CEC | Central European Cultures

Globalization and Worlding: Interconnected Alternatives

Vladimir Biti ID

University of Vienna; Universitätsring 1, 1010 Vienna, Austria; vladimir.biti@univie.ac.at

Abstract. At the outset, a distinction is drawn between *globalization,* that takes the shape of a consensus imposed from above, and *worlding,* that takes the shape of a dissensus developed from below. In Jacques Rancière's terms, globalization "polices" a political space, suppresses conflicts among its constituents, appropriates and translates everything into its own identity parameters. By pointing out the "political" gap between what is *claimed* and what *is* within the given space, worlding, in contrast. insists on disagreement. However, these two reconfigurations and recalibrations of human being-in-common are never diametrically opposed, but are interrelated and intertwined. Worlding can start as a liberating "politics" but, as soon as it institutes its platform of commonality, may slip into an imposed "police". Since political disagreement necessarily aims to legitimize its unrecognized identities, a surreptitious perversion of dissensual politics into a consensual police is its inescapable ultimate consequence. Disagreement invents names and utterances, setting up new collectivities that solidify their identities by "policing" their spaces. Accordingly, one can conclude that worlding starts as an emancipating project that gradually turns into discriminating globalization. The continuous slide of one into the other impeded and disconcerted the political space of European modernity from its very beginnings, accompanying it like an uncanny shadow. This space repeatedly proliferated both its internal (intra-European) and external (extra-European) "zones of indistinction", whose residents forged transborder alliances with the aim of its recalibration and reconfiguration.

Keywords: globalization, worlding, zone of indistinction, transborder alliances

Two kinds of the cosmopolitan reconfiguration and recalibration of human commonality are genuine to European modernity. One is *discriminating,* i.e., imposed from above in the "policing" form of consensus. Such "imperial cosmopolitanism" takes the appropriative form of hegemonic globalization, which by its all-equalizing pressure induces inequality and proliferates the so-called "zones of indistinction". According to the author of this term, Giorgio Agamben,[1] the confinement of these

---

1   Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 63, 112, 181.

zones deprives people of their rights and identities. The other kind of reconfiguration is *emancipating*. i.e., launched from below, out of these apocryphal zones, in the "political" form of dissensus. Through the interlocking and alliances of these zones, i.e., worlding in the "vernacular cosmopolitan" fashion, imagined communities emerge that exempt themselves from the all-equalizing pressure from above.

This requires a preliminary distinction between the globe and the world. In the words of the Chinese-American theorist of cosmopolitanism Pheng Cheah:

> "The world is thus a form of relating, belonging, or being-with. In contradistinction, the globe—the thing produced by processes of globalization—is a bounded object or entity in Mercatorian space. (…) It is assumed that the spatial diffusion and extensiveness achieved through global media and markets give rise to a sense of belonging to a shared world, when one might argue that such developments lead instead to greater polarization and division of nations and regions. The globe is not a world."[2]

However, these two kinds of reconfiguration and recalibration of human commonality are never diametrically opposed, but are interrelated and intertwined. According to the French political philosopher Jacques Rancière, the redistribution of a political space can start as a liberating *politics* but, as soon as it institutes its platform of commonality, may slip into an imposed *police*.[3] Following this line of thought, the political theorist Costas Douzinas concludes that

> [...] cosmopolitanism starts as a moral universalism but often degenerates into imperial globalism. [...] The continuous slide of cosmopolitan ideas towards empire is one of the dominant motifs of modernity.[4]

To pick a famous example, the French Revolution had for a long time been regarded as the harbinger of a tolerant age of a "universal" humanity, but proved to be the promoter of a discriminatory age of nation-states.[5] As soon as it had established its egalitarian concept of the citizen, which was determined to eliminate religious and class differences between the people, it introduced a new division of the state citizen and the *foreigner*. As citizenship of the nation-state now became more important than membership of orders, guilds, provinces, and other so-called "hereditary privileges", the French Revolution successfully abolished internal legal, moral, and personal barriers between individuals, *but instead established national*

---

2   Pheng, *What Is a World*, 42.

3   Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, 11–20; Rancière, *Disagreement*, 21–42, 61–64.

