

Reflections on “the Present”

Culture. Politics. Globalization.

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Abstract

This is an inquiry into how aspects of the present human reality came to being and thereby also an investigation into limitations and potentialities of this “present”. An important argument in this essay is that there exists a mutually affective relationship between culture and politics and this relationship implies both possibilities and constraints. With this in mind I try to critically investigate the prospects of a future democratic “Cosmopolis”. A democratic “Cosmopolis” requires, as I will argue, a universal adoption of certain values. However, as people live their lives “in” different, particular cultures the universality required by a democratic “Cosmopolis” is unlikely to emerge unless a “global culture” is universally adopted. With the present state of human reality in mind the prospects of such a global culture are slight. An analysis of “the present” and how this came into being shows us that cultural particularity is likely to persist since the particular cultures “in” which humans are satisfy a fundamental human need and precisely the historical success of particular cultures in satisfying this need hinders the emergence of a global culture; with the intimate relationship between “culture” and “politics” in mind this means that the future prospects for a democratic “Cosmopolis” are dire indeed.

Keywords: “Culture”, “National imagination”, “Global culture”, “Cultural globalization”, “Cosmopolitan democracy”

Words:

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1 Introduction

The general aim of this text is to understand some of the fundamental features of the contemporary human world and how these might develop. There is also a more specific aim which is to examine the prospect for something that the contemporary world is not, namely a democratic “Cosmopolis”. Cosmopolitan democracy is an ideal that many contemporary scholars argue in favor of. In this essay I will not go into a moral debate about the desirability of this ideal; what I am going to do is to examine whether the future emergence of cosmopolitan democracy is plausible. In order to decide upon this I must devote much effort to an examination of aspects of contemporary human reality. My argument in this essay will be that without a far-going spread of a “global culture” the prospects for cosmopolitan democracy are slight. Contemporary human reality is a reality of particular cultures and, as I will argue, this state of particularity is not likely to develop into the universality required by a democratic “Cosmopolis”.

“Culture” is the most important concept in this essay and it will remain so during the whole argumentation. Culture is of major importance for the way we think and act and in order to understand human reality one must take this importance of culture into consideration. Because of this I will provide the reader with an initial definition of culture right from the start, this definition will be complemented throughout the essay.

1.1 The Cultural Being and His Culture

To start with it is fruitful to think about how peculiar we humans are. Just like other animals we have drives and appetites: we need to eat, drink and release our libido. However, when it comes to the satisfaction of the drives and appetites humans must appear as peculiar to other animals. An illustrative example is the whole bundle of rites that can encompass the satisfaction of hunger: the guests arrive at the restaurant where the waiter greets them welcome. The waiter takes them to a table on which a range of devices have been arranged in a certain way and while seated they are given a piece of paper from which they can choose different varieties of food available. After the guests have told the waiter what they want to eat the waiter lets the chef know the choices they have made and he cook and prepare the food accordingly. When the ingredients are cooked the chef arranges them on a plate in order to make the food look tasty and the waiter finally bring the plates to the table to let the guests eat the food they ordered. Now it is time for the rite of eating: seated and using the devices available the guests cut the food on the plate placed on the table into adequate pieces which are finally put into the mouth.

Many more examples of the peculiarity of humanity can be given: most of us go to a secluded place when we satisfy our sexual needs; some people “shake hand” when greeting each other; we always stand at the “right” distance when we are talking to someone – not too far away and not too close.

Another way in which we humans differ from other animals is how we react on stimuli. Imagine what would have happened if you attacked an eating lion and tried to steal his food: the lion would probably have counterattacked you and done whatever it took to recover his food. A human being often react very differently on the similar stimuli: a man who is robbed when he is carrying his food home from the grocery is very likely *regulate his impulses* and instead report to the police what has happened. The example suggests that we cannot, in many cases, use the results of animal experiments to understand much human behavior, this because the human responses to stimuli are not purely instinctive. But neither do all humans respond in the same way to the same stimuli: in some places a woman who is raped can later be killed by her relatives, not because they don’t love her anymore but because of the fact that the dishonored woman is know a threat to the family honor. The same rape would have caused very different responses from relatives in other places on Earth. Such facts are of course problematic for behaviorists within the social sciences: if the same stimuli causes very different responses from different “peoples” this suggests that there is a more fundamental level than observable behavior that need to be studied if we are to *understand* that very behavior which we can observe. That fundamental level is culture and the examples that have been illustrated above suggest that human beings regulate their behavior (mostly without reflection) according to the prescriptions of the culture in which the dwell and with which they are filled.

Cultural, and hence human, behavior is *meaningful* behavior. Clifford Geertz gives us a good example of meaningful behavior when he uses Gilberts Ryle's example of the difference between a twitch and a wink:

Consider [...] two boys rapidly contracting the eyelids of their right eyes. In one, this is an involuntarily twitch; in the other, a conspiratorial signal to a friend. The two movements are, as movements, identical; from an I-am-a-camera, “phenomenalistic” observation of them alone, one could not tell which was twitch and which was wink, or indeed whether both or either was twitch or wink. Yet the difference, however unphotographable, between a twitch and wink is vast; as anyone unfortunate enough to have had the first taken for the second knows.¹

A twitch is merely an involuntarily contraction of the eyelids explainable in purely physical terms. A wink, on the other hand, is a behavior which is *meaningful* and that cannot be explained in purely physical terms. A wink needs to be *understood* and can be so only in relation to a socially established code:

¹ Geertz, Clifford, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture” in Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973)

Contracting your eyelids on purpose when there exists a public code in which doing so counts as a conspirational signal *is* winking. That's all there is to it: a speck of behavior, a fleck of culture, and *voilà!* – a gesture.²

Clifford Geertz explicates things in an illuminating way when he defines the object of ethnography (i.e. “culture”) as:

[A] stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures in terms of which twitches, winks, fake-winks, parodies, rehearsals of parodies are produced, perceived, and interpreted, and without which they would not (not even the zero-form twitches, which *as a cultural category*, are as much nonwinks as winks are nontwishes) in fact exist, no matter what anyone did or didn't do with his eyelids.³

Behavior is only one aspect of humans which are culturally determined. In another part of this essay I will show that how humans think and conceive of the world is also determined by the meanings available and provided by the culture “in” which the human subject finds himself.

From the examples and arguments above we can conclude that human beings are cultural beings and as cultural beings they behave in *meaningful* ways that can be *interpreted* and *understood* by other human beings. Culture can be conceived of as an intersubjective structure and as such exists in the interaction between human beings. However, culture also exists in humans: in order to understand the intersubjective structure called culture humans need to internalize culture. Every fully developed human has internalized culture and is thus “filled” with culture. Hence, culture can be said to exist both outside and inside humans simultaneously. As an intersubjective structure culture is public and independent of the *individual* human: the individual is born into a culture that exists before him and which he internalizes.

But “where” then does culture exist? In what is culture *objectified*? If culture exists before and independently of the individual human it must surely have its existence in something objective, something objective that the individual nevertheless can internalize. That “objective something” is what we call “language”. It is in language that *meaning* exists and can be transmitted between persons. Language exists before the individual and when he learns his first language he also internalizes culture – he becomes a *human* (hence, cultural) being. Language in this sense is surely spoken and written language but it can also be for example bodily gestures, works of art and behavior in general since all of these are containers of meaning. From this point of view Ludwig Wittgenstein's arguments about language in his *Philosophical Investigations* tells us as much about culture as it does about language and it is to this work that we now turn.

Here I will concentrate on how Wittgenstein tries to show us how intersubjective understanding and transmittance of meaning is possible. How is it that A can understand what B means when B utter a specific sound? How is it

² Ibid: p.6

³ Ibid: p.7

possible that C can find a meaning contained in a contraction of D's eyelids? To answer questions like these Wittgenstein draws an analogy between language and game in his concept "language game". It is only *within* a language game that language becomes understandable; a trivial example can be when someone makes the sound "hum hum. How is it that people understand that when someone are uttering the sound "hum hum" the mean that "I want to say something"? The answer is that people understands "hum hum" because they are familiar with the rules of the language game within which "hum hum" is uttered. But how, then, do we learn the rules of the language game?

