

## 27. NATIONALISM, MODERNISM, AND THEIR MULTIPLICITIES<sup>1</sup>

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Nationalism is a vexed subject, and modernism scarcely less so. It is not enough that we are unsure of their historical significance, whether they are basic or mere epiphenomena. We do not agree about what the words mean, or to what time period they refer, or how precisely the 'ism' form relates to the root term. In this chapter, I do not propose to fix these problems with some single theory of nationalism or simple location of modernism. Rather, I want to suggest that the very complexities of each derive from the constitutive role they play in our entire, but contradictory epoch. We have little choice but to call this epoch modernity, because even to say 'the capitalist era', though it adds something, also narrows the scope of reference too much. But modernity is not a simple set of constants nor even of linear trends. If it is a single epoch, it is one characterized by widely diverse but equally modern projects.

Pursuing uniformity and producing difference in unprecedented ways, defined equally by the slave trade and the post-Reformation ideal of tolerance, modernity has been an epoch of crossed purposes from its outset. To imagine modernity as simply one side of struggles over subjectivity, solidarity, power/knowledge, or contextualization/decontextualization is to misunderstand the era deeply. Modernity is an era shaped by contradictions.

Nowhere are the contradictions of modernity more apparent than in the proliferation of claims to nationhood and the attendant transformations of both collective and individual identities. The idea of national identity has been a crucial part of the democratic project in the struggles of 'peoples' against kings. It has been equally basic to fiercely anti-democratic campaigns of irredentism, secession, and the imposition of uniform ideas of what sort of behavior is acceptable among the members of a nation. Nationalist projects have helped draw disparate principalities and quasi-autonomous cities together into larger and more effectively centralized polities. They have also challenged political integration with secessionist movements and seeming

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fragmentation. Nationalism is thus not one side to a contradiction within modernity, but rather one of the basic dimensions of contradiction constitutive of modernity.

Nationalism and modernism figure in our era as 'discursive formations', in Foucault's sense.<sup>2</sup> That is, they are ways of talking that inescapably exceed the bounds of any single usage, that endlessly generate more talk, and that embody tensions and contradictions. Nationalism and modernism are not simply settled positions about our epoch, but clusters of rhetoric and reference that enable people to articulate positions which are not settled and to take stands in opposition to each other on basic issues in society and culture. In the present chapter, I cannot even remotely approach a general account of either, let alone an analysis of their relationship. What I would like to do is to suggest some of the ways in which nationalist rhetoric provides the modern era with a constitutive framework for the identification of collective subjects, both the protagonists of historical struggles and those who experience history and by whose experience it can be judged good or bad, progress or regress or stagnation. In this, nationalism most resembles another great discursive formation, also constitutive for modernity, individualism. Indeed, I shall argue that they are closely related.

Modernism is related to this aspect of nationalism in several ways. First, modernism in a relatively general way is a rhetoric that helps to constitute the idea of history for the modern era, particularly in relation to notions of progress and novelty. Second, modernism in a somewhat narrower sense, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, refers to a movement of artists, writers, and indeed social theorists. These explored the way in which the wholes of modernity—individuals and nations, biographies and histories—were put together, and how they could be deconstructed and reconstructed. Third, the sense of modernism as a project opens the idea of multiple modernist projects, a diverse range of potential modernities. This way of speaking suggests that the modern is not simply one direction through the present epoch, but a multiplicity of potentials built into the age and its social formations.<sup>3</sup> Though these multiple modernities may differ, they are not disconnected; part of what makes them modern is precisely their interconnection. Just as the idea of nation posits a self-subsistent being that moves through history—but in fact only makes sense when related to a multiplicity of nations—so multiple modernities may claim radical originality but in fact reflect sharing of culture as much as separate pasts or choices.

<sup>2</sup> Foucault, 1969b; 1980.

<sup>3</sup> For various related notions of multiple modernities, see *Public Culture* 11(1). Also Göle, 2000b.

## I

A first important point is that national identities are neither simply inherited from a premodern past nor arbitrarily created by elites struggling for power and seeking to enlist followers in their projects. Both of these are possible dimensions of nationalism in particular settings, but neither explains it. Moreover, much writing on nationalism and modernism (or modernity) tends to assume uncritically that the last five centuries of history reveal a unilateral decline in human diversity. The whole modern era has been shaped by globalization, to be sure, but I will argue against assuming that differences among human groups are simply inherited from the past. Implicitly, this continues an argument I have started elsewhere against an *a priori* realism of groups. Too commonly, analysts assume that nations exist, and then ask why some or all of their members become nationalists. It is much better, I contend, to keep in mind that human groupings may be constructed in a variety of different ways and ask what is distinctive about the nationalist way, and why it dominates group construction and representation in the modern era.

It is surprising, at least to me, how readily social scientists accept the proposition that nearly all of the important differences among human beings originated in the relatively distant past, and are thus *found* by rather than created in modernity. Here is Ernest Gellner:

Cultural nuances in the agrarian world are legion: they are like raindrops in a storm, there is no counting of them. But when they all fall on the ground . . . [during modernization] they aggregate into a number of distinct, large, often mutually hostile puddles. The aggregation, the elimination of plurality and nuance anticipated by the internationalists, does indeed take place, but it leaves behind not one large universal culture-puddle, but a whole set of them.<sup>4</sup>

Gellner is disagreeing here with liberal internationalists who imagined that nations would give way to a single world-culture, but he accepts the notion that in the main diversity was produced in the past, and is now being erased (or at least consolidated) by "the tidal wave of industrialization or modernization".

It is as though analysts imagine that there was great cultural creativity in tribal and agrarian societies, but that moderns wield only the capacity to homogenize, or manipulate, but not to create—and create differences. This view, I think, is one that early moderns helped to produce by the way

<sup>4</sup> Calhoun, 1997: 34.

they revered the classics and the way they understood historical time, reason, and the struggle against prejudice. But it is false. And in fact, I don't think most social scientists believe it—that is, they don't really believe that peasant societies are more culturally fertile—they only write about nationalism as though they believed this. What they seem actually to believe is that the sort of 'culture' that counts for the construction of deeply felt ethnicity is necessarily ancient, even if obviously created at some point. Oddly, even those who seek to demonstrate the novel and invented character of national culture tend to accept the same assumption. They argue that 'invented traditions', in the phrase of Hobsbawm and Ranger, are not as real as those which grow by gradual accretion over the centuries.<sup>5</sup> It is taken as obvious that the spread of CNN and McDonald's franchises, following the spread of English and global trade, simply betoken growing uniformity of culture and that modernists (by contrast to postmodernists) endorse this because they are universalists. This representation of one historical trend leaves out others, including not only resistance to this sort of modernism but the production of competing modernisms.