4   Douzinas, *Human Rights and Empire*, 159.

5   Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 167.

boundaries in their place.[6] Such a redrawing of the lines of identity politics resulted in marking out foreigners as paradigmatic outsiders. As Hannah Arendt demonstrates in her famous argument on the origins of totalitarianism, human rights were identified with national citizen rights in the key declarations of the French Revolution, which left stateless populations and individuals without "the right of bearing rights".[7] The poor, women, workers, and the elderly were then included, but at the expense of excluded foreigners. Consider that Article 1 of the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* states that men are born free and equal in their rights, but in Article 3 it stipulates that the source of this equality and freedom is the *Nation*. This is how the French national citizen became the principal beneficiary of human rights. Universal human rights and national sovereignty were born together, turning the latter into the condition for the possibility of the former.

Naturally, once drawn into the "zones of indistinction", foreigners can also endeavor to exempt themselves, through various mutual identifications, into what one might call "transborder communities". Consider, for example, the case of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who around the mid-eighteenth century abundantly engaged such elective affinities between the "stranded" of various nations. Though clearly attached to French literature and culture, he was an expelled Protestant, dissident and poor petty bourgeois or, in a word, a foreigner in the French state and a stranger in noble society. These were the terms of his personal humiliation. Due to this stigmatizing second-class citizen status, which induced his deeply frustrating experience, he was forced to look for influential allies in the Protestant tradition both inside and outside France. Looking for inside support, he had recourse to Montesquieu's praise of the Protestant individual disposition as opposed to the socially dependent Catholic one, which is put forth in his *Spirit of the Laws* (XXIV.5 and XXV.2). Looking for outside support, he introduced great English literature to the Francophone world.

A second-class citizen of the French nation, located in the southern city-republic of Geneva, thus established transborder alliances to support the resistance of other nations to the cultural pressure of his privileged compatriots. At the same time, he obviously wanted to gain their support for his resistance inside. However, Rousseau's complex interlocking maneuvering, characteristic of indistinct individuals and collectivities throughout European modernity, followed not only his *confessional* affinities. His Geneva Republic, in addition to its Protestant religion, also differed from Paris in terms of its "provincial" *position* and inferior *size*. Such a marginal and compressed "natural community", according to Rousseau's explanation in *Discourse on Inequality*, improves the sense of co-belonging for the community members. In his opinion, small nations are much better prepared for the future

---

6   Febvre "Frontière," 213–14.

7   Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 299–300.

republican constitution that will be a substitute for the cumbersome and anachronous monarchic one.

Therefore, when Rousseau addressed the Polish nation in his *Considerations on the Government of Poland*, an open letter of sympathy against a powerful and cunning aggressor, his public collective address was intended as a countermove to his mighty compatriot Voltaire's personal private letters to the absolutist sovereign Catherine II of Russia. He sided with the victim rather than the aggressor.[8] "If you make it so that a Pole can never become a Russian, I answer you that Russia will never subjugate Poland."[9] Nobody can destroy a nation so naturally rooted in its tastes, manners, prejudices and vices,[10] i.e., so clearly distinguished from its neighbors. With this distinctive perception of Poles, Rousseau was countering Voltaire's indiscriminate and careless lumping together of Russians, Poles, Tartars, and Hungarians. Whereas the whole of Western Europe becomes uniform under the pressure of French taste, the Poles must defend their peculiar national feeling by nurturing it with careful national education.[11] Only by understanding their historical cultural roots can they shift from being subjects to becoming members of the world's community of nations. On this basis, by offering them what he took to be a more just type of commonality—designed against the so-called egalitarian discrimination–Rousseau undertook to unite the victims of political and cultural oppression throughout Europe.

