
Understanding the Sources of Anti-Westernism: a dialogue between Jan Nederveen Pieterse and Michael A. Peters

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MP: Anti-Westernism is a widespread phenomenon in the world today. It is complex and takes many different forms including most prevalently anti-Americanism and anti-science. In this context notions of *Orientalism* and *Occidentalism* occur. Curiously, while many in the West do not subscribe to Samuel Huntington's view regarding a 'clash of civilizations', fundamentalist Muslims and Islamists emphasize the Islamic world's clash with Western civilization. Of course, much of this anti-Americanism is based on aggressive American foreign policy in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. I think it is important to analyze the sources of anti-Westernism especially in the context of what you have called a 'global rebalancing'. Can you say how your recent works bears on this question.

JNP: I'm not sure it's widespread; many are just tired of the West. Anti-Americanism was strong in 1980s and 1990s and has been shrinking. Anti-science is increasingly rare too. In emerging societies the key mottos of advancement are science and innovation. This doesn't sound right. Huntington inspired the American neoconservatives in their foreign policies and new wars; and American media without exception interpreted 9/11 through the clash of civilizations lens. It's practically irrelevant. Short version: while the US obsesses over the Middle East, Islam etc., emerging societies from Brazil, South Africa to China are interested in new dynamics and forces and deal with an entirely different global horizon. They're not interested in anti-Westernism; that vastly exaggerates the importance of the West. They're interested in pragmatic cooperation but worry about American policies, the US dollar.

MP: OK let me reformulate the anti-Westernism thesis to get the conversation going. Some recent work like Cemil Aydin's (2007) *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: visions of world order in pan-Islamic and pan-Asian thought* demonstrates that the Eurocentric global system we see in transition today carries with it a legacy of resistance and change from an earlier era. Aydin looks back at the period between 1880 and 1945 to an era marked by the heights of late European imperialism in order to understand resistance to Western globalism. Others like Melinda Cooper have reflected on the convergence of revolutionary anti-capitalism and moral fundamentalism in the contemporary Islamic revival. Still others suggest that Western scholars have interpreted criticisms of the West by Islamist and Middle Eastern intellectuals as expressions of anti-modernism and anti-globalization aimed at the attempt to fashion an alternative global modernity. Buruma and Margalit (2004) in *Occidentalism: a short history of anti-Westernism* argue that the idea of 'the West' in the minds of its self-proclaimed enemies is still largely unexamined and woefully misunderstood and they tell us that the 'venomous brew' of Occidentalism consists of four main elements: hostility to the city; revulsion for the material life; abhorrence of the Western mind; and hatred of the infidel. There are

plenty of sources that document the forms of anti-Westernism in various parts of the world and indeed though wrongly it is a form of anti-Westernism that often informs forms of post-colonialism. This anti-Westernism has in the past taken the form of anti-modernization that is equated with anti-Westernism, the rejection of modernity because its core values and institutions are redeemably Western and tied historically to forms of colonialism. Today it seems that some of the strongest critics of the West are indicating possibilities of multiple or alternative modernities; yet with the rise of the rest and the decline of the West the tenor of these arguments has changed somewhat. I am interested in trying to understand anti-Westernism in its historical forms, its continued prevalence today, and the way in which many on the Left who are themselves Western embrace a form of anti-Westernism and even anti-science.

JNP: From Herodotus to Pliny, the ancient Greeks and Romans invariably found monsters on their far-away shores, which was not a good sign. The Crusades were not a great success either. The Jesuits were kicked out of sixteenth-century Japan because they were 'too Christian'. In the late eighteenth century, the envoy of the British monarch to the Chinese emperor encountered total lack of interest in English goods. But in the course of the nineteenth century relations changed drastically and several nonwestern countries actively sought to adopt European technologies and reforms, such as the Ottoman Tanzimat reforms, Egypt and Persia seeking to industrialize, and Japan sending out missions to the West.