Some of the most striking misunderstandings come from the burgeoning (but often not very intellectually serious) literature on globalization. In the first place, globalization needs to be seen as a basic feature of the entire modern era, not something distinctive to the 20th century, or to the last ten years. Secondly, it is a serious mistake to see globalization simply as the spread of capitalism and Western culture. Thirdly, the error is compounded when such globalization is equated with modernization and all resistances understood as antimodernisms. The weakness of such understanding is evident, for example, in Benjamin Barber's well-intentioned and surprisingly well-reviewed best-seller, *Jihad vs. McWorld*. I propose to make an example of this, not because it is the worst case in the literature on globalization, but because it is representative and the product of a political theorist who ought to have known better.

Barber is among those who have recently popularized the idea of an end to the nation-state. He writes of 'Jihad' as a shorthand for all the reactionary anti-modernisms and fundamentalisms of the world, and 'McWorld' as global economic integration (which he understands mainly in terms of the spread of Western consumer culture):

Jihad and McWorld operate with equal strength in opposite directions, the one driven by parochial hatreds, the other by universalizing markets, the one recreating ancient subnational and ethnic borders from within, the other making

war on national borders from without. Yet Jihad and McWorld have this in common: they both make war on the sovereign nation-state and thus undermine the nation-state's democratic institutions.<sup>6</sup>

This is not so clear. In many respects, minor aid for Sudan aside, Iran has pursued a policy of 'Islam in One Country' not unlike Stalin's 'socialism in one country'. Both declared more internationalism than they practiced. Most Islamic militants in power have been builders and defenders of their nation-states, if not of democratic institutions. Barber greatly overestimates, moreover, the extent to which fundamentalisms and reactionary ethnic nationalisms are rooted in ancient identities which are clear to all those involved. He fails to consider, for example, that the spread of Islam and so-called Islamic fundamentalism or Islamism may be less a resistance to modernity than an alternative modernism. He imagines Islam simply surviving from the past, embedded in traditional communities, rather than focusing on the extent to which Islam spread as a universalistic religion, itself challenging and transforming traditional life in many settings. Islam thus was before modernity and remains within modernity a globalizing force. Part of what is going on in Islamism today is a struggle over the definition of Islam, not simply a reaction of Muslims to modernization. Religious leaders like some followers of the Ayatolla Khomeini are fighting against not only secularists and foreign influences such as global capitalism, they are fighting against Muslims who would modernize in other ways. They are attacking intellectuals who claim the right to make their own interpretations of the Koran, advocates of women's rights who point to the fact that the Koran at least arguably gives women a number of rights that male-dominated Islamic courts and families deny them. They are trying to enshrine one definition of the faith as the only acceptable one—and theirs may in many ways be as new as some of those they attack.<sup>7</sup> Among those they have attacked, advocates of mass literacy and critical reinterpretation of sacred texts loom very large (and this helps to explain why they were so eager to mobilize non-readers against Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*). By the same token apparent symbols of conservatism and allegiance to the premodern past may take on very different meanings, as when wearing the veil provides security for women to enter the public sphere and mixed gender occupations (even while obviously reproducing certain aspects of gender inequality).<sup>8</sup> Afghanistan's Taliban may in this sense look more like Barber's model for Jihad, but neither Khomeini's Iran nor Turabi's Sudan fit.

<sup>6</sup> Barber, 1995: 6.

<sup>7</sup> See Fischer and Abedi, 1990; and for an Indonesian case study of the processes of modernization within Islam, see Bowen, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Göle, 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983.

Bizarrely, Barber assumes that what he terms 'Jihad' is a reaction of small and relatively homogenous entities. But Islam—his primary example—is neither small nor homogenous. Islam's billion adherents are citizens of dozens of countries; many are fiercely patriotic at a national level while others profess loyalty only to the whole community of faith, the Umma Islam. The largest Islamic country, after all, is Indonesia. It is not immune to fundamentalist currents, but it is also extraordinarily different from Iran or Iraq—as they are from Algeria and Afghanistan. In each case, Islam is interwoven with local and national cultural traditions, histories, disputes, and patriotisms. And each of the countries I just mentioned has a different dominant language from the others; only one is Arabic-speaking (to tweak a popular stereotype and confusion). Islam, like Christendom and Communism at different times, is the ideological glue of a world-system of its own—on a scale more comparable to global capitalism than to narrow nationalisms.

Despite the fact that they find it far easier to spread messages by means of modern communication technology, Muslims today are arguably less unified than, say, Christians in the era of the Crusades (who were not so very unified, as Western European Catholics learned when they were disappointed to find Eastern and Greek Orthodox Christians relatively indifferent to their fundamentalist adventure). In the case of Islamic fundamentalism, as of all religious fundamentalisms, there are people who think that there is one simple truth and that everyone ought to follow precisely the same understanding of that single truth that they have. In other words, there are people who would like Islam to be homogenous. But they do not agree amongst themselves about the definition of the single truth which everyone ought to believe. There are Sunni and Shi'a and divisions within each; there are debates as to whether Ismaili are really Muslims. What Barber fails to realize, is that while in the modern world many people find ideologies that *claim* homogeneity very appealing, this does not mean that in fact those people *are* homogenous with each other.

On the side of what he calls 'McWorld', Barber tells one-sidedly the story of global homogenization—without considering the ways in which global capitalism itself creates the settings for new forms of cultural creativity and the production of new differences. Were people really more free and more heterogeneous in their cultural tastes when nearly all of them were peasants? The spread of capitalism into China, for example, does bring new commonalities between Chinese buyers of Kentucky Fried Chicken and those in Budapest and Boston. But it also allows for the development of a variety of taste cultures within China. It allows for some teenagers to prefer to listen to rock music—admittedly a Western import at first, but now produced by a wide range of Chinese artists, some of whom like Cui Jian articulate a vision of China at odds not just with many of their elders but with

the communist party.<sup>9</sup> If McWorld eliminates the difference between Szechuan and Cantonese cooking, that will be a loss. But markets are at least as likely to encourage the stylization of each—both within China and for global consumption—and to give chefs the chance to innovate. Similarly, while Hollywood cinema may look like McWorld, world cinema does not.

Differences among human groups, then, are not simply inherited from premodern cultural formations. It is true that much 'ethnocultural' difference is of relatively old provenance, both in the sense of differences in ways of life and differences in the content of historical memories. But even this is often transformed and redistributed. Serbian identity has ancient roots, but was transformed during the 19th and early 20th centuries by the rise of both literary and political nationalism, an effort to define sharper cultural distinctions from Croats and an effort to gain both autonomy from the Hapsburgs and dominion over a 'greater Serbia'. Talk of rights, and especially of the rights of free-born Englishmen, is of relatively old provenance but has changed its significance through time. Among the changes are not just new meanings for Englishmen (and women), but resonance among English-speakers outside England—in the American Revolution, of course, but on through to the present day.

