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# Cultural Nationalism: The Last Resort of Scoundrels

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# **CULTURAL NATIONALISM: THE LAST RESORT OF SCOUNDRELS**

ERIC JONES

*This is the text of the Chancellor Dunning Trust Lecture as it was delivered on Oct. 4, 2006. As a public lecture, it has no footnotes.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Economists have never been able to persuade the public to reason the way they do themselves. Among the laments of the profession is that protectionism is perpetual, though what this really means is that advocacy for it never quite goes away. It does not mean that trade is actually grinding to a halt nor that calls to block competition are not sometimes ignored. Yet, besides real increases in expressions of economic nationalism, there has lately been a change in the sector of the economy for which protection is especially sought. Moreover, whatever its target, protectionism readily aligns with collectivist and interventionist politics, and that really does seem ceaseless. A Dunning Lecture is a fitting opportunity to expose these unhealthy tendencies.

Hence, while protectionism grumbles away in the background of public life and its moralizing stays much the same through the ages, the recent shift in emphasis has been from demands for the protection of manufacturing towards demands for protecting cultural industries. This is partly an adaptation to the changing structure of the economy. And although demands for the protection of agriculture have continued unabated, even there the grounds have been cannily amended to suit modern tastes such as media-driven concerns for the environment and nostalgia for old rural ways of life.

Global information technology has opened the once-exempt interests of cultural producers to foreign competition and inspired them to resist further change. This means trying to frustrate cultural competition behind a smokescreen of appeals to the public interest. Special interests in the cultural industries ally with political factions that would like to replace the holders of power with others more to their taste. The struggle between globalisers and anti-globalisers is sharply

polarising. This was foretold several years ago. Soon after the dissolution of the USSR, *The Economist* published a perceptive letter saying that the battle between Smith and Marx was over but the battle between Smith and List had only begun.

We are confronted with what David Henderson calls New Millennium Collectivism. Henderson thinks the concerted result of beliefs, influences and pressures has intensified the collectivism that threatens liberty as well as the material gains of free trade. His explanation refers to old themes such as distrust of market solutions, ‘unreflecting centralism’ (that is, exaggeration of the actual and desirable role of the state), and failure to grasp that the role of profits is to induce socially desirable risk taking. Among the new themes he mentions are the multiplication of NGOs and the spread of global Salvationist ideas.

We may add that interest groups in the business sector seem to have become running dogs of interventionism partly because they fear that free trade lets in foreign competitors and undermines their own position. Economists, who admire the power of the market and are impressed by the triumph of international economic integration, underrate the dangers of a return to regulation. Replacing the market by lobbying is the great danger: we may wake up to find our actions and choices heavily circumscribed. In short, we face a modern wave from the old restless sea of protectionism, a variant of the ancient theme that in its new guise urges the need to protect not merely traditional manufacturing, but intangible cultures.

## THE HISTORY OF CULTURE

Let us start with the history of culture. The important feature to note is that cultures are constructs. They are always changing and many of them, or many of their parts, are much more recent in origin than they look. Alfred Marshall memorably observed, ‘short-lived man has little better means of ascertaining whether custom is quietly changing, than the fly, born to-day and dead to-morrow, has of watching the growth of the plant on which it rests.’ Protecting cultures as they exist at a given moment is arbitrary and tries to freeze history. It may well prove to be futile but that does not mean it will be costless.

When cultures seem not to have changed over long stretches of time we are probably witnessing one of two phenomena. First, we may not have adequate records to determine subtle shifts in something as indeterminate as culture: this is especially likely to be true for non-Western societies. Alternatively, culture may not have changed much because it was not much stimulated. The point is made for China by Richard Wilhelm: Chinese economic psychology, he remarks, remained

unchanged for thousands of years because it was adapted to conditions that did not change much. In reality Chinese history was far from devoid of change, but as a first approximation Wilhelm's point is well taken. I agree with him that culture is largely reactive and not the prime determinant of economic life.

Published literature gives precedence to the Great Traditions, that is to the main civilizations and religions, or rather the organised churches, as they are portrayed in written texts. They are depicted as finite, fixed, solid, permanent and inalienable. But this violates real, existing history. The evidence has to be searched for but there are to be found subterranean currents, interpenetrations, loose, ambiguous and multiple allegiances, and liminal expanses of space and time. To imply otherwise is as if to imply that no one can speak more than a single language. Ian Buruma refers to the idea that civilisations must necessarily be at odds with one another as Manichaeism. Although the Clash of Civilisations debate promoted this zero-sum view, and it is popular with politicians, journalists and lawyers, it does not exhaust the possibilities and is conspicuously unhelpful.