One learns the game by watching how others play. But we say that it is played according to such-and-such rules because an observer can read these rules off from the practice of the game – like a natural law governing the play. – But how does the observer distinguish in this case between players' mistakes and correct play? – There are characteristic signs of it in the players' behavior. Think of the behavior characteristic of correcting a slip of the tongue.⁴

The rules of how to understand and use a word is explained by other words but this presupposes that we already know the meaning of these explanatory words and the rules that govern their usage – and this can be repeated in infinitum:

Perhaps you say: two can only be ostensively defined in this way: "This *number* is called 'two' ". For the word "number" here shews what place in language, in grammar, we assign to the word. But this means that the word "number" must be explained before the ostensive definition can be understood.⁵

"This colour is called so-and-so", "This length is called so-and-so", and so on. That is to say: misunderstandings are sometimes averted in this way. But is there only one way of taking the word "color" or "length"? – Well, they just need defining. – Defining, then, by means of other words! And what about the last definition in this chain?⁶

Suppose I give this explanation: I take 'Moses' to mean the man, if there was such a man, who led the Israelites out of Egypt, whatever he was called then and whatever he may or may not have done besides." But similar doubts to those about "Moses" are possible about the words of this explanation (what are you calling "Egypt", whom the "Israelites" etc.?). Nor would these questions come to an end when we got down to words like "red", "dark", "sweet". "But then how does an explanation help me to understand, if after all it is not the final one? In that case the explanation is never completed; so I still don't understand what he means, and never shall!"⁷

⁴ Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Filosofiska Undersökningar* (Karlshamn: Thales, 1992), p. 37. *My translation from Swedish.*

⁵ Ibid: p.23-24. *My translation from Swedish.*

⁶ Ibid: p.24. *My translation from Swedish.*

⁷ Ibid: p.52. *My translation from Swedish.*

However, despite these philosophical problems it remains the fact that we do indeed understand each other, how can this be? This is not an easy matter to explain. Wittgenstein argues, as stated above, that we learn the meaning of the word by learning *how* the word is used. Just as we learn the rules of a game by participation so we learn the meaning and possible uses of word by participating in language. And thus:

[T]he term "language-game" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life.⁸

Examples of activities in which language is used can be: to give orders; to make a joke; to apologize; to show gratitude; to insult; and many more. Each of these activities has their own language game. The activity one does when one is uttering "hum hum" is *calling* for attention.

Language use is thus conventional and, in order to function, dependent upon the obeying of its rules. In this way intersubjective understanding and transmittance of meaning is made possible. But how did these rules get established from the beginning, how did the first consensus come by and why was the existing rules, and not different ones, chosen? Why does a wink designate something conspirational in some cases and not others? How can many Swedish people know that the expression "the ball is round" in fact *means* that in football every team has a chance to victory? How does the *necessary agreement* to adopt a certain package of rules arise? We are now at the most fundamental level, what Wittgenstein calls "form of life". The form of life is the necessary consensus underlying language, the unexplainable foundation on which all language games rest. The form of life is that *certainty* without which language would have been impossible:

That which must be accepted, the certain, – one could say are – forms of life.⁹

On different forms of life rest different language games which contains different meanings with the result that:

[O]ne human being can be a complete enigma to another. We learn this when we come into a strange country with entirely strange traditions; and, what is more, even given a mastery of the country's language. We do not *understand* the people. (And not because we do not know what they are saying to themselves.) We cannot simply find our feet with them.¹⁰

In addition to this quote from Wittgenstein, Geertz adds:

⁸ Ibid: p. 21. *My translation from Swedish*

⁹ Ibid: p. 260. *My translation from Swedish*

¹⁰ Ibid: p. 257 *My translation from Swedish*

Finding our feet, an unnerving business which never more than distantly succeeds, is what ethnographic research consists of as a personal experience; trying to formulate the basis on which one imagines, always excessively, one has found them is what anthropological writing consists of as a scientific endeavor.¹¹

Since culture is closely intervened with (one could say inseparable from) meaning and language broadly defined we can use Wittgenstein's insights when we are trying to make sense of culture. Thus, culture can be said to be: an *intersubjective structure* which have its objective existence in language broadly defined. Language defined in this sense is all containers of meaning such as: spoken and written language; bodily gestures; works of art; general behavior; and more. With help of Wittgenstein's terminology we can define culture as the form of life on which language games, and thereby, meaning ultimately depends. As a form of life culture is "that which must be accepted, the certain" which we cannot go beyond in order to find some ultimate foundation of meaning. As a cultural being man has internalized culture when he learned his first language, he is "filled" with culture. He thinks and acts in ways that are meaningful according to the culture within which he dwell and which dwells within him and as there are different forms of life there are also different kinds of humans.

The definition of "culture" presented here is an initial one that will be complemented in subsequent chapters. By giving this initial definition right from the start I think that I have provided some help for understanding the investigation that I am about to undertake.

1.2 My Type of Investigation

In proportion to the length of this essay this introductory part may strike one as too extensive. However, as culture and the notion of man as a cultural being is central to the argumentation I would have needed to elaborate the above argumentation anyway and by doing it right from the start I think that I have left the reader well prepared for understanding the specific task that I am now about to undertake.

What I am trying to do bear, I think, some resemblance to the undertakings that Michel Foucault sketches in one his manifestos: *What is Enlightenment*. Foucault argues that as subjects we are historically constituted, the meaningfulness of the way we think and act are historically determined.¹² As critique are about investigating the limits and possibilities of something Foucault's life-task is:

¹¹ Clifford Geertz, "Thick description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture", p. 13

¹² Foucault, Michel, "What is Enlightenment" in Foucault, Michel, *The Foucault Reader*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), p. 44-47

a philosophical life in which the *critique of what we are* is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.¹³

Such an analysis consists of a:

historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying.¹⁴

Foucault's position is quite consistent, I think, with my position presented above: since human beings are cultural beings they act and think meaningfully in ways that are available within their culture and since culture is something that evolves in history we can investigate the into historical conditions which limits and makes a certain culture – and thereby certain kinds of human beings – possible.

Such an investigation is similar to what I am going to undertake in this essay. However, I will not – as Foucault do – make a historical investigation in the sense of dealing with primary sources and I will not adopt his genealogical approach here. My investigation will use secondary sources and, while underlain by the philosophical presumptions stated above, will be more of a critical examination of different approaches to the human subject, culture, cultural change, politics and the relationship between these different aspects of human reality.

1.3 The Problems I Must Deal With

This is an essay within the field of political science and as such as such it critically examines politics. However, as will be shown throughout this essay, an important assumption of mine is that you cannot fully understand problems in one field of the social sciences without consulting other fields. I will argue that there is a fundamental and mutually affective relationship between culture and politics and that these two grandeurs need to be conceived in terms of each other. With this in mind I will examine the conditions of possibility for the emergence of cosmopolitan democracy. To do this I need to start by a “critique of the present” – that is, in Foucault's words, a “critique of what we are”¹⁵ – something that might make it possible to:

separate out, from the contingency that have made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think.¹⁶

¹³ Ibid: p. 50. *Emphasis added by me.*

¹⁴ Ibid: p. 46

¹⁵ Foucault himself often stated that he wrote histories of “the present”, he wanted to understand why contemporary human beings in western societies think and act as they do by investigating into the “historical apriori” that determines how contemporaries are “constituted as subjects”.

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment”, p. 46

After this critique of the “present” I must move on to examine processes that might have a potential to give rise to a new “present”. Is it possible, given the present “present” and its potentialities, to expect a new “present” where cosmopolitan democracy is an aspect?

My task is surely relevant especially if one have the contemporary debates about globalization as characteristic of our historical epoch in mind. For example, in *The Risk Society* Ulrich Beck argues that modernity has evolved into contemporary “second modernity” which is an historical epoch when global risks are constantly present, risks which demand global solutions.¹⁷ An argument here could be that in this global era when it is hard to determine from where problems affecting all people stem and how these problems should be solved the nation-state as a political community has become outmoded. One can ask, as David Held does:

How can problems such as the spread of AIDS, the debt burden of many countries in the ‘developing world’, the flow of financial resources that escape national jurisdiction, the drugs trade and international crime be satisfactorily brought within the sphere of democracy?¹⁸

The elaboration of the ideal of cosmopolitan democracy has been done very much in relation to questions like these. What, then, does the ideal entail? We can trace “cosmopolitanism” as far back as to the moral philosophy of the antique Stoics. According to their philosophy the individual not only belonged to his particular polis (e.g. Athens, Sparta etc.) but also to a wider “Cosmopolis” (the meaning of the Greek word “kosmos” was “world”).¹⁹ It is the belonging to “Cosmopolis” that is of significance here: according to the cosmopolitan ideal it is the individual that is the ultimate unit of moral concern regardless of his belonging to a particular “Polis” other than the “Cosmopolis”.²⁰ Hence, cosmopolitanism is not only a response to contemporary “globalization” it is also a moral ideal that has been elaborated, and is elaborated, by philosophers from the antiquity to the present.