This, one may suggest, is a matter of ideas rather than ethnicity, and ethnicity is more enduring, more premodern. I think there is more than a hint of ethnicity in the language of rights, but I also want to suggest that ethnic identities are not simply premodern. Ethnicity as we understand it today is not the same as kinship. It is not simply an inheritance from primordial times, whether in the imagery of Wagnerian mists or African jungles. Rather, ethnicity is a product of confrontation among peoples of different group identities and cultural backgrounds. It is a mode of identity forged largely in cities, not in the countryside. Migrants to cities developed ethnicity by accenting commonalities with people to whom they would not necessarily have been close in the countryside, people from the 'wrong' clan or a distant village. In the context of a city, these could appear as speakers of the same language, practitioners of the same religion, people with whom one could feel at home. But common ethnicity was not primarily a

<sup>9</sup> Without giving any serious evidence, Barber dismisses the much more persuasive arguments of Orlando Patterson that 'world musical homogenization' is simply not occurring. Barber actually does not consider the production of music or systematic studies of audiences, but rather notes anecdotally that MTV content is disproportionately American even in non-English-speaking countries. Barber, 1995: 105; see Patterson, 1994. See also Gilroy (1993) for a critique of the illusions of the idea of 'authentic culture', including in music, and an account of how musicians of African descent creatively mixed different influences in different settings in Europe and America.

matter of specific relationships of marriage and descent, like those of kin-based societies, nor of place. Though ethnics might marry within their ethnic group, and even try to keep alive more specific norms about proper matches, the ethnic group was in fact a category rather than a network. That is, it was constructed out of cultural similarities salient in the urban context rather than the specific webs of relationships that constituted alliances and rivalries in the countryside. It might contain more or less of those webs of relationships, but it was not defined by them. Ethnic groups were and are defined by their juxtaposition to other ethnic groups and to the state. In the eyes of each other and under the gaze of the state, each tends to be a category, a set within which members are largely equivalent.<sup>10</sup> Ethnicity in this sense certainly existed in the premodern world, with religion often dominant in the ascriptive constructions, as in the Ottoman millet system. But ethnicity also flourished and was constructed anew in the modern rise of cities. In this sense, the construction of ethnicity out of kinship continues. New identities are formed. Many, like Asian-American, have no analog 'at home' and cannot be understood simply as an amalgamation of prior local identities.

In addition to transforming older identities and helping to produce new identities such as ethnicities, modern life occasions increasing juxtaposition among identities. It brings a new 'dynamic density' of intergroup contacts (to borrow Durkheim's under-remarked phrase). Markets, media, migration, state-building, and the growth of cities all bring together people of different cultural and social-organizational backgrounds. This is not radically new; trading cities and the capitals of empires always produced contact across cultural lines. The point here is simply that even without the production of new identities, modernity helps to produce in each person a greater awareness of diversity of identities. The world of others is represented to each person in terms of a welter of different groups. As in the past, and perhaps more often, many individuals experience belonging to more than one of these at the same time.

It is also true that new differences are created, and suppressed differences are given new public voice. Science, for example, may be universalistic as in the stereotype of modernism, but it produces change and multiplication and diversities of knowledges. The very expansion of what is known—far beyond the capacity of any single human knower—makes it inevitable that

<sup>10</sup> I have elaborated on this theme, and on the language of category and network at more length in Calhoun (1997), esp. ch. 3. My usage is indebted to the anthropological distinction of clan and lineage, and to the specific formulation in Nadel (1957).

the common knowledge of different groups will partake differentially of the ever-expanding whole. Beyond science, literary and artistic activity produce novel culture all the time, and at least as much now as ever before. They also are appreciated in different communities of reception and help thus to contribute to cultural differentiations among groups (as in the way Asian-American novels may help to make, not just reflect, Asian-Americans). There is also an expansion of occupations and economic niches in the modern world. A quick glance at the Dictionary of Occupational Titles produced by the US government should give pause to anyone who thinks diversity is being erased, even if most of these exist in capitalist labor markets that commodify labor and establish class differences. So should the inverse thought: wasn't the way of life of traditional peasants impressively uniform, at least within broad ecological and material-cultural zones?

Indeed, local communities vary a great deal today, and at least in the world's richer countries afford the relatively novel luxury of choice of 'lifestyles'. The differences from one peasant village to another in Vietnam or Burkina Faso are hard to describe in terms of this kind of diversity, but despite widespread condemnation of the homogeneity of suburbs by comparison to cities, there is this sort of diversity—at least up to a point—between one suburb and another in Westchester County. But lifestyle communities are not generally coincident with local government boundaries. Look at the emergence of more strongly self-identified and publicly recognized communities based on sexual orientation. Homosexuality may have existed through history (though there are tendentious issues of definition here that I do not want to try to engage at the moment). But opportunities to form differentiated social groups based on gay lifestyles—or indeed other lifestyles 'alternative' to conventional heterosexual family formation—have certainly proliferated. This is an achievement unevenly distributed both among and within 'modern' countries, but it is also modernist, not post or pre-modern.

This may seem to take us rather far from nationalism, and I certainly don't mean to suggest that I see gay nationalisms as the next step in global history (though something like this, if short of a request for a UN seat, may not be totally inconceivable). The connection lies, rather, in the fact that new cultural diversity is produced in the modern era. The very multiplicity of possible bases for the structuring of group identities should focus our attention on the questions of how some of them are constructed (or reconstructed) as nations, why only some of them are, and what the implications of this are.

## II

Nationalist rhetoric is commonly employed to produce the image of a pre-politically unified population. It allows those who employ it to judge contemporary politics—and culture and economics—by the standard of a people understood as always already there, constituted in a kind of primal innocence outside the realm of ordinary politics. The people may be understood simply as given, on ethnic or other cultural grounds, or as the creation of martyrs, heroes and law-givers acting outside or above the normal politics of individual and sectional interests. Both images may be evoked at the same time. The important thing is the implication that the nation is established in advance of, separately from, the more quotidian developments which may then be judged as serving or failing to serve its interests.

This is, of course, an illusion insofar as processes of collective identification (as of cultural transformation) are never altogether without politics. Saying so does not make the illusion any less powerful, either in its grips on individual imaginations and emotions or in its capacity to constitute a cultural order. People who have read Hobsbawm are still moved by national anthems, enlist in armies, and understand themselves to have 'home' countries when they migrate.

Nationalism offers distinctively modern ways of reasoning about identities: their 'natural' origins, their 'categorical' distinctions, their integrity. These had an older provenance, especially in Europe, but in the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries they helped to constitute a global discourse about national identity, sovereignty, and legitimacy. This discourse shapes not only the way in which we try to understand movements for self-determination, but the creation of such movements and the contests over recognition. Self-determination presumes a self.

At the individual level, debates about what constitutes such a self inform and were informed by the emergence of modern ideas of legal personality, a growing emphasis on the autonomy of moral subjects, and psychological concerns for the integration and integrity of the person. Understanding of collective selves grew in close tandem with that of individual persons. At its most influential, collective self-determination demanded a self composed not of a dynasty or a state, nor of a disconnected, unintegrated population, but of a people, an organized, meaningfully integrated collectivity. This the idea of nation supplied.