The question is, of course, whether Rousseau's "natural communities" as established through worlding represent a more just, i.e., egalitarian human togetherness. In his *Social Contract*, he points out that in them, contrary to the discrimination genuine to the elitist and authoritarian monarchies, all people participate equally in the business of rule. But this strikes us today as an outcast's wishful thinking. First, the notion of "all people" in Rousseau's understanding excludes women since they were, in his view, bereft of autonomy in their thinking. Second, besides being eminently masculine, the "naturalness" of these communities implied their contraction, narrowing down and solidifying isolation, which means the purification of all extraneous influences. A century thereupon, these attributes characterized the rise of the rigid and bellicose ethnic nationalisms in East Central European national revolutions. This might explain Hannah Arendt's harsh critique of Rousseau's key concept of the people's "general will", as developed in the second chapter of her book *On Revolution*. Third, the envisaged equal participation in the business of rule ended with the same outcome as in Rousseau's exemplary Geneva, where out of

---

8   Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 238.

9   Rousseau, "Considerations," 170–71, trans. mine.

10   Rousseau, "Considerations," 163.

11   Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 240–41.

four distinct orders of inhabitants "only two compose[d] the Republic",[12] i.e., the nobility and citizens. As Rousseau's enthusiastic follower Johann Gottfried Herder was forced to realize, the excluded rest of the population, acting out of bitterness and frustration, used its creative gifts for destructive ends, wrecking the fragile and gentle fabric of social mutuality.[13]

Let us now introduce our second case in point. Frustrated as they were by the division of the German Empire, the German Romanticists enthusiastically received Rousseau's resolute defense of "natural communities" victimized by the Enlightenment's modernization, administration, and rationalization of humankind. Insufficiently equipped with cosmopolitan resources to get into the engine of grand history, such peripheral communities faced the deeply unsettling effects of the global process that had been set in motion. By personally experiencing their frustration in his small city-republic, Rousseau sympathetically endorsed their recourse to indigenous myths to protect them from deracination. The most prominent German Romanticist Friedrich Schlegel took up his fundamental argument for the necessity of all people to dethrone their imposed representatives in order to return to their natural roots. Rousseau's statement that "the moment a people adopts representatives it is no longer free; it no longer exists",[14] found enormous resonance with early German Romanticists, who wanted to dethrone the French arrogance as epitomized by the German aristocracy of their time.[15] To achieve that, they enthusiastically joined Rousseau's alliances with subordinated nations.

Already Herder resumed Rousseau's self-strengthening transnational and transconfessional affinities—or what we called "worlding" against globalization—in his 1783 treatise *The Spirit of Hebraic Poetry*. Therein, he significantly discusses the contemporary question of Jewish nationality in Europe from a retrospective historical perspective. "Just as Germany was a nation of many states and Austria a state of many nations, so ancient Israel portrayed 'a most excellent example' of such nation [of twelve independent republics or tribes] long before its emergence as a *state*."[16] As if giving an example to his own people, he highlighted the ability of the Jewish people to preserve their sense of identity in a predominantly hostile environment for over two thousand years. A sustained combination of their loyalty to common law, their shared historical language, and folklore memory, their fostered and perpetuated

---

12 Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, 54.

13 Barnard, *Herder, Nationality*, 32.

14 Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, 143.

15 The German aristocracy of the eighteenth century, including the German king Frederic the Great, had strong predilections for the French language, literature, and culture. German was too vulgar for them.

16 Barnard, *Herder, Nationality*, 20.

family ties and also a love and reverence for their forefathers had gradually paved the way for a communitarian order free from power as a central source of coercion. "That law should rule and not the legislator, that a free nation should freely accept and honor it, that invisible, reasonable, and benevolent powers should guide us and no chains enslave us"[17] was not only the achievement of Moses but was also Herder's democratic vision of how modern Germany should come into being.