With this in mind we can conclude that the ideal of cosmopolitan democracy entails a global political community wherein individuals are the ultimate decision-makers. Most scholars argue that this does not entail that all particular allegiances must be dissolved; there is still room for patriotic concern.²¹

¹⁷ Beck, Ulrich, *Risksamhället* (Göteborg: Daidalos, 1992)

¹⁸ Held, David, “Democracy and Globalization”, in: Archibugi, Daniele & Held, David & Köhler, Martin (eds.), *Re-imagining Political Community. Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy* (London: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 11-12

¹⁹ Fine, Robert & Cohen, Robin, “Four Cosmopolitanism Moments”, in: Vertovec, Steven & Cohen, Robin (eds.), *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism. Theory, Context, and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 137

²⁰ See for example: Tan, Kok-Chor, *Justice Without Borders. Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism and Patriotism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1ff; Benhabib, Seyla, “The Philosophical Foundations of Cosmopolitan Norms”, in: Benhabib, Seyla, *Another Cosmopolitanism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 149

²¹ See for example: Miller, Richard W., “Cosmopolitan respect and patriotic concern”, in: Brock, Gillian & Brighouse, Harry (eds.), *The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism* (New York:

Furthermore, there is no consensus among scholars of the exact composition of such a democratic “Cosmopolis”: should it be a unitary world-state? A world-federation? Or is it perhaps enough that existing global institutions are reformed? In which questions are everyone going to decide and in which questions are only some entitled to decision-making (i.e. how is the principle of subsidiarity to be employed)? These questions are open to debate and different scholars have proposed different answers to them.²²

I will not go into debate regarding how cosmopolitan democracy should be realized but I think that it is important to stress that even though cosmopolitan democracy can be differently realized it nonetheless implies universality. All members in “Cosmopolis” must adopt some universal values that cannot be questioned and here the problems begin because from “where” does one get these values? My opinion is that values are not “universals” that one “discovers”; values are something that is created within culture. This is not the same thing as to say that there are no values that all cultures share; that is an empirical question. Even so, it is my opinion that cosmopolitan democracy is not likely to work if there is not “global culture” since without it people are unlikely to agree on the *particular* universals upon which cosmopolitan democracy must build. For example: if there is no principle of subsidiarity people are going to get angry that “other people” decide upon questions that are of big importance to themselves but of slight importance to “those other”. Should people in Pakistan decide that Christmas should not be a holiday in Sweden? What is sure is that if they did Swedes would be very angry. So let us say that a principle of subsidiarity was adopted, how should this principle be employed? Who is to decide how the boundaries of decision-making were to be drawn? This would have to be done on a global level, something that would lead to conflicts between different “peoples” claiming sovereignty over certain issues. What I am trying to say is thus that without a “global culture” the claims of particular cultures are likely to hinder the emergence of universalism that cosmopolitan democracy implies.

My claim is that democracy demands some underlying common culture (form of life if you like) and the present state of the world of global cultural diversity makes cosmopolitan democracy appear highly implausible, close to unthinkable. However, there are a number of scholars who argue that global cultural change is happening but will this mean the universal spread of a global culture? This is a crucial question which must be asked within the frame of the present enquiry.

The rest of this essay will consist of four major chapters (“Introduction” and “Conclusion” excluded). The first chapter contains some methodological considerations of the critical method that I will use.

Cambridge University Press, 2005); Couture, Jocelyne & Nielsen, Kai, “Cosmopolitanism and the compatriot priority principle”, in: Brock, Gillian & Brighouse, Harry (eds.), *The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

²² Different approaches of more practical nature regarding cosmopolitan democracy can be found in: Held, David, *Democracy and the Global Order. From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (London: Polity Press, 1995)

In the second chapter I will elaborate my argument regarding the mutual affectivity between culture and politics. This chapter will try to justify the fact that this investigation is mainly devoted to the study of “culture” even though it is an essay within the field of political science. The overarching theme of this chapter is the “present” which can partly be conceived of as a result of a nationalization of culture. In order to examine the possibilities of this “present” to be another one we need to understand how and why this nationalization became possible and successful and hence this chapter’s aspiration of being a:

analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.²³

The third chapter consists of an examination of Martin Heidegger’s notion of “world” and of the notion that it is Dasein’s (human beings) “being-in-the-world” that makes meaningful experiencing possible. I will argue that Heidegger’s concept “world” is similar to the concept “culture” as defined in this essay. Heidegger’s insights are valuable for the examination of theories of “cultural globalization” undertaken in the fourth chapter.

Thus, in the fourth chapter I will analyze if the intersubjective structures which we call “cultures” are subject to change. More specifically: do we see the universal spread and adoption of a “global culture” and thereby new conditions of possibility and limits (a new “present” in the Foucauldian sense) on which new forms of global politics (in this case cosmopolitan democracy) becomes possible and meaningful? This analysis will consist of an examination of different theories about “cultural globalization”.

By investigating into the structures, relationships and processes of the present we can perhaps get a clue of what we are *not* and thereby what we *can* be. However, one should be careful not to make too bold prophecies of what is to come because who knows with certainty that the contingencies that are the parents of the children of tomorrow is of the same kind as those which constituted the subjects of our time?

²³ Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment”, p. 50. *Emphasis added by me.*

2 Methodological Considerations

In a general sense this essay is about ideas: I will try my best to account for my own ideas as well as criticizing others, this will be done by argumentation. The purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of the art of argumentation.

Ideas basically consist of statements and if one wants to account for one's ideas one must show by argumentation that these statements are both logically valid and plausible. A logically valid (or consistent) argument is one where the conclusion can be deduced from the premises, for example: the king of France is bald (premise), I am the king of France (premise) and thus I am bald (conclusion). This argument is a *logically valid* argument.²⁴ However, I am not bald and I am definitely not the king of France (as a matter of fact France has no king since it is a republic). Hence, an argument can be valid without corresponding to reality. To be logically valid an argument does not have to be plausible; however, a plausible argument must always be logically valid. What is it, then, that makes some logically valid arguments plausible? Plausibility is always plausibility in relation to something.²⁵ What I want to study in this essay is the plausibility of cosmopolitan democracy but not from an ethical point of view but in relation to human reality: is the future realization of the cosmopolitan democratic ideal plausible? In order to criticize (exploring into the possibilities and limits of) the plausibility of cosmopolitan democracy I must compare that ideal to relevant aspects of human reality, this means that I must present arguments in favor of certain ideas about what human reality is. My arguments will of course build upon premises about human reality; premises which also must be justified. But this justification of premises cannot go on in infinitum. At the end of the day my arguments must rest upon some first principles (premises that cannot be justified by further argumentation).

To summarize: this essay will explore into the plausibility of cosmopolitan democracy in relation to human reality. To do this I will elaborate some ideas about, for this enquiry, relevant aspects of human reality and then explore whether, with these ideas about reality in mind, the future unfolding of cosmopolitan democracy is plausible. Crucial for me will be to adopt some ultimate premises on which my argumentation can take off from. The "first principle" of this essay will be that man is essentially a cultural animal and from this first principle follows, I argue, certain other facts. But how do I establish that man is a cultural animal? I have already done it in the essay when I examined the behavior of humans and argued that human behavior is *meaningful* behavior that can only be so "within" a cultural context. In another chapter ("Being-in-the-

²⁴ Föllesdal, Dagfinn & Wallö, Lars & Elster, John, *Argumentationsteori, språk och vetenskapsfilosofi* (Stockholm: Thales, 2001), p. 291

²⁵ Beckman, Ludvig, *Grundbok I idéanalys. Det kritiska studiet av politiska texter och idéer* (Stockholm: Santérus förlag, 2005), pp. 68ff

world”) I will argue that a essential feature of being human is to experience reality as significant/meaningful and such experiencing is only possible if humans are cultural animals. I will thus proceed in a way similar to that of Immanuel Kant in *The Critique of Pure Reason*. In that work Kant (ultimately inspired by Descartes) took off from undeniable experiences and from those experiences he deduced “the categories” (“the forms” which shapes “the matter” i.e. the actual experiences derived from the senses) that must necessarily exist if such experiences are to be possible. From the, in my opinion, undeniable facts that human behavior are meaningful behavior and that as humans we experience the world as significant/meaningful I “deduce” that human beings are cultural beings. My claim then is that my first principle (that human beings are cultural beings) is deduced from experiences that we cannot deny and hence justified. The fact that human beings are cultural beings means, as I will argue, that human reality is in a certain way and that human reality is in a certain way have implications of the plausibility of cosmopolitan democracy. The “present” is not a “present” of cosmopolitan democracy; hence an important thing to investigate is how human reality needs to be if cosmopolitan democracy is to become plausible and, also, if reality is heading in that direction. The results of these enquiries can then be used to examine the plausibility of cosmopolitan democracy.