An ancient concept at one level, 'nation' was as much transformed in the modern era as the idea of person. In their transformed and never quite fixed meanings, each term was also constitutive of modernity. Though represented sometimes as opposites, the two ideas were intimate partners. They

were joined among other things by the claim to refer to integral, indivisible wholes—individuals. Likewise, their objects were presented as simultaneously natural, always already there, and in need of energetic making, of *bildung* (Herder and Fichte offer classic versions of such accounts).

The discourse of nationalism helped shape identities and movements not only in Europe but throughout the world. At the same time, it informed the very way in which society came to be conceptualized as the basic unit of analysis in the social sciences. Bounded, discrete, internally integrated societies (and cultures) were understood on the model of nation-states, reflecting nationalist rhetoric as well as institution-building in both Europe and colonies. In social science and politics alike, nations also provided the idea of progress with one of its primary subjects. Along with classes and individuals, nations figured as both the agents and the beneficiaries of progress. Progress was assessed by measuring the strength, freedom, or material well-being of nations. Yet, though the idea of nation was implicitly basic to the social science that gained institutionalization during the 1890s, it was seldom the object of explicit or sustained attention. The shaping of social science during the last *fin de siècle* thus contributed to the surprise of social scientists at the resurgence of nationalism during the current *fin de siècle*.

Modernity itself was one of the crucial projects taken on in the name of nations. Modernization meant variously strength, freedom, intellectual advancement; it always meant progress. For many intellectuals in Western Europe's advanced capitalist societies, the *fin de siècle* marked the moment at which faith in modernization lost its innocence. In a curious contradiction, this is part of 'high modernism'. Deconstruction of the putative wholes of individual and nation was one of its central motifs, whether in cubist painting or Musil's simultaneous examination of the man without qualities and mockery of Austrian nationalism. Simmel asked how both individual and society were possible, implicitly challenging their naturalness. Freud argued, in a sense, that they were not possible, or at least, that they represented ideas towards which actual persons and nations might strive but never completely reach.

When Durkheim argued that organic solidarity was stronger than mechanical, or that moral education and the empowerment of occupational associations could overcome anomie and social disintegration, he also addressed modernity as progress that includes growing purposiveness. Weber, in the same vein, sounded a good deal like Marx and more than a little like Hobbes, when he wrote of the state as definitive of modern society, rendering it a cohesive and rational-purposive whole:

The modern state is an enterprise [*Betrieb*] just like a factory. This exactly is its historical peculiarity. Here as there authority relations have the same roots . . . The hierarchical dependence of the wage worker, the administrative

and technical employee, the assistant in the academic institute as well as that of the civil servant and the soldier is due to the fact that in their case the means indispensable for the enterprise and for making a living are in the hands of the entrepreneur or the political ruler.<sup>11</sup>

The state allows the ruler to exert purpose, but likewise, enables the ruler to act—and ideally achieve progress—on behalf of the nation. Recall that despite his own protestations to the contrary, Weber the politician was not so far distant from Weber the social theorist, and he was committed to what he saw as “the historical tasks of the German nation.”<sup>12</sup>

But while the turn of the century sociologists continued to understand modernity through narrations and ideas of progress and purpose, they had become ambivalent about the capacity of social actors to guide progress through their purposive action. In common with others in the generation of the 1890s, they developed deep worries that progress might end or become perverted.<sup>13</sup> The idea of progress had already received radical challenge from Nietzsche and was increasingly out of fashion with the esthetes who gave the *fin de siècle* its name and fame. In *The Man Without Qualities*, Musil mocked the facile celebration of progress in much the way that Voltaire in *Candide* mocked the complacent belief that this was the best of all possible worlds. The confident expectation of continuous improvement was under critical re-evaluation, but even more basically, the notion of a common set of criteria for judging such improvement was losing adherents. An increasing chorus of intellectuals granted modernity its material progress but worried about its philistinism. The idea of ‘the good’, argued many, was being lost in more quotidian notions of ‘goods’ or the surplus of benefits over costs.<sup>14</sup> Most ideas of progress privileged the latter; intermittent attempts to reclaim the former would punctuate the next century and are current today in communitarianism, parts of conservative thought, and the post-postmodernist turn to ethics.

For the Enlightenment thinkers, emphasis lay on people’s self-conscious efforts to make a better world. Many 19th century social scientists carried forward this faith in purposive action. Some others, however, took evolutionary thought as a cue to treat progress as much less dependent on purpose. This was also a dimension of the thought of Durkheim, Weber and

<sup>11</sup> Weber, 1968a: 1394.

<sup>12</sup> Weber, 1968a: 1391. The influence of Nietzsche is evident in Weber’s efforts to think through problems of leadership and the progress of nations. More generally, see Mommsen, 1984; and Beetham, 1985.

<sup>13</sup> Hughes (1961) is a classic source on the generational experience of the early institutionalizers of social science.

<sup>14</sup> This is the theme of Arendt (1968).

other *fin de siècle* theorists of modernity. Modernization was not always achieved by conscious struggles, but was also something that happened to people as an unintended consequence of their purposive actions. This is, for example, the basic message of Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, and of a good deal of the rest of his work on rationalization and its consequences. Much the same is true for Durkheim, Tönnies and others who prominently brought forward characterizations of the transformations that wrought modernity: mechanical to organic solidarity, *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*, etc. Marx was quintessentially ambivalent on this very point, both ascribing responsibility for progress to the laws of history and demanding voluntary revolutionary action in its behalf. In the 1890s, Marxists were divided precisely over the extent to which an ‘evolutionary’ path to socialism might adequately substitute for revolution. Evolutionary socialism embodied a faith in progress, reminding us that this had not vanished from Europe at the turn of the century.

The First World War produced a deeper rupture. Though some of the intellectual struggles continued, Maurice Mandelbaum is quite right to suggest that

if there has been any one factor which, more than others, has led to a revolutionary shift in twentieth-century thought and which has involved a break with those nineteenth-century movements which still dominated the earlier years of this century, it has been the loss of belief in Progress.<sup>15</sup>

And as Mandelbaum notes, this was not just a change in academic fashions, but one rooted in basic social experiences.

One must take cognizance of the experience of the first World War, especially in Germany, and of the widespread social and political upheaval that began in the 1930s and have continued unabated ever since. Such experiences have left little room for the earlier forms of optimism which, on the whole, dominated Western thought since the Enlightenment.<sup>16</sup>

Social science was institutionalized, thus, not with a simple faith in progress, but at the point of high modernist doubts about the capacity of ordinary people to be the agents of their own progress. This is one reason why it is misleading to counterpose the idea of modernity to putative postmodernity.

<sup>15</sup> Mandelbaum, 1971: 369.

<sup>16</sup> Mandelbaum, 1971: 370. We might note the heroic attempts of some mid-20th century thinkers like Talcott Parsons to recover the stance of naive optimism about progress in the midst of an epoch of devastating conflicts and widespread disillusionment. That Parsons reflects important aspects of his context in postwar America does not fundamentally challenge Mandelbaum’s generalization.