The Little Tradition, i.e. how people really behaved when freed from the demands for unqualified loyalty made from above by church leaders and secular rulers, was more amorphous than the texts tell us. People draw back into ghettos with their own kind when they are frightened but otherwise they start to meld with one another. The Slovakian anthropologist, Dusan Deak, shows that there were saints shared by Hindus and Muslims. A city like Benares is sacred to Hindus and Muslims alike. Christians and Muslims also shared sacred graves, in which each faith chose to believe lay the saint of its choice. The brand-new Islamic art gallery at the V & A reveals a measure of cross-fertilisation with Christian themes during what Europeans call the Middle Ages.

An excellent example of how malleable individual identity can be when the authorities leave people alone is given by William Dalrymple, speaking of the early modern interpenetration of European Christendom and the Ottoman empire. When one looks, he declares, 'the neat civilizational blocks imagined by writers such as Bernard Lewis or Samuel Huntington soon dissolve.' 'Imagined' may be a little extreme, though these authors may not have fully recognised that they are heirs to a cut-and-dried Victorian version of ethnic history, prisoners of long-dead scribblers so to speak. The need for teachers to simplify by referring to only a few categories reinforces the notion that there was a mere handful of discrete societies, civilizations and cultures.

When Dalrymple turns to India, interpenetration becomes literal. I refer to his book, *White Mughals*, and an interview placed on the web by his publishers. He shows that there was continual Hindu, Muslim and Christian crossover, with interbreeding and intermarriage between Europeans and Indians. This was not merely (as it was later) a matter of the unions between British Tommies and Indian women that generated the Anglo-Indians, nor was it simply concubinage; there were regular marriages between senior officials and Indian women of high Hindu or Muslim standing. Their children were routinely sent back to school in England. It is surprising how many prominent Victorian families had some Indian blood.

Two recent books develop similar themes. Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, stresses the ordinariness of European-Indian cultural and personal hybridisation in eighteenth-century India, while Pankaz Mishra, *Temptation of the West*, emphasizes the indeterminacy of cultural boundaries. Other writers have transposed what Dalrymple discovered, or rediscovered, to further regions. Thus Brian Sandberg writes of what he calls the ‘incredible’ fungibility of identities in the borderlands of the entire early modern Atlantic world.

In the case of India, ‘going native’, as it came to be stigmatised, began to get in the way of the careers of East India Company military and civil service personnel from the time of the Evangelicals. As early as 1814 the chapter on how to treat Indian women, sexually and socially, was edited out of the chief guidebook for the British in India. The new *apartheid* was reinforced after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, when the annual ‘fishing fleet’ of British women seeking husbands began to arrive in India and started to press for exclusive rights to the available European men.

According to Dalrymple, the cultural *apartheid* of the ninety years of the Raj, or Sarkar, between the Indian Mutiny and Independence was the historical exception. In reaction against it, anti-colonialist Indians codified Hinduism in the sense that Christians would recognise a creed. Hence the form of modern Hinduism is to a degree a by-product of contact with the West, as is Shinto. Religion was aligned with emergent Asian nation-states and previously soft sectarian boundaries began to harden (though the tendency was reversed in Japan after the war, when state Shintoism was dismantled by MacArthur and the proliferation of new sects known as the ‘rush-hour of the gods’ began).

Extremists and fundamentalists insist on exclusive adherence, and nationalists prefer it, as if the only face we should have is our religious or sectarian one. Amartya Sen’s recent *Identity and Violence* expressly urges that single identities imprison the individual. Contrast his latitudinarian view with the fright and anger behind the debate on Fox

television in the U.S. as to whether the Koran is like *Mein Kampf* and ought to be banned.

A moment's thought shows that we all possess multiple identities, just as we adopt different registers of speech according to our audience. Moreover, it is a distortion to believe people necessarily compartmentalise themselves into ethnicities, religions and nations, an approach we might term 'central message stereotyping'. Even in England religious adherence was far more fluid in earlier centuries than official versions of Christianity suggest; the signs are not in church history or religious texts but in unnoticed monuments in the churches.