3 Nationalization: Culture, Politics and Secular Religion

What are we? How did we become what we are and why did we become *this* “this” and not another “this”? As argued above an answer to these questions can perhaps give us some understanding of:

the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think.²⁶

If one reads the headlines of many of the contemporary newspapers one is very likely to read things like: “*We* are healthier than ever”; “*Our* schools are the best in the world”, and perhaps, “*The* central bank is boosting *the* economy by buying bonds”. Implicit in all these headlines is, of course, the nation and the notion of men as *homo nationalismus*. *We* are coexisting and living within the same institutional framework because *we* belong together! As members of the same nation-state we not only have the same political rights and duties: we are also sharing a common culture. One could say that in many ways we think and act nationally, this is of course not to say that nationality determines all our thoughts and actions. But what is a nation? It is fruitful to quote Benedict Andersons widespread definition of the nation as being an:

imagined political community – and it is imagined as both limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know, meet or even get to know about more than a minority of the other members, and still there dwells in everyone’s consciousness the notion of their communality.²⁷

In addition to this definition Anderson adds:

As a matter of fact is all communities beyond primitive villages (and perhaps even these), where there is face-to-face contact, imagined. Communities are not characterized by falsity/authenticity but according to how they are imagined.²⁸

Anderson seems to be a bit unsure whether “primitive villages” is imagined or not. However, I think that that even the communality of primitive villages are imagined. By imagining communality human beings make their world meaningful and communities can only exist “within” the human world of “culture”. Everything that belongs to the human world (such as communities) can only exist

²⁶ Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment”, p. 46

²⁷ Anderson, Benedict, *Den föreställda gemenskapen. Reflektioner kring nationalismens ursprung och spridning* (Göteborg: Daidalos, 1992), p. 21. *My translation from Swedish.*

²⁸ Ibid: p. 21. *My translation from Swedish.*

as imagined. This is not to say that communities do not have objective existence: as all other cultural phenomena communities are objectified in language.

In this chapter I will explore how national imagination became possible and why it became very compelling to so many people. By doing this I will shine some light on the fundamental relationship and mutual affectivity of culture and politics and thereby also justify this study as a study in political science.

The first part of this chapter will explore some into “the present” that existed before nationalization and after that into the changes that made national imagination possible. In the second part I will to answer the question of why the nation is so compelling to so many people: why are many prepared to die for their nation? In the third part I will conclude this chapter by showing how the historical and philosophical arguments in the two preceding parts illuminate the relationship between culture and politics. The whole chapter aims to be an examination of the conditions and processes that gave birth to “the present”. By examine *this* “present” we can understand why cosmopolitan democracy is not plausible at the moment and we also become prepared for the examination, undertaken in the subsequent chapters, of whether there might arise a new “present” more compatible with such a form of politics as cosmopolitan democracy.

3.1 I

In his summary of influential theories about the nation and nationalism Anthony D. Smith argues that there is a fundamental debate of whether the nation should be regarded as modern or ancient phenomenon.²⁹ An influential approach to nations and nationalism is what Smith calls the *modernist paradigm*.

According to many modernists it is the movement of nationalism that invented the nation, hence:

it is not only nationalism that is modern. So are nations, national states, national identities, and the whole ‘inter-national’ community. All these, for the modernist, are not just chronologically recent, they are also qualitatively novel.

The modernist paradigm claims that nationalism and modernity goes hand-in-hand. Scholars within the paradigm also tend, as I will argue below, to focus more on the political level – on how the nation can be seen as a result of the centralization of the territorial state and the demands of this kind of political organization on its subjects. However, the modernist paradigm is not the only one in studies of nations and nationalism, Smith presents to us several other paradigms; one of them is the *ethno-symbolical paradigm* (which is also the one that he himself advocates). Smith argues that this paradigm put focus on:

²⁹ Smith, Anthony D., *Nationalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), pp. 47ff

the subjective elements in the formation of nations, the character and impact of nationalism, and persistence of *ethnies*; and thereby seeks to enter into and comprehend the 'inner worlds' of ethnicity and nationalism.³⁰

The kind of subjectivity that the ethno-symbolical paradigm focuses on is very much what one can call emotional. Why does the nation mean so much to so many? Why are some people prepared to *die* for their nation?

[F]or ethno-symbolists the passion and attachment evoked by nationalism and nations is a central problem.³¹

Scholars within the ethno-symbolical paradigm try to offer:

historical and sociological explanations for the continuing strong emotional attachments of so many people to 'their' ethnic communities and nations.³²

Another central claim of the ethno-symbolical paradigm is that there were "nations prior to nationalism". By arguing that modern nations are building upon the basis of cultural resources that originates from ancient times the ethno-symbolists contests the modernists' claim that nations are qualitatively novel. Thus, while the main focus of the modernists is on the political level the ethno-symbolists tend to focus more on cultural aspects which they claim that the political movement of nationalism is drawing upon.

In the rest of this part I will examine and compare both of these paradigms and argue that each of them offers valuable insights to people that are trying to understand nations and nationalism. To the question why many people feel such an emotional attachment to their nation the next part of this chapter is devoted.

I now put my focus upon the modernist paradigm. Within this paradigm there seems to be a consensus that before nationalism nothing like the nation existed. In his *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* Eric J. Hobsbawm claims that he:

do[oes] not regard the 'nation' as a primary nor as an unchanging social entity. It belongs exclusively to a particular, and historically recent, period.³³

However, what Hobsbawm does not really tell us is how human reality was before the emergence of nations. In this matter we can consult Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*. In this book Gellner argues that human reality can be distinguished into three successive stages, it is the agrarian and industrial that I will focus upon here. At present we live in industrial society and the one preceding it were agrarian society. In agrarian society no national culture existed

³⁰ Ibid: p. 61

³¹ Ibid: p. 62

³² Ibid: p. 62

³³ Hobsbawm, Eric J., *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 9

and there was a cultural differentiation where a few learned people lived in a literate “high culture” while the mass lived in disparate “low cultures”.³⁴ The high culture of the few were horizontal and was shared by people from different countries, in Latin (the language of the learned) they had a common language. Thus, the elites often had much more in common with elites of other countries than commoners of their own.³⁵ The great mass of food producers on, the other hand, lived in disparate local “low cultures”, such a local culture could be described as an almost self-enclosed community wherein people:

tends to communicate in terms whose meaning can only be identified *in context*, in contrast to the relatively context-free scholasticism of the scribes.³⁶

While the “scholasticists of the scribes” seemed to live in something like a “cosmopolitan” culture where Latin was the common mode of communication the “mass of food producers” lived in local and self-enclosed cultural communities. Countries that later will have flourishing national cultures was thus characterized by a disparity between, on the one hand, a small, horizontal strata of a literate elite living in a “cosmopolitan” high culture and the mass of food producers living in local low cultures and, on the other hand, a disparity between these local low cultures. In agrarian society there was:

little incentive or opportunity for cultures to aspire to the kind of monochrome homogeneity and political pervasiveness and domination for which later, with the coming of the age of nationalism, they eventually strive.³⁷

All this was going to change with the emergence of industrial society.

According to Gellner the most striking thing with the pre-modern visions of the world was:

the coexistence within them of multiple, not properly united, but hierarchically related sub-worlds, and the existence of special privileged facts, sacralized and exempt from ordinary treatment.³⁸

Characteristic of the spirit of modernity and industrial society was, on the contrary, a rational spirit with a:

universal conceptual currency, so to speak, for the general characterization of things; and the *esprit d' analyze*, forcefully preached and characterized already by Descartes.³⁹

³⁴ Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism* (New York: Sage, 2008), pp. 9-13

³⁵ Ibid: p. 10

³⁶ Ibid: p. 12

³⁷ Ibid: p. 13

³⁸ Ibid: p. 21

³⁹ Ibid: p. 21

The conception of the world as homogenous, subject to systematic, indiscriminate laws, and as open to interminable exploration offered endless possibilities of new combinations of means with no firm prior expectations and limits: no possibilities would be barred, and in the end nothing but evidence would decide how things were [...] ⁴⁰

This spirit was something made a centralized educational system, supported by a state, feasible and this in turn would pave the way for the emergence of the *nation*-state. The spirit of modernity leads to constant re-thinking of old truths and this is something that is characteristic of industrial society as Gellner portrait it. Industrial society wants to see perpetual economic growth and to realize this goal old ways of doing things must give way to new ones if these are deemed to be more effective. Industrial society is in a state of continuous change and the workers who create economic growth must be ready to adopt with ease to new ways of doing things. This demands an educational system that educates the working force to be mobile and adaptable and Gellner claims that even though industrial society is by many criteria the most specialized society ever:

its educational system is unquestionably the *least* specialized, the most universally standardized, that has ever existed. ⁴¹

The assumption is that:

anyone who has completed the generic training common to the entire population can be re-trained for most other jobs without too much difficulty. ⁴²

The kind of specialization found in Industrial society rests precisely on a common foundation of unspecialized and standardized training. ⁴³

Such a demanding and universal educational system demanded by industrial society can only exists if supported by a centralized state and thus the state can, according to Gellner, be said to be more of an institution that have a monopoly of the legitimate distribution of education than an institution that have monopoly on the legitimate use of violence (Weber's definition of the state):

