

Theories and Practices of Nationalism - HW03

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Place in descending order the three paradoxes based on how well Benedict Anderson manages to explain them in his book

Ans: In order¹,

1. *Political power of nationalism v/s Philosophical poverty/incoherence*

Attempting to rationalise nationalism's reach is a big part of the book written in the 1980s - in itself indicative of the philosophical poverty of the concept. By drawing comparisons to religious popularity and pointing at the various phases of nationalism that include language commonalities, the idea of a "shared journey", and vernacular print capitalism, he also explains the political power of the phenomenon rather well (the idea of Nationalism turns chance to magical destiny in the void left by the weakening of religion).

2. *Objective modernity of nations v/s Subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists*

Another paradox that Anderson explains almost as well: in terms of our modern perceptions of space and time. For nationalists, events of the pasts are the actions of people living in the same imagination of time as them, and within the same borders of the modern nation that are retroactively applied onto them. It makes it easier to imagine their actions as the actions of a shared community that has continuous presence into modern day as a nation.

3. *Universal as a socio-cultural concept v/s Irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations*

Anderson does not go much into detail on how the universality of nationalism is contradictory to that of other universal constructs like gender - he mentions that, like gender, everyone "has" a nationality, but does not elaborate into why it's irremediably particular beyond what is self-evident from observation of modern nations.

¹All rationalisation taken from my reading of the book, and notes from class.