At the turn of the century and into the twentieth century, relations changed again. Decolonization became the dominant strain and the vast bloodletting of the two world wars dramatically undermined Europe's prestige as the harbinger of civilization. When Gandhi was asked what he thought of Western civilization, he replied that it would be a good idea. In the 1970s during the waning years of decolonization, dependency thinking, turning against neo-colonialism, became a major motif. This included cultural components such as resistance against Coca-Colonization. In time this spread to McDonaldization, Barbiefication, Disneyfication, all ordinary motifs, also within the West. In Iran after the Islamic revolution 'westoxification' became a theme and there were similar sensibilities among Islamist movements. Yet, of course, some of the same movements accepted American and Western support in the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

I note then in anti-Westernism as a theme the following problems. First, presentism – the implicit assumption that only developments since recent decades matter (or at most from the late nineteenth century). Go back in time and many generalizations simply don't hold. Second, bundling – the category of 'the West' glosses over differences between Europe and the United States and over different strands and dimensions of (critique of) Western influence. Third, the risk of stereotyping is not far off. Because the West = modernity and modernity = science, anti-Westernism quickly turns into anti-modernity and anti-science. From there it is a small step to the white man's burden. Fourth, to most literature you cite there is a both a regional, the Middle East, and a time element, the 1980s-90s. We are then in the neighborhood of the 'clash of civilizations', which is a thoroughly discredited thesis. Fifth, if some so-called anti-Westernism is a response to Western Orientalism and Western double standards in the Middle East and in relation to Israel, some literature you mention may be viewed as pro-Israeli pushback and as part of a game of mirrors. Sixth, these questions have been largely overtaken by the Arab Spring, which is driven by 'post-Islamic' social forces, essentially a new urban educated middle class. Seventh, finally, to the theme of anti-Westernism there is a binary structure, for or against, which is limiting in itself. It ignores intertwining. I have made this a key motif in globalization, arguing that 'globalization is braided' (notably through East-West osmosis, which is the theme of a new chapter in the 2010 edition of the book *Globalization and Culture*).

MP: Yes, I agree that the concept of the West is semantically highly unstable and that it has a long history where it has changed its meaning over time: from Charlemagne, Christendom and the Holy Roman Empire to the constitutional integration and enlargement of the EU. I realize that we are dealing here with representations and semantic categories sometimes promulgated by religious authorities and sometimes developed under the influence of philosophy. So for instance Christendom from the Latin word *Christianus* really meant the Christian body (polity) and suggests a global community of Biblical Christianity which has also geopolitically taken on a kind of cultural hegemony in the West. Early Christendom defined itself against forces in the Greco-Roman world

although the post-apostolic era in my view could not be usefully discussed in terms of 'West' and emerging anti-Western sentiments but I do think that when Christendom in the period of the Renaissance came to refer to a theocracy and sociopolitical unity based on Christian values then it also become possible to talk of the 'West' at least in terms of one set of emerging references. It is also possible given this historical entity to talk of anti-Western sentiments which is the basis of some aspects of present accounts on the Left to criticize Judaic-Christian culture by the likes of Žižek, Badiou and others. This tells us that both 'the West' and 'anti-Westernism' are strongly ideological and historical where meanings are fluid and open to change. We might even use Charles Taylor's 'social imaginaries'. I have argued for this kind of approach in a number of publications. I make clear that I do not hold Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis in any shape or form although the term has come to be accepted by 'fundamentalists' just as 'orientalism' as Edward Said (1995) tells us was adopted by Islamists contrary to his intentions as a form of anti-Westernism.

I would say that the meaning of 'the West' gets another set of references and emerges strongly in relation to a concept of modernity at the hands of German philosophy and historiography in the nineteenth century. Hegel's philosophy of history was instrumental in creating this concept of the West and we have been living in its shadow for some time. I begin an essay on this subject with this thought:

The concept of 'the West' has served important political purposes both historically and in the present foreign policy context. On the one hand it has been a cultural and philosophical unity achieved through an active historical projection back to the origins of Western civilization, at least to the classical Greeks, while on the other, it has been used as a modernist category, politically speaking, to harness the resources of Enlightenment Europe as a basis for giving assurances about the future of liberal democratic societies and the American way of life. The concept was an implicit but key one assumed in an influential analysis of new world order by Samuel Huntington (2001), who in his *The Clash of Civilizations* predicted a non-ideological world determined increasingly by the clash among the major civilizations. In Huntington's analysis 'the West' functions as an unquestioned and foundational unity yet the concept and its sense of cultural and historical unity has recently been questioned not only in terms of its historical fabrication but also in terms of its future continuance. Martin Bernal (1991, 2001) in *Black Athena* and a set of responses to his critics, questions the historical foundations of 'the West' demonstrating how the concept is a recent fiction constructed out of the Aryan myth propagated by nineteenth-century historiography. Even more recently, accounts of the so-called 'new world order' have emphasized either the dominance of an American hegemonic Empire (Hardt and Negri, 2000) or an emerging EU postmodern state system (Cooper, 2001). These accounts offer competing and influential conceptions of the 'new imperialism' based on different visions of world government and proto-world institutions. They give very different accounts of questions of international security, world order and the evolving world system of states. (Peters, 2003)