If the cross-cultural examples cited still seem marginal, as opposed to the history of standoff and conflict among the world religions and secular polities, this partly stems from relying on formal sources generated within those bodies. The documents and books are bound to be concerned with celebrating orthodoxy and reporting turf wars among major social groups. What goes on around the edges, sometimes large-scale social revolts, is allowed to go down the Orwellian memory hole. Scholars easily overlook what is not reported in writing.

My point is a simple one, so simple as to escape notice: it is that when they have the chance individuals start to shrug off their indoctrination and trespass outside the boxes to which officialdom finds comfortable. They form attachments to individuals of other cultures and faiths, and bring about a mingling. During much of history people have not been given the chance to choose freely – they have too often been bullied, indoctrinated, frightened or bewildered - but this tells us nothing about what their unconstrained behaviour might be. As John Anderson commented on reading a draft of this lecture, if cultural behaviour were not malleable, religious and secular authorities would not strain so much to channel behaviour nor stamp down so hard on deviations.

## RECURRENT PROTECTIONISM

Let us return to narrower economic forms of exclusion. The most celebrated thesis on economic slowdown remains that of the late Mancur Olson. In *The Rise and Decline of Nations* (1982), Olson urged that interest groups, like trades unions and chambers of commerce, proliferate in stable economies. These organisations, which he called distributional coalitions, admit no limit whatsoever on how much they will take out of society's common pot. They reduce the capacity to adopt new technologies or reallocate resources in response to changing circumstances. This depresses the economy's efficiency and output.

Because the process is automatic in stable systems, economic success must bring failure in its wake. The inexorable grip of what

economists call rent-seekers will be broken only if and when an upheaval sweeps away the institutions diverting effort from growth into struggles over who gets what. This thesis was eye-catching because Olson – who started with the saloon bar question of why, since they had lost the war, Germany and Japan were then winning the peace – predicted that these countries too must ultimately strangle themselves. Until the late 1980s the former Axis powers seemed so successful that few believed Olson’s prediction. Some businesspeople carried into this millennium an unqualified admiration of Germany and Japan, especially faith in Japanese managerial superiority.

Whether or not growth-impeding coalitions necessarily multiply in stable times, when there is little to curb their influence, they undoubtedly emerge in times of crisis. It would thus be easy to believe that both prosperity and recession foster protection. As Stanley Jevons observed back in the 1880s, ‘all classes of society are trades unionists at heart, and differ chiefly in the boldness, ability and secrecy with which they push their respective interests.’ But to see nothing other than economic distortion is too despairing. Competition among rent-seekers cancels out many of their efforts. If free trade and free thought had not often won, our industries would still produce coaches and crinolines, maybe stone axes. We would not be benefiting, despite everything, from an enormous expansion of foreign trade and international factor movements.

## PROTECTIONISM REVIVED & PROLONGED

The longevity of protection for agriculture has been remarkable, particularly when we consider the low and falling number employed in farming in developed countries and hence the sector’s limited voting power. The depressions of the late nineteenth century and interwar years of the last century established agricultural protection in continental European countries. In Britain its revival was delayed by the difficulty of reversing the 1846 Repeal of the Corn Laws: public concern for a ‘cheap loaf’ remained paramount for many decades. Protection was however smuggled back during the nineteen thirties, wholeheartedly adopted after the war, and entrenched once Britain joined the Common Market in 1973. In the OECD as a whole, transfers from consumers and taxpayers still account for one-third of farm incomes, unchanged in 2005 from 2004.

Without the Common Agricultural Policy, farm subsidies and tariffs might not have survived as long as they have, since for at least a dozen years before 1973 they already imposed a heavy and needless burden on the consumer, as well as on farmers in the less-developed world whose entry to European markets was impeded. By the late 1990s governments affected to find the costs of domestic overproduction



insupportable and the times seemed once more to be catching up with the agrarian protectionists. It was at this point they made a crafty sideways shift to what is called ‘multifunctionality’. This is defined as the creation of any unpriced spillover of benefits additional to the provision of food and fibre – i.e. the provision of public goods such as environmental values, rural amenities and cultural values, besides rural employment and development, all of which were declared to be desirable regardless of cost. Indeed, official agricultural statistics costed none of this, at least in Britain.