Some thirty years later, Friedrich Schlegel's enthusiasm for the contemporary Hungarian national movement came to expression in the tenth chapter of his 1812 *History of the Old and New German Literature*, where he celebrates old Hungarian songs and legends suppressed during the rule of the King Matthias Corvinus.[18] However, the similarity of Corvinus' Italian and Latin preferences to the French pre-dilections of the late Prussian king, Frederick the Great is striking. In the same way as the Hungarian national movement at the beginning of the nineteenth century, by resisting contemporary Austrian hegemony, had recourse to Hungarian legends from Corvinus' time, Schlegel expects his compatriots to resist the European offensive of French culture through recourse to German literary and cultural memory. His first intention was to promote German literature in the making, as opposed to the already widely acknowledged French literature, as the epitome of the spiritual formation of the German people. He wanted to establish the German national spirit in order to rescue his compatriots from French cultural appropriation. But this meant that Schlegel subscribed to a much broader idea of literature as an identification vehicle for people who, after having been "appropriated" by the imperial nation-states, were deprived of access to their own identity. In this conceptualization of literature, he concurred with Rousseau and Herder, all of them convinced "that an enhanced consciousness of one's identity, in and through one's grasp of historical roots, could produce a shift in one's understanding":

> "First, it would further people's reflective self-identification and self-location within time, space, and the context of others; and, second, it would make them realize that they were not meant to be merely passive observers, but that they could also think of themselves as active participants."[19]

To become active participants in history was the only way for these people to rid themselves of the traumatic experience of their downgrading, denigration, and exclusion. Consequently, thanks to a number of outstanding interconnected European intellectuals who opposed the central identification power as inadmissible tutelage, the liberating potential of their transborder alliances came to the

17   Herder, "Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie," 117, trans. mine.

18   Schlegel, "Geschichte der neuen und alten Literatur," 237.

19   Barnard, *Herder, Nationality*, 161–62.

fore. If humankind was to be established according to their vision, then the only viable option was a self-regulating ensemble of many smaller cooperating wholes. Humankind was expected to unfold from within and come from below instead of being imposed from above as in the universal model of the Republic of Letters. This affirmation of marginal literatures and cultures through their interlocking was clearly meant as an alternative vision of the recalibration of the polis. It unmistakably opposed the one imposed from above.

In the Romanticist view, human nature was always linguistically constituted, and, owing to the multitude of national languages, structurally diverse. For them, the national language was not an external instrument of intercourse between its users, but the internal structure of thinking, perception, and imagination into which one is born. The Romanticists diversified humankind by insisting on the huge variety of human linguistic capacities. In this way, they clearly conducted emancipating politics against the Enlightenment's discriminating police, or worlding against globalization, for that matter. Yet, just as the *unity* of humankind comes into being by overcoming the *diversity* of national languages, so does its *diversity* emerge through the *unification* of national languages. A given national language can take its distinctive place in the diversity of national languages only after its internal unification has been carried out. Inasmuch as the unity of a standardized national language could not be accomplished without overcoming a variety of dialects, local usages, anachronisms, loan phrases, idioms and words, intersections and overlaps with other national languages, the Romanticists relegate the Enlightenment policing to the level of national languages. Despite the appearance, they do not abandon it through their politics of emancipating diversity. Of this diversity, only policed national languages can partake. By introducing policing into their politics, this spoils both Rousseau's and the early German Romanticist worlding through transborder alliances.

It is no surprise that Friedrich Schlegel ultimately focused his intellectual energy on the national unity rather than global diversity, the way Goethe did subsequently in an obvious polemical reaction. Following Herder's guidelines,[20] Schlegel undertook the principal task of disentangling the German national substance from the hybridizing international cultural exchange. Through such national purification, he wanted to rescue the genuinely German way of thinking and feeling *(Deutschheit)* from being corrupted by the ever-growing intercultural communication. In order to cure Germany's wounded national self in the traumatic constellation induced by the breakdown of the Empire in 1806,[21] he undertook an almost militantly self-defensive historical unification of the German national spirit. By suppressing its internal

---

20   Herder, *Frühe Schriften*, 638.

21   As is well known, after the defeat by Napoleon at Jena, the German Empire fell apart into the Protestant German and Catholic Habsburg Empire.

diversity,[22] he emphasized the deep unity of the German nation in order to contrast it with the broad international unity of humankind espoused by the French Enlighteners.