I would follow Bernal's analysis against Huntington, although much more has to be said about forms of Western racism. I do think also that Weber gives another kind of stamp to the notion of the West in the 'Introduction' to *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* where he states his belief in the cultural specificity of the West in terms of a process of rationalization and 'disenchantment of the world' that sets the West apart from the East and, indeed, the rest of humanity:

A product of modern European civilization, studying any problem of universal history, is bound to ask himself to what combination of circumstances the fact should be attributed that in Western civilization, and in Western civilization only, cultural phenomena have appeared which (as we like to think) lie in a line of development having *universal* significance and value. (Weber, [1920]1992, p. 13)

As you well know he characterizes the West in terms of a process of rationalization, a kind of 'metahistorical teleology'.

My aim in this dialogue with you is not to assert the categories but to investigate their changing forms and also to use the opportunity to explore this theme in relation to your work as a world scholar on globalization – the 'decline of the West and the rise of the rest'.

JNP: The pattern of conversation is that you keep reinvoking the West and while noting the instability of the category, keep going back to it nonetheless. That is understandable because you establish it as the premise of the discussion. So be it, however, I find some references anachronistic.

First, re Christianity and the West: In seventh-century Europe, Christian means urban and is equivalent with modern (*modernus*), in contrast to rural, hence 'pagan' derives from *paysan*. In the Renaissance 'the West' does not figure as a theme or topos. In relation to the Americas there is mention of the New Golden Land, i.e. a recovery of the golden land dreamt of in ancient times (Herodotus), as in Hugh Honour's book.

You write, 'when Christendom in the period of the renaissance came to refer to a theocracy and sociopolitical unity based on Christian values then it also become possible to talk of the "West"'. This is a stretch too far. The link between Christianity and the West emerges only AFTER the West is established as a theme and framework, mostly in the twentieth century.

Second, re Hegel and the West: There's no category of the West in Hegel either; his typical categories are history, progress, development, *Zeitgeist*, the role of the state. Europe does come up, in relation to other continents, but not the West.

These links (Christianity, Hegel) seek to give the West a deep historical philosophical grounding, but I think the references are wrong. You note, 'The concept of the West ... has a long history where it has changed its meaning over time: from Charlemagne, Christendom and the Holy Roman Empire to the constitutional integration and enlargement of the EU.' None of these, however, are relevant to 'the West'. The West does NOT have a long history. The condition of emergence of this theme is recognition of North America as a significant and equivalent civilizational sphere, which happens only at the end of the nineteenth and mostly from the beginning of the twentieth century. Thus, the West is largely a twentieth-century theme which has two meanings: a civilizational sphere, comprising Europe and North America, and a geopolitical unit that takes on meaning in the context of the Cold War; hence the East-West relationship, with the East bloc and the Western world, the Warsaw Pact and NATO. Later, after Said's *Orientalism*, the East takes on a different meaning. In this setting terms such as 'Western racism' become appropriate. Retroactively also Christianity is associated with the West, which is later modified to Judeo-Christianity.

I do agree with the link between modernity and the West, notably in Weber. In relation to Europe this takes shape in the nineteenth century, but in relation to the West this takes shape in the twentieth rather than in the nineteenth century. Weber's work on the Protestant ethic refers primarily, of course, to differences *within* Europe, between northwest and Catholic Mediterranean Europe and has been criticized widely (e.g. Bryan Turner). Weber's large-scale comparative history of religions refers to Europe rather than the West. Weber's work has deeply Eurocentric traits.

On the theme of modernity and the West: as first-comer to modernity Europe has monopolized the definition of modernity, but it doesn't 'own' modernity and the new perspective is modernities in the plural (to which I have devoted several articles).

You further note: 'more recently, accounts of the so-called "new world order" have emphasized either the dominance of an American hegemonic Empire (Hardt and Negri, 2000) or an emerging EU postmodern state system (Cooper, 2001)'. These points refer to the US and Europe, not to the West. Both are rather behind the curve and overlook the new emerging configuration with emerging markets as the drivers of the world economy.

Finally you refer to the 'decline of the West and the rise of the rest'. The rise of the rest (Alice Amsden coined the phrase) is a paraphrase of the rise of the West. The decline of the West is not a necessary accompaniment to the rise of the rest. Second, decline may be too strong a term. Third, let's be cautious of 'declinism'.

