Greeks we take something more than earthly—something almost godlike.[29]

In his mature years, Humboldt enhanced, rather than tempered, this idea of the primordially generative power of antiquity by extending it further, as it were, beyond Greco-Roman, to encompass Indo-European.

4. The Essential Nature of the Semitic: Ernest Renan

The ramifications of mid-nineteenth-century philological theories of language groups, races, and religions are exemplified in the works of Ernest Renan (1823–92). Born the same year as Max Müller, and in a sense a counterpart to the famous Indo-European philologist, Renan was one of the foremost scholars of the Semitic languages. Despite their initial disagreements over, among

29. Quoted in Martin Bernal, "Black Athena Denied" (1986), 27–28.

other things, the issue of the religious tendencies ascribed to the Semites, Müller and Renan became close correspondents and lifelong friends.[30] Unlike Müller, who came from a liberal German Protestant milieu, the French Catholic Renan had renounced his allegiance to the church that had supported and enabled his education and promised security for his future as a scholar and cleric.[31] Thenceforward independent of clerical support and protection, he went on to have a distinguished scholarly career, marked by several major publications including *Histoire générale et système comparée des langues sémitiques* (1855) and, perhaps most controversially and sensationally, *La Vie de Jesus* (1863). Thus counted among the best academic authorities of the time, Renan, toward the end of his life, and roughly half a century after Humboldt, undertook what was to be the last of his great works, a five-volume history of the Israelites (1887–93).

Early in the first volume of his *History of the People of Israel*, we find the following statement, the gist of which by now seems eminently familiar:

> The languages of the Aryans and the Semites differed essentially, though there were points of connexity between them. The Aryan language was immensely superior, especially in regard to the conjugation of verbs. This marvellous instrument, created by the instinct of primitive man, contained in the germ all the metaphysics which were afterwards to be developed through the Hindoo genius, the Greek genius, the German genius. The Semitic language, upon the contrary, started by making a capital fault in regard to the verb. The greatest blunder which this race has made (for it was the most irreparable), was to adopt, in treating the verb, a mechanism so petty that the expression of the tenses and moods has always been imperfect and cumbersome. Even at the present time the Arab has to struggle in vain against the linguistic blunder which his ancestors made ten or fifteen thousand years ago.[32]

30. It appears that the onset of their relationship was rather more contentious than friendly, amounting to mutual attacks, beginning with Renan's sharp criticism of Müller's article on Turanian languages (1854), to which Müller responded by writing a scathing review of Renan's *Histoire générale et système comparée des langues sémitiques* (1855). According to his widow, Georgina Grenfell Max Müller, partly urged by Bunsen, partly because Renan himself wrote him conveying a puzzled reaction to the severity of his counterattack, Müller decided not to publish the pamphlet, "though already printed, and they gradually became great friends" (Müller, *Life and Letters*, 1:172–73). A copy of this suppressed pamphlet, entitled "Reply to Monsieur Renan's Remarks" (printed in London, 1855), is extant in Bodleian Library, Oxford University (Max Müller Papers, shelfmark d.2358, folio 1–25). More pertinent to our immediate interest, however, is that, after the publication of the second edition of Renan's *Histoire générale* (1858), Müller wrote a lengthy critical review arguing against Renan's notion that the Semites are by instinct monotheistic, in contrast to the Indo-Europeans who tend toward polytheism. See F. Max Müller, "Semitic Monotheism" (1860), in *Chips from a German Workshop*, (1869), 1:337–74.

31. The story of his church-subsidized education and his subsequent loss of faith—and his indomitable sister Henriette's role in this latter process—is sympathetically and amusingly narrated by an early biographer, Madame James Darmesteter (A. Mary F. Robinson), *The Life of Ernest Renan* (2nd ed., 1898). Prior to this biography, Renan's pupil and Zend scholar James Darmesteter wrote a lengthy essay narrating and reflecting on Renan's departure from the Catholic Church. "Ernest Renan," in *Selected Essays of James Darmesteter* (1895), 178–240.

As fatalistic as it might sound, it is not certain that the linguistic heritage envisioned here amounted to the kind of racial determinism ascribed, since the end of the Second World War, to almost any mention of the term "Aryan" in contradistinction to "Semitic." Although it is useful to remember that what Renan expresses in this passage is by no means atypical of his time, his articulation is exceptionally valuable not only because of his scholarly authority but for the disarming frankness of expression, not to mention the beguiling charm of his prose generally. It is he, moreover, who drew, with far greater clarity than any other scholar hitherto examined, the contrast between the Indo-European and the Semitic "geniuses" and between the respective contributions they supposedly had made to the course of world history; by doing so, he developed most fully the idea of the bifurcated origin of Europe, an idea shared by contemporary European intellectuals, including, as we remember, Matthew Arnold. Renan's pronouncements also proved entirely consistent with the basic orientation of Humboldt, who pursued the study of "Sanscritic" antiquity in order to shed light on the distant ancestry of Europe and, ultimately, for the greater glory of Greece. The very first paragraph of Renan's preface to *History of the People of Israel* demonstrates this affinity well:

> For a philosophic mind, that is to say for one engrossed in the origin of things, there are not more than three histories of real interest in the past of humanity: Greek history, the history of Israel, and Roman history. These three histories combined constitute what may be called the history of civilisation, civilisation being the result of the alternate collaboration of Greece, Judea, and Rome. Greece in my opinion has an exceptional past,

32. Throughout this discussion, I cite the translation by C. B. Pitman and D. Bingam, which started to appear within a year of the original French edition: Renan, *History of the People of Israel* (1888–93), 1:7–8; cited in the text by page number hereafter.

> for she founded, in the fullest sense of the word, rational and progressive humanity. Our science, our arts, our literature, our philosophy, our moral code, our political code, our strategy, our diplomacy, our maritime and international law, are of Greek origin. The framework of human culture created by Greece is susceptible of indefinite enlargement, but it is complete in its several parts. Progress will consist in constantly developing what Greece has conceived, in executing the designs which she has, so to speak, traced out for us. (1:vii)

A rather odd opening for a five-volume work intended to narrate the history of the Israelites, one might think, yet for Renan, this Hellenophilic pronouncement indeed furnished a proper orientation for any contemporary European who would write such a history. As he saw the matter, everything, or nearly everything had its origin in Greece—everything, that is, but one critical failing, and it was in the task of filling in that gap that the history of Israel finds its sole justification "for us":

> Greece had only one thing wanting in the circle of her moral and intellectual activity, but this was an important void; she despised the humble and did not feel the need of a just God. Her philosophers, while dreaming of the immortality of the soul, were tolerant towards the iniquities of this world. Her religions were merely elegant municipal playthings; the idea of a universal religion never occurred to her. The ardent genius of a small tribe established in an outlandish corner of Syria seemed created to supply this void in the Hellenic intellect. (1:vii)[33]

In effect, Renan suggests, the world historical mission of the Israelites, if not to say of the Semites as a whole, was to serve the one and the only truly original agent of civilization, the Greco-Aryans, who were endowed with the inherent force of progress. (And what is history without progress?) In order to serve this particular purpose, moreover, the character of the Semites had to be decidedly *other* than the grand, beneficent, and genteel disposition of the masters of

33. As Renan put it in a later passage: "What Greece was as regards intellectual culture and Rome as regards politics, the nomad Semites were as regards religion. It was by means of religion that these worthy pastoral tribes of Syria reached an exceptional position in the world. The promises made to Abraham are mythical only in form. Abraham, the imaginary ancestor of these tribes, was in reality the father in religion of all peoples" (ibid., 1:22).

history. According to this narrative construction, in fact, it was precisely the mission of the Israelites to be somewhat ill-mannered and cantankerous in their insistence on justice, and on justice alone:

> Israel never stood quietly by to see the world so badly governed, under the authority of a God reputed to be just. Her sages burned with anger over the abuses of the world. A bad man, dying old, rich, and at ease, kindled their fury, and the prophets in the ninth century BC elevated this idea to the height of a dogma. (1:viii)

Thus was born a veritable religion of moral extremism, which featured a doctrine of stringent laws, unforgiving judgment, and hair-raising retribution. This was the unprecedented advent of unadorned ethical monotheism, stripped bare of all ceremonial fineries and meditative unction—a religion that was deadly literal, monolithic, fanatic:

> The Israelitish prophets were impetuous writers such as we of the present day should denounce as socialists and anarchists. They were fanatics in the cause of social justice, and loudly proclaimed that if the world was not just, or capable of becoming so, it had better be destroyed—a view which, if utterly wrong, was very fertile in results, for, like all the doctrines of despair, such as the Russian nihilism of the present day, it led to deeds of heroism and brought about a grand awakening of the forces of humanity. (1:viii)

In Renan's time, this figure of a zealous soldier of divine justice immediately evoked associations with certain revolutionary radicals who were causing political and social unrest, whose dangerous fervor was particularly visible during the revolutionary events of 1848, of which Renan himself was a witness in the streets of Paris.[34] In our own time, this image of the quintessential Semite resonates disturbingly with the figure of Muslim extremists turned Arab terrorists. It is as though the incorrigibly self-righteous, wholly self-absorbed, at

34. Renan wrote *L'Avenir de la science* in the wake of 1848 to express his own socialist ideals, which, however, waned shortly thereafter. The manuscript was not published until 1890, two years before his death. The document itself, as well as the fact that he returned to the topic in advanced age, it might be surmised, testify to the deep impression those events of his youth left on him.

once self-sacrificing and other-destroying crusader for the cause of justice has burst straight out of the shell of the prophets of yore.