This makes the unifying force of Schlegel's nation as the basic prerogative of its allegedly emancipating interlocking with other nations, in fact, discriminatory. All constituents that do not comply with its unity principle are subjected to correction, emendation, marginalization, and, in the last resort, exclusion. The first such exclusion that Schlegel proposed, in fact, preceded his fashioning of the German national spirit, preparing its forthcoming design. In *Concerning the Language and the Wisdom of Indians* (1808), he privileges the "noble Aryan community" of "organic languages" (Greek, Latin, German, and English), taken to be the living seeds of growth and vitality of humankind, over ignoble languages thought to derive from Chinese, such as Slavic, American-Indian, and Japanese. The latter, atomized and lacking in depth, form a random community liable to be pulled asunder at any moment.[23] Those languages, "blown together by the wind", do not form part of civilized world history. Therefore, the formerly postulated equal value of the German language was transformed into a higher value, which led to the thesis on the right of the German nation to take over the scepter of humankind's progress. In order to stake such claims, one needed the philosophical historical reinterpretations that would make a cultural nursery of Europe out of a nation, which at the time appeared to have no profiled character.[24]

Such translations of defects into advantages, typical of all trauma narratives, usually bloom in times of bitter political disappointment. The German self-aggrandizement around 1800 is proportional to the feeling of inferiority that underpins it. "If Germans are thus proclaimed as *the* specialists for humanity *(das Menschheitliche)*, then the next step is within reach, to see the others as superficial in the construction of the building of humanity. The rest of Europe is relegated to passive bystanders."[25] What therefore involuntarily affiliates the German Romanticists' ideas with those of the French Enlightenment—whom they charged with imperialism—is the common discriminating pattern of overcoming, rooted in the traumatic experience of the wounded or humiliated identity. All of a sudden, globalization and worlding exchange their attributes. The therapeutic imperative of overcoming one's insignificance underlies both the Enlightenment and Romanticism. By attempting to overcome my inferior self, I am trying to heighten the competitiveness of my community with respect to other communities.

---

22 To recall, the Germans for long centuries shared their imperial political space with various Slavic nations.

23 Schlegel, *Über die Sprache,* 302.

24 Fohrmann, "Geschichte der deutschen Literaturgeschichtsschreibung," 585.

25 Koch, *Weimarer Weltbewohner*, 241, trans. mine.

Naturally, the remedial techniques of coming to terms with one's own enforced indistinction gradually change through history. Consider my third case in point, i.e., the situation of East Central Europe after the dissolution of the German, Austro–Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian Empires in the aftermath of the First World War. Followed by the founding of new nation-states as well as successor states to these empires, it induced the region's traumatic post-imperial condition. With the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, Western nation-state powers introduced into the reconfigured East-Central European region the principle of national self-determination, which endowed each nation with the political right to establish its own autonomous state. Such national modelling of the religiously, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically hybrid East-Central European states was not a unilateral imposition, but a decision enthusiastically embraced by the carriers of their liberation movements, who regarded the emergence of new states as a welcome opportunity for their own political establishment. Although this geopolitical extension of the principle of national self-determination was expected to 'Europeanize' East-Central European states, it ultimately deepened their frustration. It firmly attached their peoples to the vague prospect of independence, which—due to their states' miserable social and economic conditions, poor infrastructure, unemployment, inflation, rigid and immobile social stratification, and corrupt and inefficient administrations—proved to be a mission impossible.

Late empires had already constructed their communicational, traffic, and mercantile networks in East Central Europe to improve the military control of their peripheral constituencies, to facilitate their economic exploitation, and to avert them from switching to other empires. Next to fostering the import of food and raw materials from these provinces,[26] late imperial traffic networks envisaged the subsequent export of finished products in the opposite direction. Although modernization claimed to be equalizing all its participants, thus it further deteriorated the economic imbalance between them.[27] The following message underlay the integration of imperial provinces: *Only those that succumb to it are regarded as progressive and modern*. Those that remain loyal to their odd traditional habits confine themselves to their self-enclosed localities, excluding themselves from the universal process of civilization. They are stigmatized as backward. This is how modernization put the imperial provinces under the pressure of accelerated adaption, which they, although poorly equipped, were forced to come to terms with.