On the one hand, the ideology of universal progress that is commonly taken as basic to modernity had much more to do with the late 18th century than the late 19th; on the other hand, the late 19th and early 20th centuries are precisely the era of *modernism* as style and ideological position. Postmodernists, who often refuse to take seriously any goal of historical specificity, thus define their account of the late 20th century unstably against two very different modernities.

### III

In the 1890s, the thinkers for whom modernity most conveyed a singular sense of purpose were not the world-weary sophisticates of *fin de siècle* Europe. They were those for whom modernity remained to be appropriated, to whom modernity could still appear as enlightenment bundled together with a host of other forms of progress, and at the same time as occasion for Romantic exaltation of individual action. These thinkers were for the most part outside the centers of European thought. Being a little bit outside was one of the sources of the naive enthusiasm many Europeans both disparaged and envied when looking at Americans. But we grasp the stance better if we try to look at early 20th century modernity from still further outside the metropolises of West Europe.

Though the modern has been identified as the Western, the most active appropriators of the idea of modernity, those who most clearly constitute modernity as a project to pursue, have been intellectuals and political activists in the colonial and post colonial world, in East Asia, and indeed, in Europe's own East and other fringes. From China's self-strengthening movement and revolutionaries to Atatürk and even Zionists in Central and Eastern Europe and Spain's generation of 1898 in the West, the pursuit of modernity was a powerful agenda on the periphery of modernity's apparent capital. Here too, a key issue was the question of the subject—the agent—of progress and of modernizing action. If progress demanded agency, there seemed to thinkers of the late 19th century to be three main choices: setting individuals free, empowering the working class, and pursuing the collective good of the nation.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Though there were hints of pan-Asian thinking, and foreshadowings of negritude, race did not inform the positive construction of the would-be agents of progress nearly so much as it did the negative arguments as to why some outside Europe and countries of European settlement failed to attain so much progress. At least before national socialism, European usage of race was mainly about 'them', while nation referred to 'us' (though in very early writings the terms 'race' and 'nation' were often used in closely overlapping senses). See

Both class and nation were constructed for the most part as categories of individuals, and indeed often as 'superindividuals', bearers of the same sort of unitary identities in the metabiographical space of history as individuals bore in their more immediate and smaller scale contexts.<sup>18</sup> As Benedict Anderson has noted, regardless of the analytic merits of each conception, it has been nation that has commanded the stronger allegiance, especially measured by the willingness of individuals to die for the collectivity.<sup>19</sup> Sometimes the two came together, as the working class was presented as the historical actor that would save or advance the nation. There was a version of individualism, to be sure, that emphasized competition among individuals to the exclusion of any emphasis on larger units (suggesting, sometimes, the biological distinction between individual and group selection). But for the most part, social Darwinists were greatly interested in the links between the 'fitness' of individuals and that of the collectivities they made up. Even most anti-collectivist thought tended to accept the salience of nations, while challenging that of classes. And as World War I drove home, when the chips were down, the idea of the nation became the most basic, operating as a trump card against class and nearly all other collective identities. Nations thus came to be understood, almost everywhere, as both the potential agents of progress and the units for which values or goods could be measured and progress assessed. The discourse of nation gave definition and boundaries to the idea of society, but nations came to be tacitly accepted—even naturalized—to such a degree that the implicit presumption of national identity was accepted even where nationalism was criticized. Nationalism was separated as an ideology from the alleged simple reality of national identity, and seen not as modern but as a carryover from traditional social organization and identities.<sup>20</sup>

This could happen partly because the cosmopolitan nationalism of the 18th and early 19th centuries, including the 'Springtime of Nations', gave way to a more reactionary and xenophobic discourse.<sup>21</sup> This was employed in movements many moderns found it easy to dismiss as backward-looking inheritances from a pre-modern era. Even theorists deeply influenced by nationalist ideas often failed to see nations and nationalisms as fundamental

Arendt's classic account of the transformation of racist thought in Nazi ideology (Arendt, 1951). More generally, see Hannaford, 1996. In the early 19th century, race and civilization were presented more commonly as candidates for the 'subject' of modernity.

<sup>18</sup> Outside marxism, attempts to construct classes as 'superindividual' agents were limited, and more collective, less emergent notions of class dominated in sociology.

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, 1991.

<sup>20</sup> I have reviewed much of the debate on this issue in Calhoun, 1993.

<sup>21</sup> See Meinecke, 1970; Ishay, 1996.



categories of modernity as a historically specific era. The idea of nation was reduced to a hidden influence or assumption in much social science, thus, rather than made a major object of theoretical attention. The canonical story of the origins of sociology, for example, rooted the discipline in intellectual responses to domestic changes in European countries—as though those countries were always already there, and as though cross-cultural comparisons had not played a crucial part in the invention of sociology.<sup>22</sup>

The *fin de siècle* was not just an era of world-weary sophisticates, but a period when the contradictions of modernity began to become widely manifest. High modernist artists responded with both pursuit of radical formal clarity and celebration of ambiguity; Malevich and Joyce are equally typical. Max Weber argued that the advancement of rationality could entrap moderns in an iron cage; Emile Durkheim linked freedom to anomie; Sigmund Freud discovered the sexual unconscious in the midst of some of the most elaborate schemes of cultural repression the world has known.

The late 19th century was not a heroic age for European nationalism, but a sort of interregnum; a calm between the enthusiasms of the mid-19th century and the cataclysms of the 20th. Europe was busy with imperial acquisitions and related conflicts, but for the most part there was peace on the continent (which helped to foster the 'progressive' view that nationalism was a problem to be solved by modernization). Nationalism was mobilized, indeed, as much against domestic 'fifth columns' of radical workers as against outsiders. But the late 19th and early 20th centuries were crucial years for the building and deepening of the nationalist consciousnesses that would spill over in World War I, the rise of the Navy League in Prussia, the Dreyfus affair in France. The world-weary sophisticates of the *fin de siècle* were not immune; within two decades, all too many were able to find in nationalism the inspiration to shoot each other, or praise those who did so.

The 1890s were halcyon years for the deployment of nationalism as a rhetoric of identity outside Western Europe. On Europe's Eastern fringe, nationalists sought to shape countries from the decrepit Austro-Hungarian empire. Russians sought to make the empire of the Czar into a modern nation. Turks fashioned Turkey from the center of the old Ottoman Empire, and Egyptians and others pursued similar projects on its periphery. In Spain, the "generation of '98" (though not directly very political) sought to achieve both the Enlightenment and the national identity that more 'modern' Europeans had found a century earlier. In East Asia, this was the era in

<sup>22</sup> See Calhoun, 1995a; Connell, 1997; and Randall Collins' critique of Connell (Collins, 1997).

which the Japanese, and only slightly later the Chinese and Koreans, began to use the Western rhetoric of national identity to claim their distinctive, non-Western place in the world. And this was true not just far afield but as close to home as possible. These were the crucial years in the creation of black nationalism.