The level of literacy and technical competence, in a standardized medium, a common conceptual currency, which is required of members of this society if they are to be properly employable and enjoy full and effective moral citizenship, is so high that it simply *cannot* be provided by the kin or local units, such as they are. ⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Ibid: p. 22

⁴¹ Ibid: p. 26

⁴² Ibid: p. 27

⁴³ Ibid: p. 27

⁴⁴ Ibid: p. 33

The monopoly of legitimate education is now more important, more central than is the monopoly of legitimate violence.⁴⁵

According to Gellner's theory the industrial society and the centralized state seems to mutually reinforce each other and a very important consequence of this is the nearly universal spread and adoption of a literate "high culture". Such a high culture was previously reserved to the educated elite but because of the new educational system, the whole population adopts such a high culture: a national culture is born! In this sense national culture is a "school-transmitted culture".⁴⁶ To summaries Gellner's argument one could say that nationalism (and the nation) is something novel possible only in industrial society:

Nationalism is rooted in a *certain kind* of division of labour, one which is complex and persistently, cumulatively changing.⁴⁷

Such a division of labour, demanded by industrial society, is in need of a state-reinforced standardized educational system and in such an educational system a universal high culture is transmitted and become a national culture. This of course demands other things such as the adoption of a common written language and here Benedicts Anderson's theory about the importance of "print-capitalism" for the rise of the nation is insightful.⁴⁸

Central to theories within this modernist paradigm is the notions that the imagination of the nation became possible only in modern times of industrialism, print-capitalism and an educational system backed by a central state. These theories tend to focus more on the political level of the state when trying to make sense of the emergence of national imagination. Hobsbawm confirms this when he writes:

the creation of the modern, administrative, citizen-mobilizing and citizen-influencing state, both placed the question of the 'nation', and the citizen's feeling towards what he regarded as his 'nation', 'nationality' or other centre of loyalty, at the top of the political agenda.⁴⁹

However, even a modernist such as Hobsbawm admits that:

While governments were plainly engaged in conscious and deliberate ideological engineering, it would be a mistake to see these exercises as pure manipulation from above. They were, indeed, most successful when they could build on already present unofficial nationalist sentiments [...]⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Ibid: p. 33

⁴⁶ Ibid: p. 34-35

⁴⁷ Ibid: p. 24

⁴⁸ See: Benedict Anderson, *Den föreställda gemenskapen*, pp. 47ff

⁴⁹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, p. 83

⁵⁰ Ibid: p. 92

It is to these pre-existing “unofficial national sentiments” that my examination now turns.

Anthony D. Smith is critical to the modernists’ assumption that there were “no nations before nationalism”, in general his approach has:

focused on the way that prior ethnic ties and *ethnies* have influenced, and in some cases formed the basis for, subsequent nations and nationalism.⁵¹

My focus in this investigation is not the ethnic basis of nations prevalent in Smiths early works but the “cultural resources” that Smith, in his later works, claims are the basis of many nations and nationalisms.

In *The Cultural Foundations of Nations* Smith criticizes those that I have called the modernist for just examining the emergence and conditions of a particular kind of nation, namely, the modern nation. Smith argues that there are other kinds of nations throughout history and he constructs three ideal types designating three kinds of nations (hierarchical-, covenantal-, and republican nations). He then goes on to argue that most nations possess elements from all ideal types but that one of types dominate each particular nation. By arguing that all these types are nations in the sense similar to how we define the concept and then showing that the hierarchical- and covenantal nations have existed long before modernity Smith can argue that nations are not inseparable from modernity:

“nation,” deriving from *nation* and ultimately *nasci* (to be born), has a long, if tortuous, history of meaning, going back to the ancient Greeks and Romans.⁵²

The modernist merely claim that “modern nations” are particular to modernity and this, according to Smith, is a tautology⁵³ What is more, Smith argues that even modern (republican) nations build upon pre-existent, and often ancient, “cultural resources”:

How, in practice, can earlier communities be shown to provide resources and models for later ones? By what mechanisms can such influence be disseminated? The case of ancient Israel suggests the importance of sacred texts, but also of the laws, rituals, ceremonies, and offices described in those texts. Other kinds of cultural resources include customs and mores, symbols such as words and titles, languages and scripts; artifacts, like obelisks and temples, banners and insignia, icons and statues; and more generally artistic styles and motifs, such as those of ancient Greece and Rome, which were revived and renewed in subsequent epochs. Though these general resources could be used for a variety of communities other than nations, the point is that they were readily available.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism*, p. 63

⁵² Smith, Anthony D., *The Cultural Foundations of Nations. Hierarchy, Covenant, and Republic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 14

⁵³ Ibid: p. 13ff, p. 19

⁵⁴ Ibid: p. 23

Smith provides us with many examples of different types of nations throughout history and he argues that in some cases people in ancient times seem to have similar ideas regarding the nation as we have today.⁵⁵ Here he differs from Hobsbawm who claims that the modern sense of the term “nation” stems from the 18th century.⁵⁶ More important within the present enquiry is Smith’s claim that the current nations are in many cases building upon cultural resources from ancient times.⁵⁷ While an industrialized society with a state-backed educational system allied with print-capitalism are modern conditions which made modern nations possible this modern nation-formation often draws upon already existent, ancient cultural resources, hence Smith’s focus on the cultural level.

From the investigation undertaken in this part I draw the conclusion that if one wants to understand “the present” (which we must if we want to have some insight the possibilities of another “present”) one need to focus on both a cultural and a political level. “The national present” emerged from a mutually affective relationship between pre-existing culture and politics. The state- and society-focused approach of the modernists tells us how national imagination became possible as a mass-sentiment, however insights from Smith’s ethno-symbolical perspective shows how these modern nations seem to require a cultural basis in order to persist.

Another matter in which the ethno-symbolical approach is fruitful is when one is trying to account for:

the intensity and passion that ethnicity and nationalism evoke, and which modernists, even when they condemn it, so often fail to address.⁵⁸

It is important indeed to account for the passion that nations evoke in many people because this allows us to understand why “the national present” can persist and hold such a tight grip on many peoples’ thoughts and actions.

3.2 II

We have to recognize the complexity of the continuing relations between religions and forms of the sacred, on the one hand, and the ways in which contemporary nations continue to be infused with sacred meaning.⁵⁹

In *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* Anthony D. Smith is trying to account for people's attachment to their nation. In the books Smith argues that the nation is a sacred communion and a secular religion for a self-worshipping people and that this explains the fact that many people are willing to

⁵⁵ See for example: Ibid: p. 95ff

⁵⁶ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, p. 3

⁵⁷ For examples of how ancient cultural resources maintain the cohesion of modern, republican nations see: Anthony D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations*, p. 136-159

⁵⁸ Ibid: p. 10

⁵⁹ Ibid: p. 8

sacrifice themselves for the good of the nation. In this part I will summarize Smith's argument about the "sacred sources of national identity" but I will also try to get some insight into why the "secular religion of nationalism" persist and influence people the way it does. To do this I will use some important insights from Friedrich Nietzsche about how people in general seem to need some kind of religion (even if it is a *secular* religion of culture) in order to be able to live. These insights tell us a lot about how human beings devote themselves to, and live unreflective in their "present". As already mentioned this enquiry done in order to understand the conditions and limits of *this* present and thereby pave the way for an investigation into:

the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think.⁶⁰

Which are, then, the main points of Smith's *Chosen Peoples*? As already mentioned Smith deems it to be a serious shortcoming of the modernists that their theories have problems when trying to explain one of the most crucial facts about nations and nationalism, namely, its potential to evoke strong attachments and passions.⁶¹ The main explanation that Smith evokes to account for this fact is that the cultural resources which modern nations draws upon often have religious and sacred origins:

it is in the sphere of 'religion' that we must seek primarily the sources of national attachment.⁶²

In the rest of his investigation Smith examines different national myths of founding and origin and also different national rites and ceremonies and traces their origin to sacred and religious sources. Many of the myths are, according to Smith, related to text passages in The Old Testament, an important passage being the one where Moses enters a covenant with God on behalf of the Israeli people. The Israeli people thereby become God's chosen people and are given a promised land where they are to live free from slavery. This myth of The Old Testament is present, according to Smith, in many western national myths of origin and founding. By appealing to this myth many nations claim their distinctiveness by referring to themselves as "God's chosen people", "Heir's of the Israeli people" etc. In the discourse of texts like national chronicles it surely seems to be the case that myths of many different nations seems to originate from the same passage in The Old Testament.⁶³ However, "the myth of election" is only one of the sacred sources of national identity that Smith examines, others are: the sacralization of territory (homeland), and myths about "golden ages" and "the glorious dead" who sacrificed themselves for the nation. From his investigation Smith concludes that