However, faced with the pressure of 'egalitarian discrimination', they created their peculiar technique of survival. Imperial modernization involuntarily provided the common background against which the provinces could understand their

---

26   Barkey, "Thinking about Consequences of Empire," 106.

27   Berend, *Decades of Crisis*, 20–22.

differences and homogenize themselves.[28] Through the traumatic migrations induced by this modernization, they had the opportunity to make acquaintances with many other provinces that had hitherto been barely known to them. Although the encounter was sometimes uncomfortable, discouraging and even terrifying, considering the geopolitical, religious, cultural, and linguistic differences that separated imperial provinces from each other, it enabled provincial communities to strengthen their resistance to the centres' discrimination by forging alliances with those who were equally subjected to it. Uniting with them into sacrificial communities against the common oppressor, they disregarded the huge differences among them.

Their interlocking took the shape of an operation, which in his ground-breaking analysis of colonial circumstances, the Indian-British post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha described as "subversive mimicry".[29] In terms of Bhabha's analysis, by copying the colonizer's manners the colonized inadvertently parodies them. The colonized subjects fails in their reiterated attempts to erase the difference that separates him from the colonizer. Although they strive to adopt the colonizer's achievements, they cannot but reaffirm this difference.[30] To be sure, the population of European imperial provinces already subverted modernization by adopting its achievements. To illustrate, the railways that were built to enable the centres' economic expansion gradually turned into instruments of the periphery's resistance, through various diversions and sabotages.[31] Provincial elites that were educated in imperially established provincial schools, or in the imperial centres themselves, engaged this knowledge for their opposition to them.[32] If the idea of this education was to differentiate imperial *societies*, provincial elites used it to homogenize their *communities*. The modern invention of society thus inadvertently became "the condition for the more exact profiling of the concept of community, inasmuch as it could now advance into a collective name for all that cannot be subsumed in the concept of society."[33]

The delineated operation of subversion by adoption—or worlding by globalizing—which was already germane of imperial peripheries, re-emerged in the new nation-states after the breakdown of the empires. However, if in the late empires it was carried by the national elites as the victims of imperial centres, in the new nation-states their carriers became these elites' victims or subalterns. In the outcome, across post-imperial East Central Europe that had been expected to assimilate into West

28   Evans, "Joseph II and Nationality"; Cornwall, "The Habsburg Monarchy," 174–75.

29   Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 94–132.

30   Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 122.

31   Schenk, "Travel, Railroads."

32   Barkey, "Thinking about Consequences of Empire," 110.

33   Rosa et al., *Theorien der Gemeinschaft*, 37–38, trans. mine.

Europe by establishing its nation-states, hybrid communities arose as the zones of "national indifference"[34] or intra-active transnationality. Operating as the untranslatable residues of national translations, they developed a sort of *intra*national "vernacular cosmopolitanism"[35] against the imperial *inter*national cosmopolitanism (in the form of nation-states' interaction). Gradually, the proliferation of these "zones of indistinction" subverted the nation-based integrational platform. According to the American anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli, "zones of indistinction" are reservoirs of suppressed possibilities that distribute their potentiality into the social aggregate that they are (an unacknowledged) part of. In such a way, they set in motion this aggregate's spectralization and disarticulation.[36]

By enmeshing a multiplicity of small worlds into an interactive totality, transborder sacrificial communities created an alternative model of worldly mutualism. This is how the energy of longing for imagined homelands along the lines of elective affinities disaggregated the law of belonging to the given nation-states. A series of prominent contemporary political theorists interpret these internal "pockets of resistance" to guided unification as direct outcomes of "egalitarian discrimination" characteristic of modernization's globalization. In their view, the collateral effect of the production of the modern world is the would-be humans, the spectral humans, and the non-humans who are prevented from becoming legible within the established space of humanity.[37] In order to rescue themselves from this humiliating situation, these "outcasts" and "misfits" generate their alternative models of being-in-common.

However, while identifying with their 'stranded comrades' across the newly drawn state borders along national, religious, class, gender, ideological, and/or cultural lines,[38] the engineers of transborder communities exposed the states they were affiliated to to gradual compartmentalization and disintegration. By knitting together various frustrations and promising a remedy for their heterogeneous victims, they managed to mobilize masses for their agendas.[39] In this way, the initially emancipating cross-national communities that came into being amidst the newly established

---

34   Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities."