One of the central paradoxes of modernity is that an international rhetoric of national identity should become the preferred, early universal, mode of claiming autonomous and distinct local cultural identity. As Wilson Moses has remarked,

In its secular form, black chauvinism derives, ironically enough from European racial theory. Like the concept of civilization, racial chauvinism can be traced back to the writings of Hegel, Guizot, Gobineau and other continental racial theorists of the nineteenth century. Indeed it was the German, Herder, who in the eighteenth century, developed theories of organic collectivism upon which Blyden and Crummel later built their own brand of ethnic chauvinism.<sup>23</sup>

These roots are of course commonly obscured by claims to complete intellectual autonomy, or the naturalness of the nation. To see that the discourse of nationalism was always international does not mean that all discourses of Third World or subaltern nationalism were merely derivative discourses; they were not.<sup>24</sup> But it does mean that the world was already integrated on a global scale, and that it was within that transnational reality that national identities were forged, and it does mean that this was done often in large part by reproducing or appropriating—albeit sometimes with considerable transformations—the European discourses of enlightenment, romantic individualism, and national identity.

There was a deeper contradiction in the spread of this discourse and many kindred discourses of modernity. This was the attempt to constitute identities in sharp, categorical terms, to render boundaries clear and identities integral even while the processes of capitalist expansion, slave trade (integrally modern though recently abolished in moves Western thinkers could assure themselves were modernizing), colonization, war, and the globalization of culture all ensured the production of ever more multiplicities and overlaps of identities. The phenomenon of 'double consciousness' that W.E.B. DuBois analyzed in the situation of those who were both Negro and American was a resistance to this dominant pattern in the construction of identities.<sup>25</sup> But it was in more than one sense a minority voice.

<sup>23</sup> Moses, 1988: 25.

<sup>24</sup> See Chatterjee's argument against this view (Chatterjee, 1986).

<sup>25</sup> DuBois, 1989.

However common, even ubiquitous, double consciousness really was, the prevailing rhetoric of identity and agency sought singular, integral subjects. Thus lines were drawn on maps and populations understood—at least ideally—to fit as unambiguously as possible within them. Moreover, the loyalties and obligations of individuals to nations were commonly described as unmediated and direct. Unlike traditional kinship systems with their reckoning of identity in a series of nested groups from families outward to larger lineages and clans, and often cross-cut by age-sets and other groupings, modern thought understood individuals to be immediately members of a nation, as though nationality were inscribed in their very bodies. Nationalism launched a war on traditional intermediate associations. And ways of constituting local identities throughout the world, from China to India to Turkey to Spain were all influenced by this discourse of individuals and nations. Even in the manifestly international culture of 'the Black Atlantic', produced by the slave trade and maintained by later migrations of people and cultural products, there was a tendency to construct Black identities in essentialist terms. In Paul Gilroy's words,

... original, folk, or local expressions of black culture have been identified as authentic and positively evaluated... while subsequent hemispheric or global manifestations of the same cultural forms have been dismissed as inauthentic and therefore lacking in cultural or aesthetic value precisely because of their distance (supposed or actual) from a readily identifiable point of origin.<sup>26</sup>

In a wide range of other contexts and for other identities, similar processes were at work, constituting certain versions of collective culture as authentic, claiming certain historical precursors as definitive. The issue is not just the invention of new traditions, in the sense analyzed by Hobsbawm and Ranger, but also the fixing of previously more flexible and continually renewed traditions and the institutionalization both of biases and of powerful agents of cultural regulation.<sup>27</sup> Thus, for example, the creation of modern Turkish identity drew on precursors that could be understood as 'always already' Turkish—a mixture of Anatolian culture, Ottoman imperial heritage, and Islam—but it also constituted something new, something distinctively related to a non-imperial state and to the idea of nation as well as (more famously) to Western-influenced secularism. It is precisely because a nation was being forged on a model that seemed to require internal homogeneity and authenticity that Turkish nation-building was accompanied by the genocide of Armenians.

<sup>26</sup> Gilroy, 1993: 96.

<sup>27</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983.

In the late 19th century, ironically, precisely as the globalization of political and economic organization and the world wide flows of culture were reaching unprecedented levels, the urge to organize social life in terms of sharp boundaries, national identities, and essentialist cultural categories likewise reached a peak. In Europe, it was in this period that nationalists began effectively to urge immigration controls; in this period they created the standing citizen armies that fought World War I; in this period they opposed socialism in part precisely because it was internationalist.<sup>28</sup> It was in this period that modern anti-Semitism took shape. And it was in this period that nationalism became most conclusively identified, in the European context, with movements for secession rather than amalgamation of existing states.<sup>29</sup> No era placed greater emphasis on the autonomy of the nation state or the capacity of the idea of nation to define large-scale collective identities. But it did so precisely when and partly because the world was becoming pronouncedly international. In this there may lie some lesson for the present era when the acceleration of global processes of capital accumulation, the rapid global transfer of technology, the almost instantaneous spread of cultural products, and huge waves of migration lead many to imagine the nation state is likely to vanish quickly into the shadows of history.

#### IV

To use the international rhetoric of nationalism to claim local self-determination was not only to commit oneself to representing local distinctiveness in internationally recognizable terms. It was also to make the local nation a token of a global type, to construct it as equivalent to other nations. In this we see the ways in which multiple modernist projects were linked, and the modern as such constituted in multiplicities.

Before the end of the 19th century, for example, China had never been constructed by either rulers or ordinary citizens as simply one country among many. Whether understood grandly as civilization, or as the middle kingdom, or simply as the terrain on which competing dynasties fought for power, it was not conceptualized as an exemplar of a type. Other countries—Korea, say, or Japan—were understood more in this way, as subordinate polities on the frontier of China, ideally at least fitting into the class of tribute payers. Early attempts were made to fit European countries into this model. But at least from the self-strengthening movement on, and especially as

<sup>28</sup> Hobsbawm, 1990: 123.

<sup>29</sup> See E.H. Carr's emphasis on this point (Carr, 1945: 24–25).

Chinese recognition of the transformation in Japan deepened after 1895, thinkers and officials began more often to think of China as one nation among many. Whether it was sick and weak or the only truly civilized nation were in a sense secondary questions to this deeper transformation of the basic conceptualization of the unit.

The transformation of collective identity was accompanied by, and perhaps entailed, a transformation of personal identity. Projects of reform sought to remake the person—just as they had a generation or two earlier in Germany, the country from which China (like Japan) perhaps borrowed most on this score. Schemes for popular education, an end to foot-binding, emancipation of sons (as well as daughters) from tyrannical fathers, and even reform of the language all signalled the change. The person was being freed from certain constraints, the rhetoric of the time suggested, but also made into the sort of person who could be an effective contributor to the cause of the nation. Aesthetic modernism spread along the same vectors, as with the poet Xu Zhimo who exemplified its more Romantic side, or Lu Xin, more of a rationalist.

Similarly in a host of other settings, the emancipation of the nation from empire and dynasty went hand in hand with the emancipation of the person from subjection to patriarchy, religion, and village custom. Subjects were rethought from the vantage point of the nation.