MP: Yes I am trying to establish the concept of the West as the premise and possibility of a certain kind of discourse: I am not trying to establish its truth, I am trying to establish its sources. I am adopting a historicist approach to the discourse of the West and want to show that at different times it is portrayed or characterized differently. I have not given any indication as to whether I agree with these. I agree with these representations only that they exist and change and that the representations have multiple sources: in the concept of Christendom, in nineteenth-century German historiography, in Hegel, in Weber, in Spengler, in Heidegger and many others in the

twentieth century, including Stuart Hall and Edward Said. In each case to establish what these thinkers say is a difficult task because there are contradictions in their thought and because interpretations of their 'views' also change. In Hegel's case a particular view of idealism influences how we should view Hegel's metaphysics and its connection with history and the idea of historical development or progress especially teleological views of history. When I say 'the West' has a long history I do not mean in a continuous unchanging sense only that we can see pre-existing elements of the discourse that go back to a distinction among Abrahamic religions. Where you say the concept really only takes hold in the twentieth century I am happy to work with that periodizing; and we seem to agree on the link between 'the West' and modernity which is where I want to go because without prejudice I want to investigate the discursive and historical links among a series of family-related concepts that establish valances among 'the West', modernism, and modernization (sometimes also specific forms of the West, like 'Americanism', 'Eurocentrism', maybe 'ethnocentrism') and their binary oppositions: anti-West, anti-modernism, anti-modernization, etc. I am not embracing the binary opposition simply noting that binaries often exist as a means for the production of discourse. I mention 'new world order' at a second time removed from the texts I discuss, i.e. both Cooper and Robert Kagan refer to a split in the West during the period where Rumsfeld refers to 'old Europe'. I am happy to be suspicious of 'declinism' which is a great point but I want to know something about this discourse (elements of its production) especially given that it is a prevalent mood among the discourse-mongers in the US at the moment.

Let me ask you to elaborate further on the discourse of decline and perhaps its sister concept, that of crisis. I am trying to find a more direct way back to your work.

JNP: About the West and modernity let me note it is an overworked theme. It goes back to the Enlightenment, is thematized in Marx (modern capitalism, etc.) and looms large in sociology, particularly in Weber (modern bureaucracy, the modern state), and in the distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, which is taken up in American structural functionalism. All of this is well known. A further development of course is the postmodern turn. Secondly, modernization looms large in modern development studies. I've written about this extensively and can't repeat it here (notably in *Development Theory: deconstructions/reconstructions*, Sage 2010, 2nd edition). What these discourses share is Eurocentrism.

'Decline' in my view is too simplistic. Amid the ongoing process of global rebalancing some strata and classes win even as particular Western countries lose in a general sense. The US and UK will go some notches down, but not Wall Street and the London City. What decline means here is greater social inequality. The pattern of private wealth and public squalor, Galbraith's point, will become more sharply profiled. Northwest Europe and Japan are in a different situation. Mediterranean Europe is different again.

MP: This is helpful because it seems to me in these overworked discourses in sociology one also gets a notion of anti-modernity, where anti-modernism forms a strata and leitmotif that takes decline as its core and emerges with the realization that technological development and 'progress' has its dark side that has destructive consequences for nature, culture and religion. These anti-modernisms within modernity emerge in the nineteenth century with Thoreau, Ruskin, and William Morris and in the twentieth century with T.S. Eliot, Rainer Maria Rilke, and W.B. Yeats who seem to articulate a voice of *cultural* decline as a direct result of industrial modernity. Wittgenstein, in some ways like Nietzsche and Heidegger, sees himself and his work as trying to avoid the nihilism that industrial-scientific society represented. In this context of anti-modernism the term 'postmodernism' at the hands of Lyotard becomes more easily understood. There are of course forms of anti-modernism that critique the cultural wasteland (Eliot) and other forms that champion the notions of arts and crafts (Ruskin, Morris) against the 'alienated labor' of the capitalist factory. Some beginning from radical features of ecology or environmentalism or Christian theology head in different directions. Ecological anti-modernism seems to view modern technoscience as a species of symbolic capitalism that always survives on exporting its environmental costs and disputes the concept of 'science'. There are also violent forms of anti-modernism. Is it true to say that all these versions also share Eurocentrism as a fundamental premise? What is Eurocentrism if not a form of anti-modernism? Can you also say something more about 'decline' within the processes of global rebalancing.