35   Bhabha, "Culture's In-Between."

36   Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment*, 3–4; 11–13.

37   Agamben, *Economies of Abandonment*, 121; Esposito, "The Person and Human Life," 209; Butler, *Precarious Life*, 92.

38   National minorities identified with the representatives of their external native countries, religious minorities with the representatives of their confession in other countries, oppressed workers with foreign workers, oppressed women with foreign women, frustrated fascists with foreign fascists, and avant-garde artists with their like-minded colleagues in other countries.

39   Hanson, *Post-Imperial Democracies*, xvi.

national communities perverted into a populist enterprise. While creating the new kind of human togetherness out of their "zones of indistinction", their 'engineers' took recourse to the past narratives of victimhood because of their potential to galvanize heterogeneous 'addicts'. By establishing such an affiliation to the past, besides the state, religious, cultural, ideological, and linguistic boundaries, they also transgressed those of historical epochs, disregarding a series of important differences between their communities' extremely heterogeneous constituencies. Consistently relying on such indistinct analogies, they for example identified with the founders of great religions whose martyrdom had once mobilized the frustration of various victims.[40] By merging the deeply rooted religious patterns with the new socialist, fascist and nationalist agendas,[41] they energized the new states' victims to join the hatred against the allegedly perennial 'torturers' that, in their turn, were equally indiscriminately amalgamated. The invoked indistinct communities were directly placed at this hatred's service. In a word, if West European nation-states engaged communicational, traffic, and commercial mobility for the *individual differentiation* of their societies, East Central European nation-states used it for their communities' *collective homogenization*, which was based on an undifferentiated demonization and exclusion of others. Rather than being distinct, subtle, and clandestine, their amalgamated and radical sacrificial narratives defined perpetrators and victims in clearly bipolar, antithetical terms.[42]

Yet, only a few decades thereafter, in the aftermath of the Second World War that induced the traumatic dissolution of West European colonial empires, decolonization made obvious that such grave malformations of human togetherness did not reside exclusively in East Central Europe as West Europeans proclaimed in the interwar period. Suddenly, it turned out that the great West European nations' distinctive identity was also based on the proliferation of 'zones of indeterminacy' outside Europe. The unexpected dissemination of these external zones, which gradually penetrated the former imperial centers in the aftermath of the Second World War, gradually disaggregated West European 'mentoring' nations. After the colonial atrocities had boomerang-like returned into the heart of Europe, as epitomized by the Holocaust, the entire Europe entered the turbulent post-imperial condition. Through its internal imbalances, fissures, and divisions it was forced to confront the consequences of its imperial past. The recent rise of populist and fascist ideologies as well as secessionist developments, both within the European Union and outside it, testify that this confrontation is far from being finished. It requires to be carried on in new, widened, and substantially revised terms.

40   Mylonas, *Serbian Orthodox Fundamentals*, 7–8.

41   Berend, *Decades of Crisis*, 201.

42   Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory*, 16–19.

This means that Europe has to face the "zones of indistinction" both within and outside as its probably inassimilable but nonetheless constitutive parts. Their incommensurability does not index an absolute otherness but rather a traumatic proximity. The "zones of indistinction" inhabit Europe as its unprocessed residue that contaminates its distinction, subverts its self-sufficiency, and pollutes its ambitious projects of deterritorializing the human belonging. The traumatic proximity of Europe and its "zones of indistinction" implies an uneasy cohabitation. However, there is no evidence that Europe has faced, let alone accepted this challenge.

Literature

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Alexander, Jeffrey. *Trauma: A Social Theory.* Cambridge–Malden, MA: Polity, 2012.

Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism.* San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich, 1979.

Barkey, Karen. "Thinking about Consequences of Empire." In *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building. The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*, edited by Karen Barkey and Mark van Hagen, 99–114. Boulder, CO–Oxford: Westview Press, 1996. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429494222-8

Barnard, Frederick M. *Herder, Nationality, Humanity, and History.* Montreal–London–Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780773570917

Berend, Ivan. *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II.* Berkeley–Los Angeles–London: University of California Press, 1998. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520927018

Bhabha, Homi. "Culture's In-Between." In *Questions of Cultural Identity,* edited by Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, 53–61. London: Sage, 1996.

Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture.* London–New York: Routledge, 1994.

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence.* London–New York: Verso, 2004.

Cornwall, Mark. "The Habsburg Monarchy." In *What is a Nation? Europe 1879–1914,* edited by Tymothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson, 171–92. Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Douzinas, Costas. *Human Rights and Empire: The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism.* Milton Park–New York: Routledge–Cavendish, 2007. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203945117

Esposito, Roberto. "The Person and Human Life." In *Theory after 'Theory'*, edited by Jane Elliott and Derek Attridge, 205–20. London–New York: Routledge, 2011.

Evans, Robert J. W. "Joseph II and Nationality in the Habsburg Lands." In *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs: Essays on Central Europe c. 1683–1867,* by Robert J. W. Evans, 134–46. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199541621.003.0008

Febvre, Lucien. "Frontière: The Word and the Concept." In *A New Kind of History and Other Essays*, edited by Peter Burke, translated by K. Folca, 208–18. London–New York: Routledge, 1973.

Fohrmann, Jürgen. "Geschichte der deutschen Literaturgeschichtsschreibung zwischen Aufklärung und Kaiserreich." In *Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Germanistik im 19. Jahrhundert*, edited by Jürgen Fohrmann and Wilhelm Voßkamp, 576–604. Stuttgart–Weimar: Metzler, 1994. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-476-03523-3_14

Hanson, Stephen E. *Post-Imperial Democracies: Ideology and Party Formation in Third Republic France, Weimar Germany, and Post-Soviet Russia.* Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511781391

Herder, Johann Gottfried. *Frühe Schriften 1764–1772*, edited by U. Gaier; *Werke in zehn Bänden*, edited by Martin Bollacher et al., Vol. 1. Frankfurt an Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985.

Herder, Johann Gottfried. "Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie." In *Sämtliche Werke,* edited by Bernhard Suphan, Vol. 12. Berlin: Weidmann, 1877.

Koch, Manfred. *Weimarer Weltbewohner: Zur Genese von Goethes Begriff 'Weltliteratur'.* Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2002. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110953503

Kristeva, Julia. *Strangers to Ourselves*, translated by Leon S. Roudiez. London: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Mylonas, Christos. *Serbian Orthodox Fundamentals: The Quest for an Eternal Identity.* Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2003. https://doi.org/10.1515/9786155211201

Pheng, Cheah. *What Is a World? On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature.* Durham–London: Duke University Press, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822374534

Povinelli, Elisabeth. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism.* Durham–London: Duke University Press, 2011. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822394570

Rancière, Jacques. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, translated by Julie Rose. Minneapolis–London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Rancière, Jacques. *On the Shores of Politics*, translated by Liz Heron. London: Verso, 1995.

Rosa, Hartmut, Lars Gertenbach, Henning Laux, and David Strecker. *Theorien der Gemeinschaft zur Einführung.* Hamburg: Junius, 2011.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. "Considerations sur le gouvernement de Pologne." In *Discours sur l'économie politique, Projet de constitution pour la Corse, Considerations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*, edited by Barbara de Negroni. Paris: Seuil, 1990.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *On the Social Contract*, edited by Roger D. Masters, translated by Judith R. Masters. New York: St Martin's, 1978.

Schenk, Frithjof Benjamin. "Travel, Railroads, and Identity Formation in the Russian Empire." In *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands*, edited by Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz, 136–51. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Schlegel, Friedrich. "Geschichte der neuen und alten Literatur." In *Kritische Ausgabe*, edited by Ernst Behler, Vol. 6. Munich–Paderborn–Vienna: Schöningh, 1961. https://doi.org/10.30965/9783657778065

Schlegel, Friedrich. *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Inder*. Sämtliche Werke 7. Vienna: Klang, 1846.

Wolff, Larry. *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.

Zahra, Tara. "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis." *Slavic Review 69, no. 1* (2010): 93–119. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0037677900016715