If such fire-and-brimstone holy outrage was the defining characteristic of Semitic religion, it would seem highly unlikely that this hypercritical force—with an altogether negative, unpromising prospect for a career in constructive history—should have come to play an essential role, perhaps the greatest part ever, on the world historical stage. But this was indeed what happened, according to Renan. This was the miracle of Christianity—that is, insofar as this adamant rationalist would allow any mention of miracles. In Renan's view, the founders of Christianity included not only Jesus and the apostles but also "the second generation of Christians." It was those "direct successors of the prophets," he suggests, who "spent their strength in an incessant call for the end of the world, and, strange to say, did in reality transform the world." In this fashion, the essentially Semitic religion of the prophets, or what Arnold called Hebraism, becomes on a par with the master narrative of history, or Hellenism, at least for a time:

> Christianity, in a word, becomes in history as important an element as the liberal rationalism of the Greeks, though in some respects less assured of duration. The tendency which leads the nineteenth century to secularise everything, to make a host of things lay instead of ecclesiastical, is a reaction against Christianity; but even supposing that it attains its end, Christianity will leave an imperishable trace of its existence. (1:ix)

This pronouncement is ominous, of course, for those Semites who come after Christianity—what might be their raison d'être, now that Christianity has arrived? And what of those who would insist on Christianity beyond this historical moment? The case is clear in Renan's mind: of all the strands of history that have come to constitute the world as "we" know it, eternity lies with the legacy of Greece alone; the rest may have their own day, but their glory is in their respective place, and time, in serving that master history.[35]

35. Thus it follows, for Renan, that the most felicitous of all historians are those who write about Greece. And he positions his own mission in life as a Semitic scholar in this way: "Happy will be the man who shall, at the age of sixty, write this history [of Greece] *con amore*, after having spent his whole life in the study of the works which so many learned schools have devoted to it. He will have for his recompense the greatest joy which man can taste, that of following up the evolutions of life in the very centre of the divine egg within which life first began to palpitate. And yet does it follow that, because I envy the future historian of the genius of Greece, I regret the Nazarite's vow which attached me early in life to the Jewish and Christian problem? Assuredly not. The Jewish and Christian histories have been the delight of eighteen centuries, and although they are now half vanquished by Greek rationalism, they are extraordinarily effective in the amelioration of morals" (*History of the People of Israel*, 1:x-xi).

All in all, then, there is no surprise that the five volumes of Renan's *History of the People of Israel* should end with the advent of Christianity. Thus we read in the conclusion at the end of the final volume:

> Christianity is the offshoot, or . . . the end or final cause of Judaism. Having given birth to Christianity, Judaism still continues to exist, but as a withered trunk beside one fertile branch. Henceforth the life is gone from it. Its history, though still deeply interesting, has only a secondary importance in a large historical view. There is in this assertion nothing that need sadden the heart of an Israelite, however strong in his own conviction. It is through Christianity that Judaism has really conquered the world. Christianity is the masterpiece of Judaism, its glory and the fulness of its evolution. (5:355–56)

This opinion, as problematic and objectionable as it might sound to our ear, was generally consistent with the traditional Christian view of the Jews; for the post-Christian Israelites had always been deemed, or even venerated in some sense, as living fossils of a superseded stage of providential history. Accordingly, there were few indeed among Renan's contemporaries, who would contradict this notion.[36] What was far more controversial at the time was Renan's suggestion that the time of Christianity, too, shall pass, and that signs of its passing were already in evidence in the world around him:

> Judaism and Christianity will both disappear. The work of the Jew will have its end; the work of the Greek—in other words, science and civilization, rational, experimental, without charlatanism, without revelation, a civilization founded upon reason and liberty—will last forever; and if this globe should ever fail in its duty, there will be others found to push to the end the programme of all life,—light, reason, and truth. (5:361)

36. This is not to forget, however, some important critical voices that began to be raised in the nineteenth century, particularly by the proponents of the so-called Jewish Enlightenment. See Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (1998), and Jonathan M. Hess, *Germans, Jews and the Claims of Modernity* (2002).

Rarely was the rationalist republican creed of the nineteenth century more plainly and more serenely spoken than by this former seminarian, much honored and with little to lose or to fear at the end of his days. This rationalism, lest we gloss over it too quickly, was firmly grounded in a claim for the absolute supremacy of the Aryan genius in the universal march of history. At the same time, Renan insisted with utmost sincerity, that in the legacy of humanity there was and would always remain the unforgettable gift of the Semites, or what he called, rather chillingly, "the trace of Israel."

6

Islam, a Semitic Religion

In light of the generative history of comparative philology sketched in chapter 5, there may be little surprise that Buddhism—recognized from the beginning as a tradition of Aryan origin—was more readily considered on a par with Christianity than was Islam and, frankly, more favorably viewed by the newly ethnoconscious Europeans of the nineteenth century.[1] In fact, in certain cases, Buddhism was regarded by some Europeans as their long-forgotten spiritual heritage and actively appropriated in place of Christianity, whose Semitic origin now struck a discordant note with their supposed Hellenic ancestry. Meanwhile, Islam, an old menace and invincible foe to European Christendom for centuries, had been recast as a prototypically Arab—hence Semitic—religion. In the course of the nineteenth century, Islam thus came to acquire a new alienness. Instead of being begrudged as the luxuriantly overbearing dominion of Eastern infidelity, the rule of Islam was now condescendingly viewed as narrow, rigid, and stunted, and its essential attributes were said to be defined by the national, racial, and ethnic character of the Arabs, the most bellicose and adversarial of the Semites.

This chapter documents in some detail the transformation of the image of Islam under the scrutiny of nineteenth-century European scholarship. After a review of Europe's changing relation to the Muslim world in section 1 and some general observations in section 2 on the infiltration of the new idea of the Semitic in European thought, I turn in sections 3 and 4 to Abraham Kuenen and Otto Pfleiderer, two vocal proponents of the view that the Islam is an ethnic religion of the Arabs, a Semitic race, and therefore does not belong to the class of world religions.

1. This outlook seems to be sustained to this day, even if the contrast is less explicitly racialized. On the whole, "typical" Muslims are considered to be prone to militancy, while Buddhists are generally presumed pacific and meditative. Although the sampling is small and highly localized, an interesting empirical study in present day Tübingen, Germany, demonstrates that the stereotypical views of these religions, mainly driven by popular media, agree with these century-old images. Kirsten George, et al., "Das Bild des Islam und des Buddhismus" (1996), 55–82.

The image of Semitic Islam established by the end of the nineteenth century is now eminently familiar to us, so much so that we seem largely oblivious to the fact of its establishment, that there once was a time when Islam presented a rather different countenance to the eyes of Europe. How such a transformation was possible in the first place, and why it occurred when it did, cannot be ascertained merely by peering into the arcane society of nineteenth-century European Scholars. While the focal point of the present study is precisely that scholarly society, I begin this chapter with a consideration of the broader historical context, a rough sketch taken from an existing historical narrative, drawn from a wide array of studies documenting the sea change in the power and fortunes of Europe over the past five centuries.

1. The Problem of Islam for Premodern and Early Modern Europe

It is uncontroversial enough to say that European modernity commenced, for whatever reasons, with a dramatic transformation of Europe's relation to the rest of the world. For centuries, the most proximate of the rest of the world for Europe was solidly Islamic. As we know, the so-called voyages of discovery did not send out the denizens of Europe to hitherto uninhabited, uncharted, or ungoverned places elsewhere. Far from it, much of that "elsewhere" had been the dominion of those whom the Europeans called Mohammedans, who were not of one but of greatly diverse sorts. Europe began to make inroads into this vast and various Islamic dominion and, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, reached a certain watershed. Call it colonial expansion or the progress of modernity, this amounted to a monumental geopolitical shift, a large-scale change in the power relation between the Islamic domain and European Christendom. It is therefore impossible to claim to take seriously either the European discovery of other religions or its refiguration of Islam, or for that matter, the concomitant reconstitution of European identity itself, *apart from* this shift in the position of Europe vis-à-vis the once-invincible Islamic rule.

In the past half century or so, this story of dynamic geopolitical change has been concertedly narrated, analyzed, and critiqued by numerous scholars. This critical literature includes, to cite a few prominent trends, works presenting new global perspectives on modern economy, as exemplified by Immanuel Wallerstein's "modern world-system" theory and many a critical rejoinder thereof, by comprehensive historical studies such as Donald Lach's life-work documenting the "making of Europe" in its dealings with Asia; and by the prolific scholarly output in the wake of Edward Said's epoch-making treatise,

Orientalism.[2] In effect, we are certainly not lacking in the variety of historiographical accounts, which could be employed as a means to orient the topic of this chapter in a larger historical context. Thus, if I choose to utilize for this purpose an older, relatively unknown text instead, it is for a reason.

Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch of Asian History, 1498–1945, by Kavalam Madhava Panikkar (1896–1963), was first published in London in 1953, and as the author himself credibly states, it was "perhaps the first attempt by an Asian student to see and understand European activities in Asia for 450 years."[3] "The Vasco da Gama Epoch" of the subtitle refers, of course, to the period in which Europeans began to explore the world beyond their boundaries and successfully established a new world order in their own terms and to their unparalleled advantage, thereby usurping the Islamic rule that had reigned supreme over the semiglobal trade system until the beginning of that period. From the closing years of the fifteenth century through at least the end of the Second World War, various European powers—multiply contending among themselves and sometimes in complicity with one another—developed technological and strategic means to transport themselves directly to Asian nations. They eventually attained direct control, or at least uncontestable sway and influence over much of the inhabited part of the earth.

What was new in Panikkar's study was that it brought back the broad, semiglobal perspective that had apparently been lost since the nineteenth century.[4] As Panikkar explains in the introduction:

2. To name but a few of the most representative studies, see Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (1974–89), Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (1982), Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient* (1998), in addition to Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe* (1965–93). Cf. also K. N. Chaudhuri, *Asia before Europe* (1990). P. J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams's useful study of the European conception of the world may also be mentioned: *The Great Map of Mankind* (1982).

3. I refer throughout this discussion to a more recent edition: K. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance* (1959), 17; cited in the text by page number hereafter. If Panikkar's claim is true, it seems significant that a pioneering work on the critical study of Orientalism, in the broadest sense, was brought forward by a historian who identified himself as a non-European. Moreover, the relative obscurity of this text and of its author seems all the more remarkable, especially given that Panikkar was far from obscure, being a distinguished historian, diplomat, and prolific writer.

4. I believe it is fair to describe its perspective as semi-global, even if this particular work by Panikkar is principally focused on the relation between Europe and non-Islamic Asia.

> Though this epoch, because of its importance, has been the subject of many valuable studies, so far they have been concerned mainly with special areas. No study of the relations of Europe with non-Islamic Asia as a whole has yet been attempted. On the purely historical side there are many works of great value dealing with each country separately and ignoring the basic unity of the problem, which was to a large extent obscured by the position of the British Empire in India which a distinguished Foreign Secretary of that Government once described as neither the Far East, nor the Middle East, but INDIA. The British position in India was thus isolated from the rest of the problem, rendering a correct perspective of Asia difficult if not impossible.
>
> The present attempt, therefore, is to restore that perspective, which was well understood and fully realized in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. (17)

It would be worthwhile, indeed, to consider at some length both the circumstances and the probable causes for this loss of perspective, since the amnesia itself may have been an essential condition for the success of the new world order accomplished at the end of the nineteenth century, that is to say, an indispensable condition for European hegemony to seem natural, objective, and necessary.

Let us begin by remembering the indisputable superiority of the Islamic powers on the world stage up to the late fifteenth century, and what that must have meant for the denizens of Europe. With the ancient glories of the Roman Empire and of Alexander's exploits long past and faded, European Christendom was a rather confined area, whose power was only of regional importance. Clearly, it was no match for the enormous reach of the Islamic realm, which by that time spanned North Africa and the islands of today's Indonesia. To be sure, the sheepherder of Fez and the spice gatherer of Batavia may not have had much in common or much to say to each other; at the same time it could be meaningfully said that they did inhabit two geographic extremities of the "same," though far from homogeneous, domain. And this domain at its height was a vast landmass and archipelago covering a multitude of nations, interconnected by an intricate network of regional administrative relations and transregional trade routes, both on land and sea. What we now call in retrospect the Islamic world was thus a broad ribbon of kingdoms and empires extending halfway across the planet, an immense area studded with countless busy ports and prosperous cities teeming with traveling goods, people, and animals, their markets redolent with tropical perfumes and spices, their palaces resplendent with gold, ivory, silks, and brocades from the Far East, . . . or at least that must have been how the Europeans imagined it from afar, judging from the intensity of their age-old longing "to reach India." The memory of this yearning survived well into the nineteenth century, as it moved Hegel to call India, suitably enough, "a Land of Desire."[5] And he was by no means the last to recollect this old yearning.

Notable already in this survey is the deep ambivalence in the European attitude toward the East, manifest in the semantic bifurcation of the Orient into, on the one hand, a land of desire, and on the other, a formidable obstacle to attaining those very objects of desire. This ambivalence is probably less psychostructural than a direct reflection of a particular historical circumstance. As Panikkar points out, "the spice trade with the East, one of the great motivating factors of history and one which yielded the largest profits to merchants as commodities in universal demand, could only come from the Indian ports across the territories controlled by Muslim rulers. . . . Spices which became more and more an essential for European cookery could not be obtained except from India and Indonesia and must come through Persia or Egypt" (22).[6] In short, the more Europeans desired spices, the better business it was for Muslims everywhere. This general situation had obtained since the end of the twelfth century:

> From the time of Saladin, who recaptured Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187, Islam based [i]n Egypt had been organized as an immensely powerful barrier between Asia and Europe. The extraordinary burst of energy, enthusiasm and zeal which had moved Christendom in the first three Crusades had come to naught, and the victory of Saladin, from the point of view of later history one of the most decisive in the world, had established

5. "From the most ancient times downwards, all nations have directed their wishes and longings to gaining access to the treasures of this land of marvels, the most costly which the earth presents, treasures of nature—pearls, diamonds, perfumes, rose essences, lions, elephants, etc.—as also treasures of wisdom. The way by which these treasures have passed to the West has at all times been a matter of world historical importance bound up with the fate of nations" (Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, quoted in Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance*, 21).

6. For a consideration of the impact of the spice trade upon modern European cultural history more generally, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise* (1992).

> Muslim predominance in the vital area of Syrian and Egyptian coasts for centuries to come. That European statesmen were not unaware of this is proved by the fact that the fifth Crusade (1218–21) was directed against Egypt itself. (22)

Interestingly, the only Europeans who were not particularly encumbered by this situation, but on the contrary handsomely profited from it, seem to have been the patrician families of the mercantile republic of Venice. "By a combination of skilful diplomacy, adventurous spirit and far-sighted policy the Venetians had for long established powerful influence at Cairo and had made themselves the monopolist agents of Eastern trade in Europe. While their fortunes, so far as the land routes were concerned, varied with political changes in Byzantium, the Venetians were able to resist every challenge and to maintain their supremacy in the Red Sea trade" (23). The prodigious wealth and power of this trade monopoly was such that, even today, any visitor to this improbable city, poised on the water as if it were adrift at sea, would not fail to see that five-hundred years of relentless decline has not yet been enough to rub off the gilded opulence and sheer splendor of its premodern economic miracle.

The rest of Europe had been hemmed in, insofar as their external commerce was concerned, not only by the immense unmovable reality of the Ottoman Empire but also by the uncontestable dominance of the tiny Italian city-state that virtually controlled the vital trade routes of the eastern Mediterranean Sea. Consequently, the singular objective of many of the lesser European nations—especially those with limited access to the Mediterranean, such as Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, and England—was to circumvent the impenetrable Orient, the landmass blockade, and to sail "freely" to the other Orient, the land of desire, to the ethereal font of fragrant treasures. As we know, the most ambitious pioneers among them devised what could only be described as rather outlandish alternative methods of getting to "India." Some took an extraordinary detour circumnavigating the massive continent of Africa, in order to reach the Indian Ocean by way of what they poignantly named the Cape of Good Hope. Others sailed far west into the Atlantic Ocean, in the hopes of eventually getting to the east. Thus commenced the "Vasco da Gama Epoch," or, more commonly, what school children today learn as the "Age of Discovery." As the story told by the triumphalist moderns goes, the irrepressible spirit of freedom—supposedly a natural endowment of the West—stepped up to take the center stage in world history. This innate spirit of the West was at last enabled and empowered by a series of scientific discoveries, technological innovations,

and just plain resourcefulness. Thenceforward, the West, mobility (particularly navigational mobility), modernity, and freedom have been presumed to be essentially and constitutionally interrelated in the deepest possible sense. Looking back at this turn of world historical events from a point of view less ideologically blinded and more historically informed, Panikkar's account allows us to see how indispensable—hence how extraordinarily revealing—this conflation of attributes self-ascribed to the West has been to the cause of European hegemony.