⁶⁰ Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment", p. 46

⁶¹ Smith, Anthony D., *Chosen Peoples. Sacred Foundations of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 3ff

⁶² Ibid: p. 5

⁶³ Ibid: pp. 44-94

this attachment to the nation often can be described as the worshipping of a “secular religion”:

the nation state replaces the deity, history assumes the role of divine providence, the leader becomes the prophet, his writings and speeches form the sacred texts, the national movement becomes the new church, and its celebratory and commemorative rites take the place of religious ceremonies.⁶⁴

What makes the worshipping of the nation a worshipping of a *secular* religion is that the religious sources, to which this worshipping is ultimately related, are not manifest. Smith claims that these originally religious sources are revived and given new meaning in order to be usable in the present age of nations and nationalism.⁶⁵ Smith’s investigation bears resemblances to the investigation that Friedrich Nietzsche undertook in his *Genealogy of Morals* there Nietzsche argues that:

there is a world of difference between the reason for something coming to existence in the first place and the ultimate use to which it is put, its actual application and integration into a system of goals; that anything which exists, once it has somehow come into being, can be reinterpreted in the service of new intentions [...] in the course of which the previous ‘meaning’ and ‘aim’ must necessarily be obscured or completely effaced.⁶⁶

Thus, according to Smith, religious myths and ceremonies that “somehow came into being” became reinterpreted in order to “serve” the nation. But why do people attach and devote themselves to religions (in this case a secular religion) in the first place? How is it possible for religions to become evokers of passion? An investigation into these questions can perhaps tell us about why the present state of national imagination can persist with such strength as well as shine some light on human beings as being essentially cultural beings. In such an investigation some of Friedrich Nietzsche’s insights are very valuable.

In *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche writes that we are in need of a “chemistry” of moral, religious and aesthetic ideals. The aim of this “chemistry” of moral, religious and aesthetic ideals should be to:

explain them fully without resorting to the use of *metaphysical intervention* at the beginning and along the way.⁶⁷

A chemistry of this sort will be an enquiry into the “substrates” of these ideals (with the analogy of chemistry in mind the substrate is the *unmodified* origin of these ideals). However, the problem is that:

⁶⁴ Ibid: p. 17

⁶⁵ Ibid: pp. 258-259

⁶⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals. A Polemic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 57-58

⁶⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Human, All Too Human* (London: Penguin Books, 1984): p. 18

Mankind loves to put the questions of origin and beginnings out of mind: must one not be almost inhuman to feel in himself the opposite inclination?⁶⁸

Before I try to answer why mankind loves to put the question of origin out of mind I need to say something about the *need* for this kind of “chemistry”. Why does Nietzsche think that there is a need for an investigation into origins? What is certain is that Nietzsche does *not* have utility in mind. A questioning into origins will not be useful to life in the sense that it will make life easier to live (quite the contrary). What Nietzsche surely had in mind when he claimed that there was a need of an enquiry into origins was simply the need for *truth* and according to Nietzsche “truth” is often not the same as the useful:

Does not truth become an enemy for life, an enemy of what is better?⁶⁹

Throughout immense stretches of time the intellect produced nothing but errors; some of them proved to be useful and preservative of the species[...] ⁷⁰

Life is no argument; error might be among the conditions of life. ⁷¹

But why should one be a proponent of truth if truth is not useful? Why should one be a proponent of “dangerous” truths? To this Nietzsche has no good answer and he simply admits that this is to what extent that even he is pious (i.e. in his worshipping of truth).⁷² But which are these dangerous truths that are in risk of being unveiled in an enquiry into origins? In order to make this potential danger comprehensible we need to remind ourselves that we, as humans, are cultural beings who act in meaningful ways and experience the world as meaningful. The “danger” in this case might be that an investigation into origins might reveal that the cultural ideals that provide our life with meaning might rest on dubious foundations:

the more we advance towards origins, the more our interest diminishes; indeed, that all the evaluations and ‘interestedness’ we have implanted into things begin to lose their meaning the further we go back and the closer we approach the things themselves. *The more insight we possess into an origin the less significant does the origin appear: while what is nearest to us, what is around us and in us, gradually begins to display colours and beauties and enigmas and riches of significance of which earlier mankind had not an inkling.*⁷³

⁶⁸Ibid: p. 14

⁶⁹Ibid: p. 36

⁷⁰Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay Science* (New York: Dover Publications, 2006), p. 82

⁷¹Ibid: p. 88

⁷²Ibid: p. 156

⁷³Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Daybreak. Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 46

What are nearest to us are the ideals that provide our life with meaning. These ideals answer the questions of why we should live at all when life for many people is a struggle and also provide prescriptions of how we should live in order to live a meaningful life. Inherent in the national imagination seems to be ideals that provide our life with meaning: we should do this and that because this and that is good for the nation and to do good for the nation is to live a meaningful life. However, as secular religion nationalism is, as Smith has shown, nonetheless based upon religious origins and if we as secularist start to question these religious origins the “danger” is that these origins cannot stand up to the pressure from our enquiry: the origins can start to seem too dubious and arbitrary to provide a justification of nationalism. *If the origins cannot stand up to an enquiry what rests on these origins is in risk of lose its meaning.* A great part of Nietzsche’s philosophical work has been to show that the ideals in western societies that, in this secular age, provide us with meanings rest upon origins and foundations that an atheist cannot accept, in this case secular people live according to ideals that are “prescribed” by “the nation” despite the religious origins of these ideals. In the case of case of atheist nationalists perhaps we can say that their lives are:

sunk deep in untruth; the individual cannot pull it out of this well without growing profoundly annoyed with his entire past, without finding his present motives (like honor) senseless, and without opposing scorn and disdain to the passions that urge one on to the future and to the happiness in it.⁷⁴

If we conceive of nationalism as a “secular religion” we must ask why even atheists seem to need religion. Nietzsche’s answer to this question is that we as human beings seem to have a kind of “metaphysical need”:

A young person appreciates metaphysical explanations because they show him something highly meaningful in matters he found unpleasant or despicable. If he is dissatisfied with himself, his feeling is relieved if he can recognize in that which he so disapproves of in himself the innermost riddle of the world or its misery. To feel less responsible, and at the same time to find things more interesting: that is the twofold benefit which he owes to metaphysics.⁷⁵

In this light the nation can be seen as a metaphysical principle that provide people with answers to why they should act and think in certain ways instead of act and think in other ways (or perhaps not even act and think at all). Humans seem to be in need of these meaningful answers to be able to bear the hardship and absurdities of life because:

⁷⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, p. 37

⁷⁵ *Ibid*: pp. 24-25

Man has gradually become a visionary animal, who has to fulfill one more condition of existence than the other animals: man *must* from time to time believe that he knows *why* he exists; his species cannot flourish without periodically confiding in life. Without the belief in *reason in life!* And always from time to time will the human race decree anew the “there is something which really may not be laughed at.”⁷⁶

Man as a cultural being is *addicted* to meaning – he is in need of meaningfulness in order to be able to live. He often cannot stand thoughts that his life has no intrinsic value or that his own behavior is not objectively better than any other behavior, or the fact that:

Whatever has *value* [or meaning] in the present world, has not it in itself, by its nature, – nature is always worthless: but a value was once given to it, bestowed upon it and it was *we* who gave and bestowed!⁷⁷

Man is in need of something steadfast, something that “really may not be laughed at”, something that he can hold on to in order to avoid falling into nihilistic pits. A critical enquiry into origins might expose the arbitrariness of many of our foundations of meaningfulness (such as the religious foundations of nationalism) and thus give rise to doubt and existential anxiety, something that surely will not make life easier to live. Truth is not the same as usefulness!

Nietzsche’s insights can help us to understand why the present state of national imagination evokes such passion and attachment. On a general level his insights tell us that the human animal has reached such a high level of intelligence that he needs meaning just in order to live (“man has gradually become a visionary animal...”). One cannot tell a priori what kind of meaning that will be bestowed on the world to satisfy man’s meaning-addiction: particular cultures cannot be deduced from the fact that man is a cultural animal; only culture in a general sense can be deduced. Man cannot stand nihilism and that is why his cultural ideals often “really may not be laughed at”.⁷⁸ In the present state it seems to be the case that it is, to a quite great extent, “the nation” that satisfy man’s meaning-addiction, the nation has become something that spurs the belief in life and:

make us forget that fundamentally it [life] is just impulse, instinct, folly and baselessness. Life should be loved *for...* [the nation]! Man *should* benefit himself and his neighbor, *for...* [the nation]!⁷⁹

This is not to say that the nation is the only thing in this “present” that provides man’s life with meaning. But one cannot deny that the nation is an important

⁷⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 19

⁷⁷ Ibid: p. 132

⁷⁸ For his thoughts on ‘nihilism’, see: Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Will to Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), pp. 9-39

⁷⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 18

“toxic” for the satisfaction of the “meaning-addiction” of contemporary humans and this helps us understand why the nation evokes such passion: even many atheists seem to need religion in order to avoid nihilism.