Nationalism was not the whole, but only the most important part of the tacit consensus forged in the late 19th century as to what would count as politically appropriate identities. It played a central role in the development of 'essentialist' thinking that was also basic to the way race, gender, sexual orientation and other modalities of collective identities came to be constituted. In all cases, the assumption has been widespread both in social theory and in more popular discourses that these cultural categories address really existing and discretely identifiable collections of people—and more surprisingly that it is possible to understand each category by focusing on its primary identifier rather than on the way it overlaps with, contests and/or reinforces others.

Put another way, it has been the tacit assumption of modern social and cultural thought that people are normally members of one and only one nation, that they are members of one and only one race, one gender, and one sexual orientation, and that each of these memberships describes neatly and concretely some aspect of their being. It has been assumed that people naturally live in one world at a time, that they inhabit one way of life, that they speak one language, and that they themselves, as individuals, are singular, integral beings. All these assumptions came clearly into focus in the late 19th century, and all seem problematic.

The underlying issues are hard to get at because social and cultural theory did not consistently study the constitution of nations, races, genders or other categories. Rather, a variety of putatively neutral terms—society, culture, subculture—were introduced. Their seeming neutrality obscured the extent to which they reflected the presumptions about categorical distinctiveness that were forged especially with sex, race, and nation in mind. Social scientists came to a remarkable extent to take for granted the objects of their study—notably societies—without reflecting on the extent to which their view of what societies were had been produced largely on the foundation of 19th century nationalist reasoning.

The unraveling of this tacit equation of nation and society has been a key theme of the late 20th century. The problematic nature of these assumptions has been raised most prominently by postmodernism, but also by discussion of globalism and the 'clash of civilizations'.<sup>30</sup> One problem with the term 'postmodern' is that it suggests that these assumptions may once have held, but that something has changed in the world to render identity newly problematic and to render the old fixity of categories obsolete. When the change should be located and whether it happened equally throughout the world is at best only fuzzily suggested.<sup>31</sup> The power of the category of nation was always embedded in modernizing projects, never simply a stable condition of modernity; particular nationalist claims were always subject to contestation.

Whether it solves any specific problems or not, postmodernism rightly encourages us at the end of the 20th century to revisit the question of the 'purpose' of modernity as it figured in the late 19th century. If the last *fin de siècle* saw the purpose of modernity as progress, at least a large postmodernist current in the present one sees the purpose of modernity as repression.<sup>32</sup> This is by no means so familiar an opposition as to be uninteresting. Postmodernist discourse extends certain of the late 19th and early 20th century themes of high modernism—like the instability of the subject, as interesting to Musil as to Kundera. At the same time, it focuses attention on themes that were either neglected a hundred years ago or pushed to the margin of social and cultural theory as they were consolidated in that period. Simmel, paradigmatic high modernist among social theorists, thus anticipated themes of postmodernism.<sup>33</sup> But while the high modernism of Joyce, Baudelaire and the Bauhaus was enormously influential in aesthetic domains,

<sup>30</sup> Robertson, 1992b; Barber, 1995; Huntington, 1996.

<sup>31</sup> See Calhoun, 1995b.

<sup>32</sup> See, paradigmatically, Lyotard, 1984.

<sup>33</sup> Compare Frisby (1985) and Weinstein and Weinstein (1993).

social theory proved more resistant. For all the ubiquity of the contrast of countryside to city in modern social theory, one reason may be that theorists' deepest commitments were to nation-states as the primary units of analysis. Artists and writers might inhabit cities more than countries, and become suspect to nationalists on this account. Most social scientists compared countries, and indeed helped to reproduce the very dominance of a division of the world into states made legitimate by representing nations.

Modernism was, however, also a critical response to much of what we call modernity. That this doesn't figure much in the historical self-reflections of the social science disciplines is due largely to the success of efforts at canonization and discipline formation that worked systematically to extract the thought of the late 19th and early 20th centuries from its historical context, to cut Durkheim off from Sorel, to insulate Weber from Mann and Lukacs, to minimize Marx. Talcott Parsons thought he could distill the essence of the social thought of the generation that matured in the 1890s into a theory of voluntary but highly structured social action and a general picture of gradual social evolution. But this may tell us more about him and about mid-twentieth century America than about thinkers who came of age at the end of the last century in Europe. And in any case, the era when his optimism (both about the world and about the unity of theory) seemed justified proved brief. It is worth recalling that to a much greater extent, the theorists we associate with the *fin de siècle* were pessimists or at least committed to an idea of disillusioned realism and opposed to Romanticism even when they drew substantively on its intellectual currents. The great thinkers of the late 19th century, like Darwin and Spencer may have been believers in a simpler and more Providential progress (though it is worth recalling that their age was also Nietzsche's). Freud and Weber and Simmel certainly were not, and even Durkheim hedged his bets on progress well before World War One. Yet surprisingly, especially but not exclusively in America, the social sciences were established as autonomous academic disciplines in such a fashion that reflection on the basic anxieties of twentieth-century life—including the instability of nations and other organizing collective identities—would seem foreign to each, an unscientific interpolation.

Especially under the influence of nationalist ideas, social scientists developed notions of societies as singular, bounded, and internally integrated, and as realms in which people were more or less the same. On this basis, a great deal of modern social theory came to incorporate prereflectively the notion that human beings naturally inhabit only a single social world or culture at a time. People on borders, children of mixed marriages, those rising through social mobility and those migrating from one society to another were all constituted for social theory as people with problems by contrast

to the presumed ideal of people who inhabited a single social world and could therefore unambiguously place themselves in their social environments. The implicit phenomenological presumption was that human life would be easier if individuals did not have to manage a heterogeneity of social worlds or modes of cultural understanding. An ideal of clarity and consistency prevailed. This ideal of course reflected broadly rationalist thinking, but it should not be interpreted as limited to rationalistic (or Enlightenment) views. Much of the jargon of authenticity in Romantic and later anti-rationalist thought shares the same idealization of the notion of inhabiting a single self-consistent life world.<sup>34</sup> This notion of the external world mirrored a pre-Freudian (not to mention pre-Bakhtinian) notion of the potential self-consistent internal life of the individual—one represented in the very term 'individual' with its implication that the person cannot be internally divided.

This notion of inhabiting singular social or lifeworlds as integral beings reflected both assumptions about how actual social life was organized and ideals about how social life ought to be organized. It invoked, in other words, an idea of normality. But the early theorists did not for the most part see their contemporary world as unproblematic on this dimension. Rather, they recognized that people around them faced challenges in trying to come to terms with differences, border crossings and interstitial positions. This led to an understanding of the past as one in which singular social worlds more completely enveloped people; in which society was less differentiated and less complicated. Societies differed, but internally each was unified. This was for some a golden age, but most social scientists emphasized that for better or worse modernity meant parting with such visions.