Also noteworthy is Panikkar's observation that the nation that initiated this momentous turn of European fortune was Portugal, one of the most zealous and abiding supporters of the cause of the Roman Catholic Church to fight the Mohammedan infidels. Earlier in the fifteenth century, Portugal's single-minded prince Henry, deservedly called the Navigator, reportedly made an extraordinary investment in developing a new navigational technology (in short, devising vessels navigable in the open sea, and fleets and vessels large enough to carry cannons) and in the charting of a new route around Africa. As Panikkar reminds us, in the mind of this prince and of his compatriots, these developments meant more than technical feats and commercial gain:

> The spirit of the Crusades not only survived but flourished with added vigour in the Iberian Peninsula in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. While to the other countries of Western Europe, Islam was but a distant menace, to the people of the Iberian Peninsula, to Castile, Aragon and Portugal, Islam represented something menacing, formidable and vigilant on the doorstep. Other countries became enthusiastic against the infidel by fits and starts; but the Iberian was a Crusader by necessity, every day of his life, for in the Peninsula itself Muslim kingdoms still existed and were flourishing. To a devout and patriotic Iberian, Spaniard or Portuguese, the fight against Islam was a stern imperative, a combination alike of religious duty and patriotic necessity. Islam was the enemy and had to be fought everywhere. Much of Portuguese action in Asia will remain inexplicable unless this fact is constantly borne in mind. (24)

From this standpoint, then, the efforts of early European explorers to reach India were aimed at more than lowering the cost of pepper or outwitting the hated Venetian monopolists; for, in the eyes of those navigational pioneers, their expeditions were veritable missions in the continuing crusade. Their charge, put succinctly, was "to cut at the root of Islam by attacking it from behind" (27).

As we know, the pathbreaking success of the Portuguese was soon overridden by the wily mercantilism of the Dutch, who in turn were to be overshadowed by the concerted colonial enterprises of the more powerful neighboring nations of the eighteenth century. Yet, despite these intraregional transfers of the ruling power over colonial trade, from that critical moment in the late fifteenth century until today, the centrality and the hegemonic position of Europe—and, in time, including all the colonial locations established fully on this Eurohegemonic principle, that is, the West—has not been seriously challenged. Thence comes the inseparability of Eurocentrality and modernity.

The conquest of Islam in this complicated sense, then, was the utmost exigency for European modernity at the moment of its inception. The remarkable success of this project achieved by the end of the nineteenth century was such that, apparently, the very memory of the former condition was nearly effaced.[7] Thenceforward, the problem of Islam seems to have been vaguely felt more as a puzzling nuisance than an active menace, as a strange, alien ethos that remained incorrigible, backward, and recalcitrant. For reasons no longer recognized, then, Islam now appeared as the most peculiar of the "old" religions—all the more irrational and anomalous because, as discussed in chapter 2, it was a latecomer. But in the last analysis, it was liable to be set aside as a moribund tradition just like all other "archaic" religions, as one of the last vestiges of the stubborn premodernity with which the world was still replete.

2. The Problem of Semitism and Aryanism for Nineteenth-Century Europe

With this historical context in mind, we now return to the condition of European self-understanding in light of the new theory of language families, and the novel perspectives on "other religions" that this theory brought about.

The construction of Aryan Buddhism and the reconstitution of Semitic Islam occurred by virtue of the new science of language. As we saw in chapter 5, by the second half of the nineteenth century, these newly minted categories had found their places in a nascent domain of knowledge, the science of religion. Of the practitioners in this emerging field, the Continental scholars, among whom the term "world religion" had begun to have a specific meaning, naturally accepted Buddhism's status as a world religion, thereby attributing to it a certain universalistic character, if not to say universality outright. This effectively brought Buddhism on a par with Christianity, at least in a certain taxonomic sense. In describing the similarity between Christianity and Buddhism, these scholars would often draw an analogy between the historical origins of the two religions: on the one hand, the emergence of (universal) Christianity out of (national/ethnic) Judaism, and on the other, (universal) Buddhism out of (national/ethnic) Brahmanism.

7. This is consistent with Panikkar's suggestion above that the global perspective (within which the changing relation between European Christendom and Asia can be adequately comprehended) was "well understood and fully realized in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," but not, presumably, since the nineteenth century.

For some, the analogy went even further. Just as Christianity did not thrive in the place of its origin but rather disappeared from it, so it was suggested, Buddhism likewise vanished in its native India, and both religions came to prosper among strangers in foreign lands. But in the course of their subsequent transnational developments, the ethnic character of the new host nations inevitably colored the outcome such that, just as original Christianity at one point was diverted to gnostic heresies, popish superstitions, and other forms of particularism and divisiveness, the universalistic primitive Buddhism, too, was corrupted and transformed into a variety of peculiar, popular, (non-Aryan) ethnic forms endemic to various South, East, and Southeast Asian nations. By this reckoning, it would appear, it was entirely natural that the essential characteristic of "original Buddhism"—or, as Monier-Williams called it, "true Buddhism"—as a universalistic religion should be more readily recognized and far better understood by European scholars than by native Asian practitioners. For, after all, those Asian Buddhists had little connection or access to the early textual sources of their religion, either through scholarly and intellectual cultivation or through their "racial," ethnic, or national heritage.

Furthermore, if Buddhism was a universal or universalistic religion that was genuinely Aryan in its origin, arising quite independently of Semitic monotheism, it would be feasible to suggest that universality is an intrinsic character of (Indo-)European civilization, while at the same time it would be possible to relinquish the traditional assumption that (Semitic) monotheism is the sole source of universality. As we recall, in earlier centuries, the privileged position of Christianity as universal religion was based on its being a true monotheism, that is, on the unity, singularity, and universality of the Deity.[8] On account of the shared belief in monotheism, moreover, earlier Euro-Christians saw relatively little difficulty in recognizing that their closest kin were Jews and Mohammedans. This was in fact taken for granted, because of their commonality of

8. The idea is typically expressed, for instance, by David Hume's *The Natural History of Religion* (1956), a text originally prepared for publication in 1756 but suppressed until 1777.

origin in the biblical tradition, as well as their subsequent historical relations, even though much of that history consisted of conflict. Despite the recurrent outbursts of animosity, the Euro-Christians of the early modern period acknowledged or assumed the three communities to be fraternal, or even consanguineous. Measured against the trio of monotheisms, all forms of Gentile polytheism were deemed no match, however grand and Olympian they might be, not to mention more humble instances of heathen idolatry, fetishism, or any other veneration of limited and particularistic deities and spirits. Given this evaluative scheme, then, any serious challenge to Christian supremacy could come only from other monotheisms. In fact, in order to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over all others, it seemed sufficient to show how it and it alone realized and embodied the true universalism of the Sovereign Deity. An argument in favor of Christianity on this score could be made—at least to the Euro-Christians' own satisfaction—by suggesting that Judaism represented an older, undeveloped, fossilized, hence limited universalism, whereas Islam was a latter-day breakaway movement, amounting to a renegade universalism, and both of these definitions, of course, were contradictions in terms.

The nineteenth-century discovery of the Indo-European lineage undermined this basic assumption. In the new, philologically informed perspective, the triune ensemble became a questionable alliance at best, and in the meantime, a hitherto unknown rival had appeared on the horizon. Buddhism, though not exactly a polytheism, is not a monotheism either. Its principle of unity and universality, if there is one, is not tied to the figure of an all-commanding Creator-Judge-God; rather, the unitary principle involved here seems more abstract and philosophical, or so it seemed in the eyes of nineteenth-century Indologists, many of whom were well-schooled in German Idealism. Perhaps it was almost as though they could imagine that something like a Kantian idea of God—what Kant called the ideal of pure reason, qua postulate of reason, that is, as necessary guarantor of the unity of knowledge and therefore of the possibility of science[9]—had long ago been posited by Buddhism in its gloriously plain, primitive Aryan nakedness. The case of Buddhism therefore presented an alternative to the (mono)theistic foundation of universalism, as it pointed to the possibility of universal religion predicated instead on more philosophical, or even "scientific," grounds. Having recognized its origin as essentially Aryan, not surprisingly, some Europeans

9. Cf. Immanuel Kant, "Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic," in *Critique of Pure Reason*, B670–733.

found in Buddhism a new venue in which to reenvision their ancestral roots, to reassemble and to rectify their heritage racially and spiritually.[10]

For the European intellectual and cultural elites who were also cognizant of developments in the emergent human sciences at the end of the nineteenth century, there were several options for envisioning their future destiny. Some, as we have seen already in the case of Ernest Renan, for instance, were not entirely averse to relinquishing Europe's historical ties with Christianity altogether. It seems that some were even prepared to embrace alternative spiritual traditions supposedly original to the Indo-Greco-Germanic or Celtic peoples, including various forms of "polytheism." The lure of pre-Christian paganism seems to have stemmed in part from rising nationalist sentiments and their habitual recourse to mythologies—whether Norse, Celtic, or Teutonic. But the most powerful attraction came from the romance of ancient Greece, whose glorious pantheon was taken to be a monument to what Hegel famously termed "the religion of beauty." What underlies this extolling of Olympian polytheism was a relatively novel and intriguing idea that the polytheistic temperament of the Greeks, combined with their superb sense of order, balance, and proportion, constituted their unique genius, which allowed them—and them alone—to come to terms with the infinite multiplicity of nature. Hence their incomparable ability to represent the world beautifully (their artistic genius) as well as rationally (their scientific genius). As we recall from Renan's musings, it was this felicitous culmination of the aesthetic and the rational that was believed to be the origin of virtually everything that was true, good, beautiful, and therefore universal.