This account of important aspects of this “present” have helped us understand why it persists – the “present” satisfy a fundamental human need, man as a visionary animal (i.e. cultural being):

has to fulfill one more condition of existence than the other animals[...] ⁸⁰

However, before we undertake an investigation into potentialities and possibilities I will draw some conclusions from the examination made in the preceding two parts as well as pave the way for the remaining enquiry.

3.3 III

What have we learnt from this enquiry so far? I think that we have seen how the nation emerged from a relationship between culture and politics. We have also seen that nations persist because they are an important aspect of this “present”, a present “wherein” the “meaning-addiction” of many humans is satisfied.

An important feature of national imagination seems to be the notion that there should be congruence between culture and politics. In this part I will argue that democratic politics seem to need to be based upon some common culture and cosmopolitan democracy thus appears to require something like a universal adoption of a global culture. As shown in the examination of the emergence of national imagination there was a mutually affective relationship between “culture” and “politics” and when we examine the possibilities for the emergence of a universal adoption of a global culture we must admit that the absence of a “world-state” complicate matters.

Why is it that democratic politics appears not to be able to stand too much cultural diversity? This question can be answered by drawing on insights already examined in this essay. As a cultural being man not only behaves and thinks meaningfully, meaning has even become a condition of his existence. As Wittgenstein has shown different meaning is dependent upon context and culture (forms of life). This means that humans of different cultures often are addictive to different kinds of meaning: people in different cultures behaves differently and thinks differently and their thinking and behavior is meaningful in relation to their culture – a wink with the eye does not signify the same thing in all cultures. What I want to say with this is that different forms of life (cultures) often demand particular political institutions and this account for the fact that cosmopolitan democracy appears to be difficult to think of within this present state of global cultural diversity.

The notion that democratic politics seem to presuppose a common culture can be made more intelligible with a thought experiment: imagine the absence of a

⁸⁰ Ibid: p. 19

state and absence of authority from “above”. Imagine, further, that humans living in this “state of nature” decide that they are going to create democratic political institutions with democratic means. The paradox here is that a particular community cannot establish itself politically by democratic means: if “the people” are asked how they are going to constitute “their” political institutions this already presuppose the existence of a “people”. If one ask a “people” who is to be included in their political community one have already accepted “the people” whom are asked to be a legitimate bounded people. “The people” cannot constitute themselves democratically, “the people” is already there!⁸¹ What I want this example to illustrate is that culture is the base on which “the people” rests – “we are a common people with a common culture and therefore we should have common political institutions”. The congruence of politics and culture seems to be a congruence of meaningfulness, it is deemed *meaningful* that a certain culture should have certain political institutions. But the relationship between culture and politics is no “one-way street” that my examination regarding the emergence of national imagination have shown. It appears that it is possible for culture to be constructed and spread from above, at the same time this “social engineering” at the political level often draws, as Smith have shown, upon existing cultural resources. Where one should focus if one wants to understand the relationship between culture and politics, and the emergence and spread of culture remains something of an enigma. However, what is certain and relevant in relation to this particular enquiry is that there no “world-state” exists which can promote the spread and adoption of a global culture (in the way that territorial-states promoted national culture) on which cosmopolitan democracy can be based on and become meaningful in relation to. And I am bold enough to say that such a world-state is very unlikely to emerge.⁸²

From the above I conclude that the rest of this essay must focus on potential cultural change “from below”. Do we live in a global era that will lead to (or perhaps have already lead to) the emergence of a global culture? If there is potential for a global culture is this culture likely to be adopted universally? These are questions that we must try to answer is we are trying to gain some insight into the possibilities of a future democratic “Cosmopolis”.

⁸¹ For various illustrations of this paradox see: Benhabib, Seyla, *The Rights of Others. Aliens, Residents, and Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 44-45; Benhabib, Seyla, “The Philosophical foundations of Cosmopolitan norms”, pp. 32ff; Bartelson, Jens, “Globalizing the Democratic Community” in: *Ethics & Global Politics*. Vol. 1, No. 4, 2008, pp. 159-174

⁸² For discussions of problems regarding a “world-state” see: Nagel, Thomas, “The Problem of Global Justice” in: *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 113-147; Prozorov, Sergei, “Generic Universalism in World Politics: beyond International Anarchy and the World State” in: *International Theory*. Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 215-247

4 Being-in-the-world

My purpose in the previous chapter was not to claim that culture and nations are isomorphic. It is not my opinion that meaningfulness is something that only exists within nations and among co-nationals. Nonetheless I think that national imagination constitutes an important aspect of the “present” in which the people of today live their lives. The fact that many people every day, through their actions, continue to nourish the nation shows that an understanding of national imagination is crucial if one wants to understand the present “present”. This is not to say that a study of national imagination exhausts everything and gives us complete knowledge of how contemporary people are constituted as subjects.

There surely are scholars who are claiming that we now live in a global, or cosmopolitan, era. The argument runs something like this: We have entered a new era, the era of high-, late-, or, second modernity. While the era of first modernity was an era of industrialization, centralization and the rise of nationalism and the nation-state this contemporary second modernity is a global era. It is a global era because central features of first modernity such as capitalism and industrialism gave birth to such things as global economic interdependency and common global risks such as climate change, nuclear arms and terrorism. With the emergence of communications technology such as the telegraph, the telephone, the television, and the Internet these “global phenomena” becomes a part of the everyday life-world of many people throughout the world and this will in turn give rise to a global common consciousness.

What could the implication of such a global common consciousness be? One could perhaps argue that this global common consciousness would be common in the sense that the people possessing it make the world meaningful in the same way. Since meaning and culture is, as I have argued above, inseparable one could argue that the globalization of meaning would also be the globalization of culture. To summarize: we now live in a global era in the sense that global phenomena enter the life-worlds of people throughout the world. The the fact that people have access to the same phenomena through communications technologies and media also means that they inhabits the same meaningful “world” – that is to say: people share a common global culture. Upon this common global culture new forms of politics can build. I think that there are serious flaws in this line of argument. For one thing: this minimalistic global culture will probably not eradicate other particular cultures. Even more importantly the fact that people already dwells in particular cultures makes it unlikely that people all over the world will interpret and experience the alleged global phenomena they confront in the same way. Even if there are phenomena that are global in the sense that they are experienced by people all over the world this will not automatically imply that people interpret and ascribe the same meaning to them. From the fact that people worldwide have access to the “same” reality one cannot deduce the

universalization of meaning and, hence, not the rise of a global culture either. I will elaborate this argument in the next chapter but first I must show that people also dwells in particular cultures when it comes to their experiences (and not just when in relation to behavior as shown above). To show the important relationship between experience and culture will be the task of this chapter and it will be done by drawing on some very important insights that Martin Heidegger elaborated in his magnum opus *Being and Time*. These insights of Heidegger will then be used in the next chapter when I argue that the fact that particular cultures exist and evokes strong emotions itself makes the emergence of a global culture (a culture which cosmopolitan democracy, at least in theory, can build upon) unlikely. Jens Bartelson seems to have been in similar thoughts when he wrote:

In the history of international thought, the creation of a world community has been seen as a way of overcoming discord between political communities without having to impose sovereign authority from above. Yet the very same division of mankind into distinct communities that makes the idea of a world community morally compelling has also been the main obstacle to its successful realization, since differences between peoples have made such a community hard to attain in practice.⁸³

This is not to say that the ideal of world community itself is not the ideal of particular cultures. What I want to say by quoting Bartelson is that particularity only becomes a problem when successful particularization have taken place and that it is exactly this necessary prior particularization that made particularity a possible problem that hinders the emergence of universality.

The remaining part of this chapter will be divided into two sections. In the first part I will argue that experience is meaningful experience: the reality that enters our consciousness is a meaningful reality. In the second part I will explore how this meaningful experiencing of reality is possible. I will, with Heideggers help, argue that this meaningfulness is possible because the experiencing subject is a part of, and involved “in”, the very “world” he experiences. We as human beings are always already “in-the-world”, we are cultural beings that experience the world as meaningful. Meaning is only possible “in-the-world”, here are some similarity with Wittgenstein’s notion that language-games makes meaning possible. What is more, Heideggers notion of “world” and Wittgenstein’s notion of “form of life” seems similar to me: my definition of culture has except from Wittgenstein’s notion of “form of life” also drawn much upon Heidegger’s notion of “world”.