JNP: The category anti-modernism doesn't work for me. We should distinguish between an internal critique (accept the overall premises) and an external one (overall rejection). Most instances you cite seem to me internal critiques of modernity and are in that sense negotiations of modernity, not rejections. Industrialization causing dislocation is a familiar trope from the Luddites to Dickens, *Two Cities*, and Cardinal Newman. The first origin of development thinking is here: development is needed to mend the dislocations that industrialization brings. Technology bringing alienation is familiar from Marx onward, yet Marx was also an arch-modernist (Berman).

Some forms of modernism (Huysmans, trends in avant-garde art) reject modernity. Indeed, we should distinguish between modernity (a condition) and modernism (art, style), just as we distinguish between postmodernity (condition) and postmodernism (philosophy, art, style).

Some of the themes of modernism resonate with the tropes of decadence, decay that reflect the crisis of aristocracy – for the rise of the modern was also the decline and fall of the *ancien régime* of nobles, monarchy and the church, a decline that lasted well over a century, with dramatic cultural ramifications, as in Shelley, *Frankenstein*, *Count Dracula* and images of the 'dark castle'.

So to 'the modern' there are several variations: early modernity, high modernity, late modernity, critical modernity (Frankfurt school, critical theory), modernism (art and philosophy of 'willing the modern'), postmodernism, postmodernity. The latest turn that I find interesting and productive is modernities-in-the-plural, a theme more radical in my view than postmodernism. I don't agree that anti-modernity is Eurocentric; on the contrary, most variants of modernity are Eurocentric.

Global rebalancing brings decline in some places (especially US, UK and the PIGS: Portugal, Ireland, Greece, Spain); mostly moderate adjustments in others (northwest Europe, Scandinavia and Japan), and opportunities or boom in emerging markets.

MP: I agree that we can make a distinction between 'internal' and 'external' critique and it seems to me that a number of strands in modern Western philosophy, those represented separately by Nietzsche, Heidegger and Wittgenstein are forms that reject underlying premises and therefore provide example of external critiques. It is interesting because we can see some interesting results when we trace the contemporary lines of these investigations in the work of post-Nietzscheans, post-Heideggerians, and post-Wittgensteinians. I think we can find some forms of external critique in radical ecologism that begins from the premise that industrialism is functionally opposed to the preservation of nature and that surfaces in various Earth Summits from the early 1990s and in rejections of 'sustainable development'. There are extreme examples in Theodore Kaczynski's *Industrial Society and its Future* and in the Earth Liberation Front. Speaking of religious-based forms we might recognize both Islamic fundamentalism of the kind embraced by Sayyid Qutb and Catholic anti-modernism of Pope Pius X. The Oath Against the Errors of Modernism was issued on 1910 and continued to be taken until 1967. The 'sin' of modernism had been defined in the encyclicals *Pascendi Dominici gregis* of 1907 and *Lamentabili Sane*.

I very much like your comments and your work on multiple or new modernities that transcend and in some cases seek to advance theory with the explicit aim of unseating Eurocentrism. These are so to speak forms of world-making that are taking place in the global south that go against the classical theories of modernization and the convergence of industrial society to explain the history of modernity as a multiplicity of cultural programs. The notion was useful when it emerged in the early 2000s to break the easy association between modernization and Westernization. Yet I still have some problems with the concept, even if we admit capitalisms in the plural, of the extent to which modernities can be different. Of interest here is the uncoupling of democracy with capitalist-driven development in China. It would be good to hear your thoughts on these questions.

JNP: Yes probably Nietzsche's critique is an external one. Given his classical philology background the decline of aristocracy is an important undercurrent in his work. Heidegger strikes me rather as an internal critique. In his case, southern German Catholicism (*Lebenswelt*) is a subtext, as in phenomenology generally. As to Wittgenstein, the various Viennese schools, from psychoanalysis and linguistics to economics, are surely internal critiques of modernity.

Some strands of radical ecology, such as deep ecology, resemble of course Luddism. There are interesting parallels between Roman Catholic and Islamic takes on modernity; both defend a medieval political economy and social cohesion against modern trends. Yet the Catholic Church came around in the early twentieth century, took up modernism and then participated actively also in electoral politics; there are counter-instances to the ones you cite. The influence of the Center Party in Germany is a case in point, as are Catholic trade unions, newspapers and broadcasting in many European countries. Likewise, most forms of Islamic fundamentalism are of course thoroughly modern in outlook, so represent internal critiques. Islamic Jacobins is the appropriate terminology.