10. I should note here that the function of these racial, ethnic, and religious terms of identity is extremely various and complex. The value of such loosely strung associations is in the volatile nature of each of the terms rather than in any kind of exactitude one might attempt to ascribe. I should therefore note that,in this context, I am not heeding Tiele's fastidiously discriminating use of "Aryan," which he states as follows: "I keep the ugly but established designation 'Indo-Germans,' to distinguish the race from the Aryans proper, who were the ancestors of the Indians and Persians. The name Indo-Europeans is to be rejected on every account. The name Aryans may also be applied to the whole race, and the Indo-Persians may then be called East-Aryans. The name Indo-Germans indicates the two peoples between whom all the others belonging to the race are scattered" (C. P. Tiele, *Outlines the History of Religion* [1877], 107). Similarly but somewhat differently, Chantepie de la Saussaye explicates: "The whole family is named after its two extreme branches, the Indo-Germanic, or more correctly the Indo-Celtic, sometimes called the Indo-European, and also the Aryan, which is hardly as suitable, as it is a name better kept for the more eastern branch: the Indo-Persian" (P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Manual of the Science of Religion* [1891], 321).

It is in this regard also that the Greeks were said to be radically different from the eastern branches of the Aryan brotherhood. For, in the East—particularly in India, though perhaps less so in Persia—the Aryan sensibility embracing multiplicity went wildly out of control and produced surreal monstrosities. Not only were there countless multitudes of gods and demons, but unchecked by the sense of balance, beauty, and rationality, India generated appalling images of gods with multiple heads, numerous limbs and other body parts, not to mention the grotesque concatenation of animal and human features in a single figure. As Otto Pfleiderer guilelessly rendered this familiar idea:

> One thing which the Indians lacked utterly, the Greeks possessed, namely, a sense of order and proportion, of clearness and beauty. This artistic tendency was the *charisma* of the Greeks, ever present in their religion as in their philosophy, preserving them from the excesses of Indian fanaticism and dreaming. It is this which made it possible for them to exercise a deep influence upon Oriental belief and thought such as had never been possible to Indian wisdom.[11]

In contrast to the chaotic Eastern polytheism, the superbly classical representation of Apollo and Athena in the Greek pantheon was considered the epitome of serenity and order. It was evidently easy for nineteenth-century Europeans to overlook the rampant monstrosities among ancient Greek mythological themes, well documented in art and literature throughout the ages, which included numerous instances of sexual excess, violation of social mores, and breach of cosmic order.[12]

11. Otto Pfleiderer, *Religion and Historic Faiths* (1907), 190–91. This aversion to things Indian on aesthetic and "rational" grounds was shared by some luminaries of an earlier era, Goethe and Hegel most notably. Schopenhauer's leaning toward Buddhism instead of Brahmanism/Hinduism, too, may be analyzed in view of this general sentiment. Nietzsche's enigmatic co-option of "Zarathustra" may also resonate with Goethe's acknowledged preference for the reputedly more serene Persian tradition over and against the Indian. Cf. also Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters* (1977).

12. Interestingly, Max Müller seemed particularly sensitive to the monstrosity present in Greek mythology, which he described in another context as "hideous and revolting"; but he expected this atrocious characteristic in any mythology, not only Greek or Indian (F. Max Müller, "Comparative Mythology" [1856], in *Chips from a German Workshop* [1871], 2:1–141). See also the opening paragraphs of "On the Philosophy of Mythology," a lecture given at the Royal Institution in 1871, included as an appendix to his *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (1873). For Müller's views on the essentially grotesque character of mythology, see Tomoko Masuzawa, *In Search of Dreamtime* (1993), 58–75.

Meanwhile, other Europeans, perhaps less sanguine about the prospect of pagan gods returning in droves, and at the same time hesitant to embrace anything so unfamiliar as Buddhism, availed themselves of another option, another way of realigning the place of Christianity in the history of religions, by disengaging their Christianity from its Judeo-Semitic origin. There was apparently more than one way of accomplishing this disengagement. One was to claim that, despite a long-held tradition, Christianity in its essential being (as opposed to its historical beginning) is not to be traced back to Palestine as one of the many Jewish messianic sects; rather, Christianity emerged from the far richer soil of the late Hellenic world, which stretched from the Mediterranean to Persia and Northern India—roughly, the reach of the short-lived Macedonian empire of Alexander the Great. Following this train of thought, Christianity was reenvisioned as something more universal than national or ethnic, or—to say roughly the same thing—more Greek, meaning, more broadly Hellenic and Aryan than Hebraic and Semitic.

Another option for salvaging Christianity from the fetters of Semitic provenance—and this alternative was more immediately compliant with orthodox Christian views than the one just mentioned—was to claim to identify, in the heart of the ancient Israelite tradition itself, something that completely transcended the narrow and particular confines of the Semitic race religion; it was from this transcendent element alone that Christianity presumably originated, that is, without carrying over any ethnic peculiarity of the parent religion. And this transethnic, universalistic element was identified as the prophetic tradition, the most central and essential spirit of the Hebrew Bible. A ready implication here was an idea as bold as it was astonishing, namely, the notion that there was at the very core of Judaism something not really Jewish.[13]

It is difficult to say with certainty when exactly and who specifically originated this powerful, much taken-for-granted idea that the "Hebrew prophets" were incomparably, overwhelmingly important in constituting the essential nature of the biblical tradition and at the same time not strictly Jewish or Semitic. James Darmesteter, distinguished French savant of the Avestan language and of Persian antiquity, credits none other than Renan and his massive *History of the People of Israel* for the revolutionary new perspective. In reviewing Renan's work, Darmesteter opines that "its novelty consists in having made prophecy the centre of interest of the history of Israel" and, in fact, in "making the

13. Maurice Olender discusses this "rescue operation" of Christianity from the taint of Semitism specifically in relation to Ernest Renan's work. See *The Languages of Paradise* (1992), 63–79.

central figure of this history not Moses on Mount Sinai, but the company of prophets, the men who spoke to Israel during the last two centuries of the Jewish kingdom, and during the Babylonian captivity, from about 800 to 536 before Christ."[14] Renan's scientific interpretation of the biblical narrative thus relocated the generative moment of Hebrew history, lifting it away from the Garden of Eden (mythical origin) and away from Mount Sinai (sacrohistorical origin), and placing it squarely on the labor of several generations of prophets long after the fall of the Davidic kingdom.

This suggestive reading made Renan a controversial figure in the eyes of church-abiding contemporaries. For, as he more than implied, those prophets—hypercritical denouncers of the world and advocates for the Lord who purported to call the people of Israel back to their earlier covenant—in reality had created, invented, or forged this "forgotten" past and, by the same token, fashioned the Deity himself. As Darmesteter puts it: "The prophets, who according to the traditional conceptions appear in times of defection to recall to Israel forgotten truths, are in reality the creators of these truths, and prophecy, in place of being the flower of Judaism, is its very root." In effect, Renan went so far as to regard "the successive revelations of Jehovah to the legendary ancestors of the race . . . the revelation from Sinai and the colossal figure of Moses transformed from the leader of the exodus to the legislator . . . and all this drama of national history"—in short, all of the narrative history of ancient Israel—"merely a sublime fiction."[15] What was nonfictional and nonmythical, and therefore permanent and true in the ancient Israelite tradition, was the resounding voice of the prophetic exhortation tirelessly admonishing the people to repair themselves to the blessed way of justice and to righteousness.

3. Islam, the Arab Religion: Abraham Kuenen

Abraham Kuenen, the Dutch Arabist and biblical scholar whom we encountered in chapter 3 in the company of Tiele, Chantepie de la Saussaye, and others, was in fact in agreement with Renan, to the extent that he, too, would trace the roots of Christianity back to the Hebrew prophets. Kuenen considered this prophetic tradition not as an ethnic and idiosyncratic disposition of desert nomads but as a kernel of true universalism whose full realization,

14. James Darmesteter, "The Prophets of Israel," in *Selected Essays of James Darmesteter* (1895), 23.

15. Darmesteter, "The Prophets of Israel," 23, 27.

however, came about only with the advent of Christianity. The general idea was not new: that the essence of the Israelite religion, which supposedly made this particular Semitic tradition unique and different from all other Semitic religions in the ancient Near East, came to fruition only with Christianity. But what the nineteenth-century formulation added to the familiar idea was that, just as this feature of the biblical tradition was being elevated, it was also lifted away and made separate from the "national life" of the Jews. With this conceptual maneuver, Kuenen made it possible to address the conundrum of how the universal religion of Christ, a world religion, could have originated in anything so particular and localized as the tribal life of the Jews firmly in the grip of a national religion, if ever there was one. As Kuenen puts it in his *National Religions and Universal Religions*:

> If we judge Judaism by its first establishment, we must attribute a rigidly national and exclusive character to it. Though not denying this, I have nevertheless asserted that it was not without the internal leaven of universalism. And if it really had appropriated this treasure bequeathed by the prophets, you may reasonably ask where it had concealed it!
>
> To begin with, let us note that the Jewish religion was only in appearance a sub-section of the Jewish national life. In reality, it had an independent existence.[16]

Kuenen thus credited the Jews with laying hold of universal religion for the first time in history, and at the same time he granted to them only the custodial status of foster parents who hid the universal genius of their offspring until the appropriate moment, just as the Hebrew parents of the infant Moses are said to have done; and in the end they, too, had to relinquish their right of sole custody.