These multifunctions were supposedly supplied free as a positive externality of farming. As excess physical production and the massive fraud engaged in by farm interests became embarrassingly conspicuous in the EU, its agricultural interests, as well as those in Switzerland, Norway and Japan, began to demand that these less familiar ‘services’ be paid for. The assertion was made that letting the countryside fall out of production must be ecologically damaging: if you’ll believe that you’ll believe anything. Farming is explicitly described, not as an industry, but as a lifestyle to which incumbents have a right. The public evidently has no sense of agriculture’s effects in restricting access, maintaining social inequality and damaging the environment; the UK Environmental Agency, for instance, points out that agriculture destroys value overall, notably because of the costs to the public purse of keeping the water supply free from chemical run-off.

The switch to insisting on the protection of rural cultural values via ‘multifunctionality’ was astutely timed because affluent urban consumers were increasingly demanding tourist services of the countryside. They put an option value on the rural landscape. What they want are views, cafes and the pretence of national food security. Yet a picturesque countryside, rustic lifestyles and modern intensive farming are not compatible. Under protection, the choices among them must end up being decided by non-market, i.e. political, means, which keeps the farm gate ajar for rent seekers.

## CULTURAL NATIONALISM

Cultural protection in its present vociferous form dates from the 1990s. It had of course existed before and disputes over what was then called ‘the audio-visual exception’ almost derailed the Uruguay Round of world trade negotiations that began in 1986. By the nineties developed countries were creating much higher shares of employment in creative services than before: in the US there are now twice as many people employed as in the 1980s (40m as against 20m) and the sector accounts for almost half of all wages and salaries earned, while in Britain cultural services are still growing at eight per cent annually, far faster than the

economy as a whole. As Imre Salusinszky says, in the 1990s cultural producers and trades unionists sensed the shift in mood away from automatic support for manufacturing industry. They began to base their arguments squarely on cultural and national identity. These considerations may tug at the heartstrings but what gains them particular support is the shifting composition of employment.

Neither culture nor identity is closely specified. Both seem to be whatever you, or your friendly corner polemicist, want to make of them. Cultures are far more syncretic than is usually admitted. And if the concept of the nation seems definite, this is largely because it suits people to ignore the way nations too are historical constructs pieced together from job lots of humanity. As Ernest Renan said, a nation is, ‘a group of people united by a mistaken view about their past and a hatred of their neighbours.’ But even here there is an assumption that a category like ‘national culture’ is sharp-edged, which is misleading. The defining characteristic of a nation is not who is admitted but who is excluded; the problem is not so much where to draw the line as that there is really no precise place where it can be drawn.

I do not deny that even if one has wide sympathies – and countries like Canada and Australia have been outstandingly generous to immigrants – groups of people located in particular places create social capital that an influx of strangers may dilute. Not everybody can be permitted to share what others have built up; and some of the generosity might be better devoted to building up the home economies of would-be immigrants rather than stripping them of their best human capital. Nevertheless my main point remains that groupings like cultures and nations are contingent. It seems unreasonable to take them, rather than individuals, as life’s fundamental building blocks.

In the social sciences cultural explanations are once again rising in popularity. They take cultures as fixed and thus dehistoricize them, making it hard to recognize the fluidity of change. Much of this ‘cultural turn’ implies a world divided, and properly divided, into national cultures, each of which is *ipso facto* worthy of protection by ‘cultural diversity’ policies, despite the fact that parity of esteem would prevent one condemning Hitler’s Germany, Stalin’s Russia or Mao’s China. As Terry Eagleton, Professor of English at Oxford, says, ‘if cultural diversity is part of what makes life worth living, it has also brought a great many lives to a bloody conclusion.’

In reality cultural diversity policies are aimed at fending off American competition, especially from Hollywood, and at debarring competition from ‘Anglo-Saxon’ countries in general and their devil’s instrument, the English language. The effect can be only to suppress exchanges and cross-fertilisation. No wonder that the Americans held

out against UNESCO's clumsily titled 'Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression' of 2005. The wonder is that other Anglo-Saxon countries could not see far enough in front of their noses to side with the Americans. The treaty, which is so blatant in its protectionism that only the farm lobby could match it, was sponsored by France (no surprise there) and Canada (which has an unfortunate history of cultural protectionism *vis a vis* the United States). The British ambassador to UNESCO provided an endorsement to the effect that the treaty is consistent with international law and human rights, apparently without considering the commercial implications. At least Australia had the grace to abstain. For most governments cultural protection is a blind spot; those that pride themselves on their economic liberalism typically remain protectionist over culture and seem not to notice the contradiction.