On the uncoupling of democracy and capitalist-driven development in China, a few notes. First, in development studies there is a decades' long debate on what comes first, development or democracy. The usual answer is development first; development is a precondition for democracy, not the other way round. When a middle class develops and pays taxes it becomes concerned about the quality of government and accountability. So China's approach simply matches that of most developing countries. Second, at some stage this will become a growing constraint. In China there are discussions about how far in the 'dynastic cycle' the CCP government is and a growing number argue it is past midway. Third, most important is the CCP's ability to deliver development and to include the majority in growing prosperity; the 12th five-year plan of March 2011 is a major step. At this stage this is more important to China than democracy Western style. Fourth, internal dynamics matter most. Just as China develops capitalism with Chinese characteristics, in time it will develop democracy with Chinese characteristics. This is the gist of the modernities perspective.

MP: Nietzsche, Heidegger and Wittgenstein are what I would describe as anti-philosophers who have at least this in common, that they are battling against the tradition of Western metaphysics, trying to get rid of metaphysical conceptions altogether and replace it with something different like 'historicism' and 'thinking' (Heidegger) or 'radical contingency' (Rorty). Thus Nietzsche and Heidegger talk of the 'end of metaphysics' and each tries to define what should follow philosophy in the West as the 'spirit' and unity of Western culture. For Heidegger it is a form of post-philosophical thinking which he explores in the essay 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking' (1969) that involves and is based upon a rethinking of Western metaphysics and its development in Western technology: 'We are thinking of the possibility that the world civilization that is just now beginning might one day overcome the technological-scientific-industrial character as the sole criterion of man's world sojourn.' What is interesting in his analysis for me is that he raises the possibility of something different: 'Perhaps there is a thinking which is more sober-minded than the incessant frenzy of rationalization and the intoxicating quality of cybernetics'. Heidegger points to a form of education. Wittgenstein also struggles against metaphysics – not so much Plato's dualism as Descartes' – and tries to rid us of 'pictures that held us captive'. Actually I must say the internal/external critique does not fit easily with these thinkers in my view.

Is this now the end of the Western, Christian, liberal worldview such that it becomes just one among a number of others? What are the consequences?

JNP: This response changes the terrain of discussion from modernity (internal/external critique) to philosophy: that all three object to the tradition of Western metaphysics is true but refer to a different subject matter. So I have no response here (but I'm thinking of Antonio Damasio's book, *Descartes' Error*).

This, then, is a different 'West' than the West discussed above; this West is, again, equated with Christian views – which I think is misplaced and anachronistic (although the Pope would probably agree); and with liberal views – which has some validity, but only if we also take on board the dark side of liberalism (as in colonialism and J.S. Mill; note the critical analyses of Parekh and Mehta).

Is this worldview becoming one among others? Of course it is. Surely the fading of Western/American hegemony implies the fading of Western/American ideological hegemony and its assorted claims. What has been strangely missing in this discussion so far is who is asking the question? What positionality is involved here (as they ask in standpoint theory)? If this is considered from the point of view of formerly colonized peoples, of those who have been on the receiving end of Western double standards and complicity with autocracies (Middle East), of the Washington

consensus, IMF conditionalities and structural adjustment (developing countries), of Western 'humanitarian intervention' (conflict zones, now zones of uranium munitions pollution), of CIA interventions, whether or not under the guise of 'human rights' and the National Endowment of Democracy, of vanity wars of American hegemony, the answer probably is good riddance. What are the consequences? Well, it includes a pretty cleanup.

MP: OK I am used to thinking about modernity in these philosophical terms, even though the 'West' here overlaps and takes on different hues with other definitions. The positionality angle is important because it implies a consistently historicist and situated condition yet I have to note that the viewpoints of 'formerly colonized peoples' are radically diverse – clearly some involve anti-Western sentiments while others willingly remain within the liberal fold and old networks despite the formal post-colonial political phase and move to independence. I certainly do not want to defend any version of Western-US hegemony or the historical plight of colonies yet I do want to understand analytically the sources of anti-Westernism, especially among the left in the West who are among those historically sensitive to double standards and the effects of power. Can I tempt you to make one further statement about the 'cleanup'?

JNP: At the end you ask the same question you started with, which leads me to wonder what has been the point of this exercise? Did we have a discussion or what? You ask me questions but you barely react to my responses. I simply don't know whether you agree or not. At times you change the subject (as in the shift from modernity to philosophy), leaving the conversation unfinished. You agree with positionality – but you note diversity. But positionality implies diversity – why else would people's standpoint matter? You keep coming back to 'the sources of anti-Westernism', even though I have refuted the category of anti-Westernism.