Thus Kuenen explicates succinctly the fundamental fissure within Jewish history—the splitting of the "leaven of universalism" that lies at the core of Judaism from Jewish national life. Predictably, Kuenen goes on to suggest that this deep inner split finds its "strongest proof" in the subsequent history of the Diaspora. In this view, the Jews themselves came to testify, albeit in a peculiar fashion, to the nonnational, nonethnic universalism inherent in their religion by becoming a nationless nation, by stubbornly insisting on remaining the chosen people of the God who would finally deny them that very status. The

16. Abraham Kuenen, *National Religions and Universal Religions* (1882), 180; cited in the text by page number hereafter.

Jews, in other words, are those who submit to the fundamental contradiction of Judaism. By this reckoning, Christianity became what it is (a distinct and separate religion) by literally growing out of this fix. This could happen because, presumably, the Christians were not "ethnically Jewish," as we say today, and because, somehow, their own nature made them refuse to be bound by such an impossible nationhood.

Seen in this way, the difference in the historical developments of the two world religions becomes clear. On the one hand, the Aryan universalism of Buddhism, once adopted by non-Aryans, turned ethnic and particular and subsequently stagnated hopelessly, languishing until the nineteenth century, when the original font of its universalism was recovered by European philology. The universalism of the Israelite religion, on the other hand, was once and for all liberated by the very people who had usurped and wrested it from its national origin; Jewish universalism was rescued from its own contradiction and was fulfilled precisely by crossing over to the Gentile Christians.

In contradistinction to both these cases, the history of Islam, in Kuenen's relentlessly damning account, represents an instance of reversion and regression from the beginning. It is a case where a particularistic—and, for that reason, arbitrary and capricious—religion is forged out of preexisting universalistic traditions, and the resulting forgery is masqueraded as something universal. As a matter of fact, Kuenen claims repeatedly in *National Religions and Universal Religions*, it was precisely Islam's disregard for the universal that caused it to be successfully imposed upon other nations. His claim, in other words, is that Islam's spiritual narrowness accounts for the high degree of its success in spreading beyond its native (Arab) borders. Here, then, the fact of its transnational existence is judged to be clear proof of its deficiency in universalism. Kuenen puts the onus of this defect squarely on the prophet-founder, Mohammed:

> [T]his we may lay to his account—less as a fault than as a striking evidence of spiritual immaturity—that the difference between the national and the universal had never entered into his mind, so that he could see no difficulty in laying upon Persians and Greeks what was exclusively adopted for Arabs. And this, again, is connected with what I might call the artificial origin of Islam. Mohammed made Islam out of elements which were supplied to him very largely from outside, and which had a whole history beyond them already, so that he could take them up as they were without further elaboration. The sifting of the national from the universal, which was accomplished in other instances in and by the life of the people, had not taken place in the preparation of Islam. Inasmuch as Mohammed places himself in the line of God's previous revelations to Israel and to the Christians, and appears as completing them and setting the seal upon them, nothing is wanting to the universalism of his own prophetic consciousness; and yet in his religion itself—just because of its origin—we miss the true character of universalism. (33–34)

The undeniably vast reach of Islam and its de facto transnationality—which could be and in fact were "mistaken" (by Tiele and others) as evidence of its universalism—are said by Kuenen to betray its opposite character. As Kuenen infers from his compatriot Veth's report on Java,[17] far from being the fulfillment of an intrinsic universalism, the hemispheric spread of Islam signifies its disingenuousness, its violence, and the danger it continues to pose to the rest of the world. For one thing, Kuenen points out, Islam in Java is merely "the official cloak that is stretched over native society" and, underneath it all, there is a horrific profusion of particulars that makes a mockery of unity and universality:

> If a flap of this cloak be lifted here and there, the Buddhism brought to Java long ago by missionaries from Hindustan is revealed; and side by side, often in grotesque confusion with it, the Siwaïsm [Shivaism] brought by the Hindu colonists from their fatherland; and beneath it all lies the old popular animistic belief that has really lost none of its force for the masses. Nature-worship and spirit-worship are still *the* religion of the Javanese. Hindu and Mohammedan elements have linked themselves to them, and so that strange compound has been formed which is not inappropriately called "Javanism." (42–43)

Meanwhile, in cases where Islam is not a cloak but in earnest, those "Mohammedans in heart and soul" turn out to be at once victims and perpetrators of "fanaticism, constantly fired by colonists from Arabia and by pilgrims returning from Mekka, infectious too, like all fanaticism, [which] by its very nature, might lay hold of the masses of the population, and certainly makes them very dangerous subjects. But this infectiousness of the political idea of

17. Presumably, Kuenen refers to Pieter Johannes Veth (1814–95), author of several books on the Dutch East Indies, including the three-volume *Java* (1875–82).

Islam is no proof of its spiritual supremacy" (43). In short, the spread of Islam, where it is not a sham, is virulent.[18]

The infelicitous reality of Islam, infecting and endangering the farthest reaches of the globe, is once again attributed to the narrowness of its founder and of the Arab race, for, in Kuenen's judgment, "the Arabic nationality was not the cradle but the boundary-wall of Islam." After improbably remarking that he trusts he has not been unjust despite the stridency of his review, Kuenen goes on to concur with Dante, who in the first book of the *Divine Comedy* (canto 28) consigned Mohammed to one of the lowest circles of hell. As we recall, the poet describes the condition of the prophet's infernal existence roughly in this fashion: his body is split in half lengthwise, his gut spilling out, and in that manner he is marked and punished as "the sower of schism." Here is Kuenen's more technical rendition of Dante's poetic vision:

> For it was thus that [Dante] expressed . . . the fact that Islam is a side branch of Christianity, or better still, as we should now say, of Judaism: a selection as it were from Law and Gospel, made by an Arab and for Arabs, levelled to their capacity, and further supplemented—or must we say adulterated?—by national elements calculated to facilitate their reception of it. Thus derived from the long acknowledged documents of God's revelation, and presently entering the lists against them, Islam was destined, after a very brief period of growth and development, to stereotype itself once for all and assume its unalterable shape. (57–58)

This anti-Islamic (and more broadly anti-Semitic) pronouncement doubtless found considerable resonance among his contemporaries. In fact, this opinion can be safely described as pervasive, and the following passage from John Arnott MacCulloch's *Religion, Its Origin and Forms* (1904), should serve as a

18. In this respect, many instances of the early-nineteenth-century European discussion of Java and the Dutch East Indies are particularly revealing. We are already familiar with Wilhelm von Humboldt's work on Kawi, a Javanese language with significant Sanskritic influence, as well as—as it happens—extensive "borrowing" from Arabic. While both are "foreign" imports, the former influence was considered positively transformative and ultimately ennobling, whereas the latter was deemed an alien imposition, destined to remain forever unassimilated, repellent. Even before Humboldt, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781–1826), a colonial official during the brief British reign on the island, set forth this idea in his two-volume *History of Java* (1817), the first such history to be written by a European. I thank Ronit Ricci for bringing this work to my attention.

good example, as would many others. The opening paragraph of the chapter entitled "Mohammedanism" reads:

> Islam, the religion of submission, as it sprung up among a people who had preserved most faithfully their Semitic characteristics, has also remained faithful to Semitic religious conceptions. In nearly every case the gods of the Semites were lofty and terrible deities, before whom man crouched in fear, unlike those of the Aryan race. And Islam in its conception of Allah has made this the foundation-stone of their faith. It is a religion of fear, not of love; it is ultra-Calvinistic in its idea of destiny and its denial of free-will; while every one of its dogmas is marked out with the utmost precision and the frankest literalism. Probably for these very reasons it succeeded from the first among barbaric races, on whom fear, fact, and precision always make a deep impression. Thus the religious experience of an enthusiast, preached with authority, commended itself to millions, mostly of an inferior civilization, and became one of the so-called universal religions.

As to Islam's alleged rigidity and inability for growth, MacCulloch further comments:

> More than any other religion Islam has shown itself unable to develop from within and to adapt itself to the varying needs of successive ages. The absolute authority of the Quran is the cause why, as [William Gifford] Palgrave says, "Islam is lifeless, and, because lifeless, cannot grow, cannot advance, cannot change, and was never intended to do so."[19]

In effect, the concept of Islam as the epitome of stifling rigidity, intolerance, and fanaticism was by this time in the public domain; it had become a familiar theme, mechanically repeated by one treatise after another, in flagrant disregard of the diversity and obvious malleability evidenced in the vast domain of the actual Islamic world. It may be added that, despite better, far more extensive scholarship on Islam available today, little has changed about this image.