We should also be careful not to follow the many classical social theorists whose examination of 'other cultures' was conducted in a way that hypostatized both the otherness and the integral unity of cultures. People have long inhabited multiple social worlds at the same time. Multilinguality is as 'natural' as monolinguality. Trade has established linkages across political and cultural frontiers. The great religions have spread across divergent local cultures and maintained connections among them. Even in the relatively small scale, low technology societies that most informed Durkheim's notion of mechanical solidarity, people inhabited multiple horizons of experience, for example as members simultaneously of local lineages and far-flung clans. In great civilizations like India that were not organized as singular political units, this was all the more true.

<sup>34</sup> See Adorno, 1973.

## V

The 20th century arguable reached its *fin de siècle* in the early 1990s. I would date it not from the great events which inspired so much hope in 1989, but from the bafflement and disappointment that spread as it became clear to what extent the collapse of communism renewed old problems rather than ushering in the end of history. The resurgence of nationalism in the former communist countries helped to draw attention to the fact that nationalism was not simply a fading inheritance of the premodern era. Indeed, nationalism flourished well beyond the range of former communist countries, suggesting that however prominent it was as a 'successor ideology' in some, it was not to be explained by the peculiarities of post-communist transitions.

Nationalism turned bloody quite quickly in the 1990s. From the first fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh and other previously obscure regions of the former USSR to the protracted struggles in what was once Yugoslavia, the nationalist fighting was a direct challenge to Western intellectuals, policymakers and citizens. It challenged faith in progress, of course, which had briefly been revitalized by the fall of communist rule. It also challenged postmodernists, though, despite their rejection of the metanarrative of progress. Not only did the manifest horrors undermine the happy relativism of some, they revealed the continuing power of a very modern form of collective identity, politics and—for many—evil. This led some postmodernists fruitfully to clarify their arguments away from claims that an epoch had ended to calls for an end to certain ways of thinking and theorizing deeply implicated in clearly continuing problems.<sup>35</sup>

The resurgence of nationalism around the world also offered a counterpoint to the celebratory politics of identity that had been flourishing, especially since the 1960s. There had been an innocent pleasure to the proliferation of such calls for recognition, and to many of the refigurations of self that ensued. Noticing that a politics of identity could be horrific put the more peaceful and benign movements of the Western democracies under a new light. Rather than easily assuming the possibility of a 'springtime of identities' not unlike the mid-19th century Springtime of Nations, many thinkers

<sup>35</sup> Bauman (1989a) addressed some of these continuing problems in an earlier historical case, developing postmodernist challenges to some core ideas of modernism without getting caught in an illusory claim that the epoch had ended. Resurgent nationalism was of course not the only factor pressing postmodernists to rethink certain themes; many, including Bauman, explicitly eschewed earlier relativisms while pursuing forms of ethnical engagement not tied to modernist universalism.

have begun to treat identity-politics as a more complex phenomenon, potentially liberatory perhaps, but also fraught with dangers. It became clearer that success for one identity movement often infringed on the claims and hopes of others—as with nationalism.

A gloomy *fin de siècle* attitude has informed some recent attempts to put the genie of identity politics back in its bottle, lest it produce nothing but endless fragmentation. In *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, for example, Todd Gitlin evokes a classical image of 'progressive' politics and argues that identity movements are increasingly undermining it.<sup>36</sup> Such views are widespread. Yet in a sense they fail to do justice to the difficulty of both the intellectual and political situation. In this current *fin de siècle*, it is no longer possible to take for granted the 'national' subject of modern progress. The identity politics movements flourish partly for this reason. Global integration challenges the tacit assumption of the self of self-determination, not just with trade and production organization across borders, but with global information flows and media corporations, and with global flows of people as migrants especially, but also as travelers. In this context, there is no escape from identity politics. To attempt to unify people at the level of existing states, for class politics or communitarianism or conventional party programs, also requires attempts to convince people that certain understandings of their individual and collective identities should have priority over others. No subject for progress can be taken for granted, and this is one of the most basic reasons why progress—or more profoundly, the good itself—is so hard to assess.

A key intellectual agenda at the beginning of the 21st century, thus, is to find a way to speak of identity, and agency in ways that do not tacitly equate society with nation, or presume that one identity is automatically a trump card against others. Likewise, it is crucial to be able to speak of multiple modernities—in the sense of different projects and potentials, and of the multiplicities inherent in the modern epoch. It is not obvious that today's social scientists will move much farther than their predecessors of the 1890s. One way to do so, however, would be to develop a way of addressing the challenges of cultural and historical difference, that does not render observed differences the bases for hypostatizing 'whole' societies or cultures as though they were internally integral.<sup>37</sup> We need to see not only that empirical

<sup>36</sup> Gitlin, 1995.

<sup>37</sup> In something of the same spirit, Sorokin (1957) generations ago criticized those who studied cultures with the presumption that these were necessarily cognitively or logically integrated units, rather than seeing such integration as an empirical variable. His criticism had regrettably little effect on developments in sociology.

variable, however, but the practical activity by which ordinary people manage cultural complexity and the interfaces among social worlds.<sup>38</sup> The issue is not just to avoid 'essentialist' invocations of integral identity, but to see that just pointing to 'social construction' offers little if any analytic purchase. It is not just that collective identities and ways of life are created, but that they are internally contested, that their boundaries are porous and overlapping, and that people live in more than one at the same time.

The prominence of postmodernism generally and a range of more particular challenges to the idea of clearly demarcated and internally coherent identities has not kept contemporary thinkers from imagining the world in those terms. When Samuel Huntington argued that the crucial conflicts of the future would be those between civilizations, thus, he saw civilizations in the same manner as the dominant 19th century discourse saw nations: discrete, internally self-consistent, and perduring tokens of a common type.<sup>39</sup> He wrote of a world minimally marked by multiplicities of identities, though maximally by conflicts over territories. Accounts of the horrors of Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda and other national and/or ethnic conflicts evoke pre-modern imagery of 'tribal warfare'. These are all the results, political leaders assure us on the basis of respectable academic sources, of ancient ethnic conflicts. Because the clashes are primordial we can do nothing about them except to try to reduce the scale of the bloodletting by sending in the Red Cross or embargoing weapons.

Such accounts are, of course, a way of getting ourselves off the hook because they justify inaction. At the same time, though, they point to a deeper sense in which we seek to exculpate ourselves, perhaps unconsciously. This is our effort to disengage such horrors from our image of modernity. It is as though we seek to salvage the remaining vestiges of a tattered idea of progress by relegating the most pressing and substantial conflicts and challenges of contemporary world affairs to the category of 'the traditional', against which the late 19th century thinkers identified the modern. Above all, perhaps, with such rhetoric and views we abandon the possibility of recovering any sense of the extent to which modernity did not just happen to us, but was produced and then exported from Europe (and later America) as a project. It is not a project from which we can disengage at will.

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<sup>38</sup> See Hannerz (1992) for a suggestion concerning this issue. Also, Hannerz, 1988.

<sup>39</sup> Huntington, 1996. Ajami's response (Ajami, 1993) to Huntington's early article on this theme makes a similar point about how "Huntington has found his civilizations whole and intact, watertight under an eternal sky."