You ask me to elaborate on the cleanup: I think it should include the cleanup of Western paranoia, which is arrogance in disguise. After all we have contributed the world's leading values, the values of liberal democracy, but what we get in return is ingratitude. Decoded: the barbarians are at the gate! The whole premise smacks of a profound lack of reflexivity.

MP: The point of the interview is really to gauge your thoughts. I'm happy to respond to any questions and to elaborate responses to aspects we have discussed. Let's extend this interview into a conversation and pursue this further. I guess I have a different reading of modernity because I see it as a philosophical issue. Indeed, the philosophers I study – Nietzsche, Heidegger and Wittgenstein ('prophets of postmodernity') – and the Continental tradition I see in relation to modernity. At the level of theory here the respect for disciplinary boundaries means little to me. I agree that positionality implies diversity and this is consistent with my historicist orientation (in fact I wrote a paper on positioning theory once!).

My position of anti-Westernism is to try to understand it as a category – how it has behaved, what kind of discourse it is, why it emerges in different forms at different times, how significant it is in the contemporary world. This was ostensibly the topic for discussion. I'm not sure what it means to say 'I have refuted the category of anti-Westernism.' You have proposed some arguments against it as a category, right but it exists as a discourse in a complicated relationship with anti-modernism, anti-modernization, anti-colonialism, anti-globalization, anti-Europeanism (or Eurocentrism), anti-Americanism, and anti-Western science. I am not saying that all of these are the same but that they belong to a set of discourses that exist. I want to understand the materiality of these discourses without wagging my finger. In other words, I do not want to take a moral attitude toward them but rather treat them as object of analysis.

Let me explain my position that this interview has enabled me to clarify in my own head. On the question of anti-Westernism I am a realist, materialist and a historicist. I am a realist in that I believe that West/anti-West is an effective historical category that while dynamic and taking different forms nevertheless correlates with a series of other dualisms and oppositions that together make up a mosaic of discourses that represent real political forces and have real political consequences. I am a materialist and realist in the sense that I believe that this opposition is accessible scientifically through the study of the mosaic of discourses that comprise it and that these discourses refer to extra-discursive features (practices and institutions). This mosaic of discourses includes specific forms of anti-Westernism – e.g. anti-Americanism and anti-Europeanism – that

can be studied through understanding forms of ethnocentrism (Americentrism, Eurocentrism). It includes aspects associated with the history of the West – precisely modernism, modernity, modernization – so that in the discourse appears anti-modernism, anti-modernization, anti-modernity – especially as these are seen to represent Western, secular and rationalist values. It is evident also that specific historical periods and forms of development occasion a negative assessment – anti-colonization, anti-capitalism, anti-globalization. There are other expressions of oppositional attitudes to Western rationalism and science – anti-rationalism, anti-science, anti-technology. There are other forms that developed around liberalism and liberal modernity, specifically anti-liberal movements, forms of anti-secularism, movements associated with the critique of liberalism giving expression to forms of post-liberalism. One current of anti-Westernism and anti-liberalism has its source in the West as a critique of Western metaphysics most influentially advanced though in different ways by Nietzsche, Heidegger and Wittgenstein. Each in turn struggling with European nihilism wants to provide a way forward and this is why I call them ‘prophets of postmodernity’. There are other sources of anti-Westernism that originate in the Western academy as a critique of the West’s Enlightenment legacy and much of what is called post-structuralism falls into this category – the postmodern critique of Enlightenment values of scientism, instrumental rationality and ‘progress’. Much of post-colonial criticism insofar as it also originates with Foucault’s assessment of Western modernity is also motivated by similar moves. There are still also neoconservative critiques of contemporary liberalism going back to Leo Strauss that also might be argued to belong to this source. Other currents typically originate outside the West specifically as religious and sometimes fundamentalist oppositions to Western values and these should be seen as country specific – Russia, the radical Islamic and Muslim jihadist elements, Asian countries, and so on – particularly when considered say in relation to anti-Americanism.