4. Sufism, an Aryan Islam: Otto Pfleiderer

Although without much Orientalist learning, the German theologian Otto Pfleiderer (1839–1908) had opinions on Judaism and Islam generally consis-

19. John Arnott MacCulloch, *Religion, Its Origin and Forms* (1904), 167, 172.

tent with those of Renan and Kuenen. In a series of lectures given in Berlin late in his life, Pfleiderer, too, affirmed the seminal importance of the Hebrew prophets to the biblical tradition, calling the religion of Israel "the prophetic religion in a high sense."[20] Like Kuenen, he also held the attendant view that the ancient Israelites and their direct ethnic descendents, the Jews, were not true to the spirit of the prophets but instead had created around this spiritual core an ossified religion of legalism and ritualism.[21] It was as though, as far as the Jews were concerned, the voice of the prophets had indeed come from afar and from an alien world, bearing a universal salvific message. As this message was showered upon them, they did not grasp its import, but at least they recorded it faithfully. The resultant scriptural legacy, the Hebrew Bible—or as Christians would have it, the Old Testament—was from the beginning a gift to the whole world, yet it was to remain for a time in the hands of a particularly provincial people, or as Renan put it, "a small tribe established in an outlandish corner of Syria." While the treasure had been thus entrusted to the Jews, according to Pfleiderer, Judaism proper—Judaism as the religion of the Jewish people—always tended toward formality and calcification, toward exteriority of laws and ceremonials.[22]

20. Pfleiderer, *Religion and Historic Faiths*, 211; cited in the text by page number hereafter. At the same time, he checks the theologically deviant direction of Renan's thought with these artless words: "Some have thought that the flight of the Israelites from Egypt and the person of Moses are mere fictions. This is going too far; the matter is not as bad as that. As far as the person of Moses is concerned, careful research students of to-day are of one opinion, that, much as legend may have woven fables about him, yet he was a historical figure of great importance" (214).

21. Pfleiderer also opines, however, that the prophetic spirit was not entirely lost to the Jews, and the legacy of the prophets produced further results in the form of certain other "writings" included in the Bible. Yet he argues that these came into existence despite the priestly religion that is the predominant character of Judaism: "Within the hard shell of external legality, the better spirit of the ideal religion of the prophets did live on and produced new and valuable fruit. At the same time that the sensuous sacrificial services which were so little to the taste of the prophets were being carried on with ever-increasing pomp at the temple, there arose the spiritual service of God without sacrifice, through scriptural edification in the synagogue. Where formerly the prophetic belief in God had been the possession of a few individuals, now it could be acquired by all the members of the Jewish congregation as their personal conviction and spiritual attitude. The most beautiful fruits of this internalization and application of religion to the experiences of man's daily life were the Psalms, and the wisdom books (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job). Their ideal of piety is not the ritualistic saintliness of the priestly code, but a clean heart and noble deed in the fear of and the trust in God" (*Religion and Historic Faiths*, 239).

22. Predictably, Christianity is depicted by Pfleiderer with an image that perfectly reverses Judaism's legalistic ceremonialism. He deems the "mythical ideas" of miracles that have been part of Christianity and of the New Testament "merely the shell, in which lay hidden the actual experience of the present redeeming power of faith and love." In the last analysis, the relation between Judaism and Christianity becomes more tenuous and contingent than the conjointly canonical status of the Old and the New Testaments might suggest. In his words, "the Christian belief in salvation," which he claims is the essential nature of the religion, "gathered up in itself all the truths contained in the religions and the philosophies of its time," and Judaism turned out to be just one of many such preexisting entities with which Christianity "shares" certain characteristics (ibid., 271).

Pfleiderer's view of Islam is an extension of this prescribed outlook on the Semitic national character. Whatever narrow and parochial characteristics could be attributed to the nation of ancient Israelites were only amplified in the case of Islam. Indeed, they were exaggerated to the point of appearing at once alarming and ridiculous. Thus Islam is characterized by its vociferous claim and its meritless presumption of universality, by the general backwardness of its subscribers, its belatedness, its derivativeness. There is hardly a more succinct and more revealing example of this quick-stroke caricature than the opening paragraph of Pfleiderer's final lecture in *Religion and Historic Faiths:*

> Islam, the religion of Mohammed, is the latest among the historical religions, a late after-impulse of the religion-forming power of the Semitic race. Founded by the prophet Mohammed under Jewish and Christian influences among the half-barbaric Arabic people in the seventh century, Islamism shares the monotheistic, rigidly theocratic and legalistic character of Judaism, without its national limitation; with Christianity, it shares the claim and propagating impulse of world-religion, but without the wealth of religious thought and motives and without the mobility and the capacity for development which belongs to a world religion. It might be maintained, probably, that Islamism is the Jewish idea of theocracy carried out on a larger scale by the youthful national vigor of the Arabians, well calculated to discipline raw barbaric peoples, but a brake on the progress of free human civilization. (274)

Here, what was implicit in Kuenen's claim becomes overt. The logic seems to be that, despite Islam's de facto transnational spread, it is not to be taken as a world religion because, in reality, it is but an inflated national religion, a national religion transgressing beyond its own proper boundaries; its universal pretensions merely reflect the expansionist ambition of the Arab nation. The much-rumored virulence of Islam, that is, its dangerous character, seems to boil down to this penchant for border aggression. This, one might surmise, is

what makes Islam more menacing than Judaism, for, if the latter represents stubborn resistance to the New Truth, the former threatens violence against it. In either case, the two principal representatives of the Semitic peoples were denied any possibility of transcendence beyond their own narrow ethnicity, whereas, as we recall, the residents of certain city-states in Greece were credited with just such capacity. Why this was so, and why it should be so self-evident, was no longer a question worth expending much European thought on at the end of the nineteenth century. There was only some vague recollection from the previous half century or more, a distant echo of the clamor about the full inflection of the Indo-Europeans versus the inchoate, imperfect, delimited inflection of the Semites.

Pfleiderer's frank expression in the passage quoted above is useful in that it brings into plain view the major components of the stereotypical image of Islam that had by then gained predominance in Europe. The passage also explains why, for Pfleiderer as well as for Kuenen, Islam was not to be considered a world religion, and that this matter, moreover, was a question of quality (i.e., the intrinsic nature of the religion) rather than quantity (the actual number of people or variety of peoples who happened to pledge allegiance to it). More specifically, it was Pfleiderer's opinion that Islam was disqualified from designation as a world religion because of its abject poverty of spiritual substance and, again, its essential nature inimical to "mobility," "development," and "freedom." Indeed, he suggests, the legalism and ritualism characteristic of the Semitic religions were ineluctable consequences of this deficiency: "The greater the poverty of spiritual content in the teaching, the more minute are the details of the ceremonial prescribed, down to the most minute" (283).

Furthermore, although the august singularity of the omnipotent God insisted upon by the Muslims might seem a lofty enough idea, this is no indication of their doctrinal height or spiritual depth, Pfleiderer implies, since this image of the Deity was merely modeled on the all too powerful ruler of the temporal domain, a tyrant typical of Oriental nations:

> The fundamental dogma [of Islam] is that of the unity of God; but concerning the nature of God, Mohammed made no deeper reflections. He conceived God as the supermundane, almighty ruler, similar to an Oriental despot; terrible in his anger and then again benevolent, delaying judgment in his benevolence, arbitrary in reward and punishment, with a will irresistible as inconceivable, demanding blind submission of men and even then his grace uncertain. This all-deciding freedom of God's despotic will was expressed, though without logical completeness, in the form of an absolute predestination. Mohammed had no difficulty in contributing even immoral features, such as revenge and deception, which naturally belong to the typical Oriental despot, to his idea of God. (283)

This mirroring of the mundane upon the supermundane, that is, the projection of the attributes of the earthly tyrant upon the figure of the supposedly almighty heavenly ruler, goes hand in hand with Islam's negative vision of this world:

> This gloomy view of God corresponds to a pessimistic view of the world; the world is compared to a dung-heap full of decaying bones, and its misery is so great that only the tortures of hell exceed it. Just as horrible as the hell, so joyous is the description of the heavenly paradise, whose drinking-bouts shall compensate the pious for the prescribed abstinence from the enjoyment of wine during life on earth. (283–84)

The gruesome depiction of the world seems to rival, or possibly surpass, that of Buddhism (whose pessimism and turning away from the world, as we recall, was viewed by European observers like Monier-Williams as its worst feature). Not only is such pessimism retrogressive and unmodern, an obvious implication here seems to be that all Islamic theology—its doctrines of God, of salvation, of retribution—is rather silly, well nigh infantile. At the same time, this immaturity of reflective imagination is presumed to be commensurate with the barbarism of the nations who embrace Islam.

It is not clear exactly where Pfleiderer derived these condescending views of Islamic philosophy, as there is no specific citation provided in the published lectures. Nor is it certain, for that matter, to what degree he was acquainted with the actual historical and contemporary conditions of the so-called Oriental nations. It might be fairly surmised that, whatever his immediate sources, those ideas were in the air, since one can easily find them voiced in countless other contemporary texts.

Pfleiderer's lecture on Islam was to be the final of the series he delivered, and it may seem an awkward ending indeed to conclude with such unflattering remarks on the last religion to be discussed, a religion that was purportedly at once late in coming and early in the developmental scale. It was perhaps

unfortunate from the standpoint of his narrative design that the latest major religion to appear on the world historical stage was merely a local religion born of a particular Semitic people, for, it would seem, any such provincial tradition would prove ultimately irrelevant to the universal future of humankind.