Whatever the fancy justifications for their form of global apartheid, cultural nationalism and cultural protectionism fragment humanity, segment markets, and diminish creative exchanges. They circumscribe individual choice and the individual is taxed for the privilege. Wherever they gain the ascendant they hit the poor consumer.

Historians do not agree about nationalism, whether it comes about top down and is constructed by the state or whether, as the perennialists say, the pertinent cultural complex predates the formation of the state. Either way, national identity and the protection of its symbols are not genetic attributes of our species. They are ideological and therefore contestable. The cultural diversity treaty seeks to exclude such challenges by striking a deal, a sort of mutually-assured isolationism: I will render what is due to your Caesar if you will render to mine.

I have found nothing except *ex cathedra* pronouncements that (in the words of the French Minister of Trade), 'the protection of national distinctiveness is important' or Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's, 'the disappearance of nations would impoverish us no less than if all people were made alike, one character, one face.' The Frenchman was as usual trying to preserve the special position of his country, all of a piece with the 1793 proposal by the painter David that a huge statue of Hercules be erected in the centre of Paris to symbolize the French as 'a race of giants.' Solzhenitsyn was hoping to revive pre-Revolutionary Russian Orthodoxy and nationalism and one may fear that his wish is coming true.

Nationalism produces 'my country right or wrong' reactions, of which an example was when thousands of South Koreans posted on the web their support for the discredited stem-cell researcher *whether he was going to turn out right or wrong*, simply through pride at thinking their land in the forefront of biotech research. With attitudes like this,

perceptions of the past become vital for justifying the present and future. East Asia is full of claims and counter-claims based on the happenstance of remote precedent. By vaunting the arrangements of some privileged period, these serve only to expose the contingent nature of history. Thus China has advanced territorial claims based on the existence of the kingdom of Koguryo, which covered northern Korea and Manchuria for seven centuries – though at the start of the last millennium. Unsurprisingly, South Korea rejects these claims.

Nationalism is one of the great fragmenting forces in world affairs. Dick Stroud's marketing studies show that the French, above all others, express aversion to new technologies, new brands and new life experiences – the diametrical opposite of Australians, whose interest in these things actually (and exceptionally) increases with age. The French writer, Pierre Manent, complains in *A World Beyond Politics?* published this year by Princeton, that the construction of the European Union – surely more a French project than anyone's – undermines the sense of nationhood. In a flat assertion typical of this topic, he describes nationhood as the most important sense of identity in a fast-globalizing world. Part of his objection seems to be to the dilution of Europe as a Christian club, especially by the proposal to incorporate Turkey. This is all about teams, portrayed as indispensable. The EU is a league of teams. The reality is that the component teams are starting to subvert the European league now that their individual interests are threatened.

The editor of the European edition of the *Financial Times* argues that the welfare statism with which European countries replaced militarised states after the war was falling out of favour by the mid-1970s but the post-statism that followed is reaching its limits today. His case seems to be that as problems of pollution, terrorism and so forth mount at the global level, only the state can protect the individual against them. But who has actually suggested privatising, say, anti-terrorist policy-making or handing it over entirely to the EC? The nation-state is not really under threat; for one thing the share of GDP taken in tax is not falling. The issue is just how intrusive and all embracing we want the nation-state to be. Do we really wish to treat it as the default option, surrendering to it all functions other than those specifically exempted, or do we merely want to opt in, as it were, when collective action promises to be more efficient than individual initiatives and market solutions?

Globalisation might be expected to have reduced the appeal of nationalism and the scope for intervention. But greater competition compresses the space for monopolists and rent seekers and this is what has provoked the backlash. In addition, more bureaucrats can be afforded in prosperous times (the French employ 12,000 cultural bureaucrats); their *raison d'être* is to *administer*, whether or not any need

for intervention genuinely exists; and thus they offer patronage and grants to some enterprises rather than others.

At any one date national cultures may be distinct but they have not and do not remain unchanged through time. Nationalists wish to freeze the passing moment. They claim for their current national cultures a sort of holy uniqueness, despite the fact that each and every one continues to be built up by adoptions from others. All cultures are syncretic and none the worse for it. American culture, above all, is created by endless immigrant streams and the mingling of their ideas. The same is evident, though to a lesser extent, in smaller and poorer new countries like Australia and Canada. Syncretism is present in old countries, too, but buried deeper in their histories.