We should not dismiss Occidentalism simply as a feeble counterpart to Orientalism, especially if, as Ziauddin Sardar (2004) argues, ‘Anti-American and anti-Western sentiments are not going to evaporate. Occidentalism seems poised to become the dominant discourse of the future. This means that attempts to theorise, understand and do something about it will become more common – and more necessary.’ He makes the point that ‘The history of orientalism dates back a thousand years. How old is occidentalism? What is the relationship between these two structures of perceiving the Other?’ I think this is a useful observation. Reviewing Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit’s (2004) *Occidentalism: a short history of anti-Westernism*, he writes: ‘It turns out that what these city-hating, anti-materialist, antirationalist occidentalists dislike most is “the selfish greed of capitalism, the moral emptiness of liberalism, the shallowness of American culture.”’ He makes the argument that Occidentalism cannot be equated with Orientalism: ‘Orientalism is a discourse – a coherent structure of knowledge through which the West has understood and represented the “Orient”, and through which the West produces self-confirming accounts of the non-west. Occidentalism is nothing more than a collection of a few pet hates, most of which, as the authors themselves admit, are entirely justified, given the excesses of the West.’ I am not sure that I agree with him here. He goes on to develop a series of contrasts: ‘orientalism is a discourse of power, with the strength of a dominant, globalised civilisation behind it. Occidentalism is the recourse of the powerless’; ‘Orientalism has a long history, dating back to the inception of Islam itself. Occidentalism ... is a relatively recent phenomenon in the non-west, emerging only after the Second World War’; ‘orientalism is deeply embodied in Western knowledge and disciplinary structure; it shaped disciplines such as anthropology and development studies, international relations and area studies, history and geography. There is not a single discipline in the world in which occidentalism plays an integral part.’

I like the last comment you make and agree that there are profound forms of Western paranoia that are founded mostly on ignorance and a lack of reflexivity. This is a kind of cultural sickness that is an extension of ethnocentrism which needs therapy and education. I am interested in your views on how we might treat the symptoms?

JNP: Re modernity then we follow different readings: sociological-historical perspectives and your philosophical angle (anti-metaphysical). We can just leave the matter here, or else follow a sociology of knowledge approach and delve into the sociology of anti-metaphysical views (i.e. the end or waning of the ancient regime in Europe). I think that makes sense and thus, sociological and philosophical approaches overlap.

As to 'anti-Westernism', your position is 'to try to understand it as a category' while I seek to refute it as a category. I think it had some relevance in the second half of the twentieth century (decolonization, dependency theory, the Iranian revolution) but has waned in importance and has no relevance per se. I have noted presentism, bundling, stereotyping, binarism, and redoing 'clash of civilizations' discourse, whose relevance has been overtaken by the Arab Spring.

Still in your view 'it exists as a discourse in a complicated relationship with anti-modernism, anti-modernization, anti-colonialism, anti-globalization, anti-Europeanism (or Eurocentrism), anti-Americanism, and anti-Western science ... I want to understand the materiality of these discourses without wagging my finger.' Michael, let me note that in doing so you are not just *observing* but are also *constructing* it as a category. Any analysis assumes and posits the 'existence' of its object of knowledge.

Breaking 'anti-Westernism' down in specific forms ('anti-Americanism and anti-Europeanism') is a step forward. The relations with the other discourses are contingent and occasional. You quite rightly refer to similar strands *within* Western thinking (such as 'neoconservative critiques of contemporary liberalism going back to Leo Strauss'), which confirms the instability of the discourses.

As to Western paranoia I think the key point is that Western power is waning and some Westerners look at rising powers as rivals, so their world horizon is one of 'present and imminent danger'. The 'rise of the rest' doesn't necessarily undermine the West but does affect its power monopoly and claims of civilizational leadership. Europeans tend to view this differently than Americans. Europeans have already long experienced decline of their power; for Americans this is a new experience. So yes it is 'founded mostly on ignorance and a lack of reflexivity' but it is a particular kind of unworldly ignorance. Does it need 'therapy and education'? That may be a bit like saying that those who fly the Confederate flag in the southern United States need therapy and education. It's not entirely untrue but it's not the first thing that comes to mind. And it comes after a hundred years or so of education already.

Further I generally agree with Zia's points on Occidentalism. Cheers!

MP: Well Jan, we have come a long way and many of the difficulties we encountered along the way – examples perhaps of 'talking past each other' are not just the result of disciplinary education but also of historical interpretation – got resolved once we grappled with the meaning of concepts and their place in current theory. I guess that fundamentally we do have a difference of opinion: unlike you, I do think that the category of 'the West' and even the trope of 'the decline of the West' (along with discourses that talk about the decline of Western metaphysics ... my passionate interest) will be around for a lot longer. More so indeed, I think that it is too early to talk of the 'end of the West'. I am grateful to you for such a spirited exchange that I enjoyed very much and also learned something from.

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