Not surprisingly, this judgment on Islam stands in sharp contrast to Pfleiderer's concluding statement on Christianity—the subject of the preceding chapter. Christianity is a religion of universal salvation, Pfleiderer proclaims, "gather[ing] up in itself all the truths contained in the religions and philosophies of its time." In this gathering of past wisdoms, ancient Judaism was only one of many tributary streams (272). The all-encompassing capacity of Christianity assures its genuine universality: "Thus it is that Christianity became the religion of the religions, conquered the old world and led up to the new" (273).

As it turns out, however, the exposition on the unreflective parochialism of the Arabs was not Pfleiderer's last word on Islam. As if to salvage, with one small gesture, the entire narrative procession of all the "historic faiths" of the world, he provides at the end of his last lecture several pages in which he discusses certain "unorthodox" strands within the greater fabric of Islam, strands that are said to be distinctly and uncharacteristically rich in philosophic exploration and spiritual contemplation. In particular, he grants the honor of the last and the most prominent place to Sufism. This tradition of Islamic mysticism has often been evocatively represented in the European imagination by the ethereal image of a ring of whirling dervishes in white skirts, entranced in dancing meditation. The first statement Pfleiderer offers regarding this philosophical tribe of elegantly dressed, otherworldly contemplatives is the following:

> A peculiarity of Persian Islamism, not less interesting is Sufism, a mystical-speculative tendency, some of which was deeply pious and given to flights of high thinking. Certain it is that this was not a genuine product of Arabian Islamism, even though it must remain undecided whether it owes its origin to ancient Persian, Indian or Neo-platonic gnosticism. (287)

Here, again, what seems to be the most precious, most profound, and most enduring aspect of this religion—an aspect consisting of deep piety and mysticism, lofty contemplation, and speculative ability—is found to be essentially alien to Islam proper, insofar as the latter is defined as the religion of the Arabs. Should it come as a surprise, then, that this jewel-like kernel, which "Arabian Islamism" has surrounded and entombed for centuries within the iron cage of

its ethnicity, turns out to be not Arab in origin at all but perhaps Persian, maybe Indian, or possibly Greek (Neoplatonic)—in whichever case, Aryan? Pfleiderer, at any rate, appears much more at home in expounding the theological details of this purportedly non-Arabic facet of Islam:

> According to the Sufi theory, the world is a flowing out of and flowing back into God. The soul of man is part of the divine being, and its destiny is union with God, which is perfected in three planes. Upon the first plane, the plane of law, God is held to be the Lord beyond who desires to be worshipped with all the traditional ceremonies. Upon the second plane, comes the knowledge that external works are without value for those who know, and in their stead there must be placed an ascetic freeing of the spirit from sensuality. Through continuous concentration of thought, one may arrive finally at the condition of enthusiasm and ecstasy which, by frequent recurrence, leads to the third and highest plane, upon which, God is no longer sought outside of one's self either by ritualistic or ascetic works, but upon which, the immanence in one's own spirit come into consciousness. For the wise man and the mystic who has attained this knowledge, the varying doctrines and ordinances of the different religions have lost their meaning. (287–88)

Thus, in the heart of Sufism, or Aryan Islam, Pfleiderer seems to find himself in strangely familiar territory. Seen through the mystic kernel of Sufism, all the parochial and miserly laws, childish dogmas, and ceremonial encrustations that have constituted orthodox Islam seem to fall away. In effect, through deep contemplation, this kernel would come to seem something other than Islam proper, or Islam in the usual sense.[23] And it seems to promise that those who set their mind to it could hope to enter a realm where "the varying doctrines and ordinances of the different religions have lost their meaning," or, perhaps, somewhere close to where "all the truths contained in the religions and philosophies" of the world were gathered up.

23. A contemporary text by John Arnott MacCulloch mentioned earlier similarly closes the chapter on Islam (also the last chapter of the book) with a laudatory account of Sufism, which simultaneously has the effect of further denigrating what is construed as Islam proper. Sufism, MacCulloch claims, is an attempt to "engraft on Islam principles wholly foreign to it," and it exhibits some pantheistic influence, possibly from Buddhism. He then goes on to conclude: "Obviously this is no native growth in Islam, but it has supplied Islam with some of its most rapturous and beautiful religious aspirations and poetry" (*Religion, Its Origin and Forms*, 173).

This kernel, in effect, would become a sphere more or less coeval with Christianity or, if not quite that, with something yet nameless but very much like Christianity of the future.

It is evident from a casual survey of the tracts published toward the end of the long nineteenth century that the views articulated by Kuenen and Pfleiderer—their decidedly negative, racially anxious, self-serving opinions about the one-time international superpower that was Islam—found much sympathy among their contemporaries. In the long run, however, Kuenen and Pfleiderer seem to have been on the wrong side of the debate when it came to the question of whether or not Islam should be counted among the world religions. For, by the turn of the century, the other side seems to have quietly won out, as the list of "world religions" by then minimally and unfailingly included Buddhism, Christianity, *and* Islam, and this list of three was already routinely presented with no particular argument or justification. Otto Pfleiderer, reputedly one of the original proponents of the *Religionsgeschichteschule*, may have been voicing his opposition to including Islam as late as 1906. But when a younger and more famous representative of the school, Ernst Troeltsch, wrote the little essay "Christianity and the History of Religion" in 1897, he was already taking the list of three "great world religions" for granted.[24] Two decades later, when Troeltsch's one-time colleague and friend Max Weber was writing a series of massive essays under the general title *Economic Ethic of the World Religions* (*Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen*, 1916–1919),[25] the list was expanded still more to include Hinduism and Confucianism, and, with some important qualifications, what Weber called "ancient Judaism" (*das antike Judentum*); along the way, Weber went on to discuss certain attendant traditions, including "Taoism," "Sikhism," and "Shinto," with the result that the list of religions began to resemble ever more closely what is familiar today.

How and why this expansion of the list came about, how the number came to settle around ten, eleven, or thereabouts, why this sedimentation of what

24. Ernst Troeltsch, "Christianity and the History of Religion," in *Religion in History* (1991), 77–86. Concerning both the diversity of opinions and the commonality of intentions within the so-called history of religions school, see Ernst Troeltsch, "The Dogmatics of the History-of-Religions School," originally published in 1913, and included in the same volume.

25. The collection as a whole never came to print, but see Weber's essay of the same name, translated by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills as "The Social Psychology of the World Religions" (1958).

amounts to the standard list occurred in 1920s and 1930s, and why little has changed since then—these are questions requiring an extensive and multifaceted investigation, or rather, a long series of investigations. The third and last part of this book will include a chapter that names—albeit in a preliminary fashion, and without any claim for being exhaustive—some of the possible areas for further inquiry. As for now, in light of the foregoing examination, we may assess the taxonomic transformation and the movement toward the eventual institutionalization of the standard world religions list from the vantage point of the nineteenth century.

First, the specific controversy that made it meaningful to distinguish "world religions" from "national religions" in the first place had lost much of its significance by the beginning of the twentieth century, primarily, it seems, because the latter term fell out of use. At the same time, the decline of interest in this particular principle of classification seems to have left intact the specific representations of several major religions that had been vital components of the nineteenth-century system. These representations of major religions include the following key ideas: (1) Buddhism was originally a humanistic and humanitarian reform movement—much like Protestant Christianity was supposed to have been—that had arisen in opposition to an ethnic religion of India, that is, Hinduism. (2) Islam is an intrinsically Arab religion, Semitic in its essential nature, and its universalist intensions derive partly from the fact that its founder had drawn considerably from Jewish and Christian sources, partly from the Arabs' own transnational political ambition and their resistance to the advancing universalism of Christianity, modernity, and rationality. (3) The spiritual core of the biblical tradition is prophetic and transethnic, whereas rabbinic Judaism, or Judaism proper, is an ethnic tradition-formation endemic to a particular Semitic people. (4) Christianity emerged not from this Semitic religion but directly out of the ancient prophetic tradition, and therefore it was from the beginning transnational and transethnic in nature. Furthermore, what is largely implicit but consistent in all of these representations is the idea that the national spirit of the Semites, apparently by its very nature, was bound to remain just that, national and ethnic, whereas those nations of the Aryans—whether Greece, Persia, or India—had shown in various epochs of their history the capacity to transcend their national particularities, hence, their propensity for universality. Consequently, as this train of thought went still further, it is the Aryan nations who either originated or brought to fruition all of the universals that the modern world would recognize and value, namely, science, art, systems of government based on law and

individual freedom, as well as those universal(istic) religions, or "world religions" in the original, strict sense.

It now appears, then, that what should be called "uniquely universal" is not Christianity—a religion saddled with a complicated, compromised, and contested legacy—but instead, the Aryans. At the close of the nineteenth century, it seems, European people everywhere no longer felt the need to wonder why this should have been the case—no need to explain the intrinsic universalism of the Aryans or the inescapable national/ethnic/racial limitation of the Semites and, for that matter, of everyone else. It was as though, at that point in history, the recently established new world order, or European hegemony in the military, political, and economic spheres could be trusted to speak for itself. Only a very faint echo seems to have remained of the idea, once heard distinctly and clamorously, that, somehow, all this had to do with inflection.