### EXPLAINING THE EXCLUSIVENESS OF NATIONAL CULTURES

How did national cultures come to be so venerated? Theodore von Laue suggested that insisting on the uniqueness (and presumably the incompatibility) of cultures is a reaction on the part of peoples frightened by modernism, egged on by writers who rationalise the fear, supported by the self-interested (like France's cultural bureaucrats), and promoted by politicians who capitalise on fear. The current wave of cultural nationalism seems to stem from the threat to elites from the renewed integration of the second globalisation boom. Cultural producers feel less secure from foreign competition than hitherto.

Von Laue was thinking of German history. Late eighteenth-century Germany felt English competition sorely and its response constituted one of what he called the counter-revolutions set off by the modernizing of the western fringe of Europe. The English thought the world would copy them and the sequence of industrial follower countries partly bears them out. The notion of rule-bound, limited government and the rights of the individual also captured many minds.

The American Revolution rested on Lockean principles, whereby political power is delegated to governmental institutions by individuals. The French system followed Rousseau's alternative principle in which individual rights are subsumed by government. Abridgements of legislative power by individual rights are viewed as anti-democratic - restraints on the general will expressed through popular representation and majority rule. This is a sort of divine right of government. The illiberal democracies springing up in the developing world similarly ride over individual rights, though this is not apparent from their rhetoric. In the developed countries professional initiative is being replaced by bureaucratic regulation in the name of the mass electorate and its lobby groups.

In 1781 Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), poet and historian, wrote to a friend about the University of Jena, where he was thinking of accepting a chair. He was clear that his intellectual freedom would be protected at Jena, not by fine-sounding proclamations but because the governance of the university was divided among the four Dukes of Saxony. Economists find it natural to accept Schiller's faith in competition whereas others prefer political and legal promises, which they trustingly accept as guarantees.

Schiller's near contemporary, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), took the opposite line and laid the basis for German nationalism. He provided the justification for national separateness by attacking claims to universality on the part of western European society. Herder dreamt up the notion that each people possesses 'a unique collective spirit (and) also an inherent right to it.' He treated 'peoples' as utterly and permanently separate nations. He introduced biological analogies to describe nations, without seeing that these are only metaphors, and inappropriate ones at that. Nations do not die in the same way as organisms. Peoples, nations, are not essentialist categories, they are social and political constructs.

In my view, Schiller had the right of it. Constrained competition among western countries by and large shielded them from extreme particularism. They continued to borrow and learn from one another. The collectivist arrangements of Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy proved to be near-fatal deviations from the European norm, disastrously imitated (or at least the Soviets were imitated) by the first generation of independent ex-colonies. Thus inspired, India chose autarky after Independence and between 1947 and 1992 grew only at the slow rate of 'Hindu economic growth'. Its planned economy was overwhelmed by the complexity of the economic system, despite efforts to reduce this by impeding foreign trade and investment, and curtailing the number of goods produced.

The glorification of indigenous roots, as von Laue put it, is an attempt to counter the modernizing revolutions. The present conservative reaction in parts of the Islamic world may be seen in this light. The second globalisation boom presents Muslim countries with an intense challenge to modify, strengthen and confirm the essence of their cultures and Faith. In East Asia there is likewise a struggle over the onset of pluralism, though that region has been more open to foreign influences, which have indeed conducted to its economic growth. Growth tends to encourage pluralism, without absolutely guaranteeing it.

Von Laue's view was not entirely new. In *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945), Karl Popper presented history as a struggle between tribalism and civilization. By referring to hostilities within as well as

among civilizations, he revealed the ubiquity of conflict between modernity and reaction. Popper wrote that his book was meant to demonstrate that ‘civilization had not yet fully recovered from the shock of its birth – the transition from the tribal or closed society, with its submission to magical forces, to the “open society” which sets free the critical powers of man.’ The book ‘attempts to show that the shock of this transition is one of the factors that have made possible the rise of those reactionary movements which have tried, and still try, to overthrow civilization and to return to tribalism.’ The shock of the second globalisation boom is having a similar effect. In many places, Britain for example, the melting pot is working better than the contrary incidents beloved of the newspapers would have us think. Nevertheless, sixty years after Popper, strident voices are again risking a great deal for us all by celebrating the differences rather than the commonalities among the world’s people.