⁸³ Bartelson, Jens, *Visions of World Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 1

4.1 I

Heidegger's ontological project is great indeed and I cannot do justice to him. The only thing that I can do is to use a couple of his insights without showing how these insights fit into his larger project. Almost all of these insights can be found in division 1 of the first part of *Being and Time* this is the part in which Heidegger undertakes what he calls a "preparatory fundamental analysis of Dasein". To simplify one can say that the word "Dasein" is another word for "human being", a word which Heidegger uses for reasons that I cannot go into here. Basically, what Heidegger does in this division is to elaborate around what it means to be a human being. For one thing, to be a human being means to experience things as endowed with meaning. Heidegger frequently uses the example of a hammer: the hammer is available (*zuhanden*) for us we experience the hammer *as* a hammer, we can hold it and we can feel if its balance is *right*:

Hammering does not just have a knowledge of the useful character of the hammer; rather, it has appropriated this utensil in the most adequate way possible.⁸⁴

There is of course a practical dimension here. A skilled carpenter does not have to be able to explicate a theoretical account of how to hammer in order to be good at hammering. He just hammers and he does it real good. But in order to hammer good he need to know (at least implicitly and practically) how the hammer is *meant* to be used.

[T]he less we just stare at the thing called hammer, the more we take hold of it and use it, the more original our relation to it becomes and the more undisguisedly it is encountered as what it is, as a useful thing.⁸⁵

We do not have to contemplate all the time, we just know how to use things. We know what they are used *for*. Heidegger is critical towards the account of the subject-object relation that cartesian philosophers have adopted. Kant tried in his *Critique of Pure Reason* to provide a base for Newtonian physics but Heidegger, following Dilthey and Husserl, means that this is not how we experience the world in our everyday life. We do not simply experience heavy spatio-temporal objects in different sizes and colours. Objects enter our consciousness *as* hammers, cars, shoes, and pencils i.e. as meaningful objects that can be used. The forest is not simply a forest, it is a *resource*. The experiencing subject described in previous, Cartesian, philosophy is not that of the everyday Dasein, because most of the time we experience the world and its objects as meaningful, the theoretical stance of natural scientists is exceptional:

⁸⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2010), p. 69 [69]

⁸⁵ Ibid: 69 [69]

But nature must not be understood as what is merely objectively present, nor as the *power of nature*. The forest is a forest of timber, the mountain a quarry of rock, the river is water power, the wind is wind “in the sails”. As the “surrounding world” is discovered “nature” thus discovered is encountered along with it. We can abstract from the nature’s kind of being as handiness; we can discover and define it in its mere objective presence [Vorhandenheit].⁸⁶

What Heidegger claims here is that our experiencing of the world and its objects as endowed with meaning is more fundamental than, and prior to, our experiencing of the world as objective in a natural scientific sense.

For example, when the south wind is “accepted” by the farmer as a sign of rain, this “acceptance” or the “value attached” to this being is not a kind of bonus attached to something already objectively present, that is, the movement of the wind and a certain geographical direction. As this mere occurrence which is meteorologically accessible, the south wind is *never initially* something objectively present that occasionally takes on the function of an omen.⁸⁷

To be human means, among other things, that reality and its objects appear as meaningful, the purpose of the next part is to show why humans experience reality in this way.

4.2 II

An important thing to keep in mind when accounting for the meaningfulness of objects is that the objects are constituted as meaningful but that this constitution is *not* taking place when the individual subject confronts the object. The object is always already constituted: the hammer is also a hammer when it lies in the toolbox and not only when it is hammered with. The hammer is not a hammer because the individual subject ascribes that meaning to the peculiar spatio-temporal object present in his field of vision, what makes the hammer a hammer is that it belongs to, and has a position in, a “world”. Dasein belongs to the same world, Dasein is “in-the-world” and this fact is what makes it possible for Dasein to experience the hammer *as* a hammer, i.e. as a meaningful object. The rest of this section will try to make sense of Heidegger’s notion of “world” and the way Dasein and objects are “in-the-world”. By doing this my intention is to show that Dasein by necessity belongs to a “world”, hence it is also by necessity that he experience a reality endowed with meaning, meaning that is only possible “in” the “world”.

“Culture”, “form of life”, and “world” all denote pretty much the same thing in this essay and we must talk of these in plural: the people of the world do not

⁸⁶ Ibid: p. 70 [70]

⁸⁷ Ibid: p. 79 [80-81]; For a discussion of Heidegger’s critique of cartesianism see: Dreyfus, Hubert, *Being-in-the-World. A commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), pp. 108ff

dwell in the same “world” and this means that people from different “worlds” are likely to experience reality differently. That insight is important to keep in mind in the examination of theories of cultural globalization in the next chapter: “global phenomena” are likely to be experienced differently by humans dwelling in different “worlds”.

What is it that Heidegger means by “world”? An important feature of “world” is that it very much consists of relations, as mentioned before a hammer is a hammer not by itself but by its position in a “world”:

Strictly speaking there “is” no such thing as *a* useful thing. There always belongs to the being of a useful thing a totality of useful things in which this useful thing can be what it is.⁸⁸

The hammer cannot *be* alone; the hammer needs other useful things in order to be the meaningful object it is. The hammer *is* in relation to nails, boards, and furniture just like nails, boards, and furniture *are* in relation to the hammer.

In accordance with their character of utility, useful things are always *in terms of* their belonging to other useful things: writing utensils, pen, ink, paper, desk blotter, table, lamp, furniture, window, doors, room. [...] A totality of useful things is always already discovered *before* the individual useful thing.⁸⁹

All these useful things refer to one and another and the meaning of each thing seems to be constituted by its position in a referential whole. The relationships in this referential whole can be stated in terms of “what-fors”, “in-order-tos”, and “for-the-sake-of-whichs”. A hammer is used *for* hammering nails, nails that are used *for* assembling boards. This hammering and assembling are done *in order to* build a house. But why does one build houses? One builds houses *for the sake of* protecting oneself from the environment. The relationships within this referential whole of “what-fors”, “in-order-tos”, and “for-the-sake-of-whichs” constitutes the hammer as a meaningful object: the hammer would not *be* if there were not nails, boards, and the need to protect oneself from the environment. Imagine an isolated tribe in Amazonas whose people sleeps under wind-shields of twinned branches (they know nothing about nails and boards and houses). One day a plane crashes nearby and in the plane-wreck one of the tribesmen finds a hammer. The point here is that the hammer is not a hammer for him: placed in the referential whole that constitutes the tribesman’s “world” the thing he is holding in his hand is a weapon and not a hammer. Now, a hammer is perhaps not the best example because it seems to be available in most cultures. However, the point I want to make is that it is “in-the-world”, from the relationships in the referential whole, that the individual object gets its meaning:

⁸⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 68 [68]

⁸⁹ Ibid: p. 68-69 [68-69]

These relations are interlocked among themselves as a primordial totality. They are what they are as this signifying in which Dasein gives itself to understand its being-in-the-world beforehand. We shall call this relational totality of signification *significance* [*Bedeutsamkeit*]. It is what constitutes the structure of the world, of that in which Dasein as such already is.⁹⁰

The world is a *primordial totality* in which objects are significant (meaningful). Thus, according to Heidegger, the fact that we experience objects as significant shows that we already are familiar with the totality that is the world: we must now the totality before we can know the individual object. What is of major importance here is that Dasein is *always already* “in-the-world”. Objects are meaningful for us and therefore we are always already “in-the-world”. To be human is to experience meaningful objects and this one can do only if one is “in-the-world”. This world is a “human world” because:

*Dasein is the ontic condition of the possibility of the discovery of beings with the kind of being of relevance (handiness) which are encountered in a world and that can thus make themselves known in their in-itself.*⁹¹

Thus, there is no “world” without Dasein. However, by the same token, there is no Dasein without “world” for Dasein is essentially “being-in-the-world”. What I think is important now is to focus on the statement that Dasein is always already “in-the-world”. Here we need to elaborate a bit around Heidegger’s notion of *thrownness*, i.e. Dasein’s essentially *thrown* character.

We shall call this character of being of Dasein which is veiled in its whence and whither, but in itself all the more openly disclosed, this “that it is”, the *thrownness* [*Geworfenheit*] of its being into its there; it is thrown in such a way that it is there as being-in-the-world.⁹²

Dasein is swept along in thrownness, that is, as something thrown into the world, it loses itself in the “world” in its being factually dependent on what is to be taken care of.⁹³

We as human beings essentially experience the reality as significant and meaningful and this means that we are *always already* “in-the-world” because to be “in” and possess an understanding of the “world” is a condition for experiencing reality as significant. However, the way in which the world is disclosed is not of our choosing; it has *always already* been disclosed for us. The way one uses hammers, nails, and boards is not something that oneself decided it has always already been decided beforehand. *To be a human being means to have been delivered over to/thrown into a “world” that is not of one’s own making.* I cannot

⁹⁰ Ibid: p. 85 [87]

⁹¹ Ibid: p. 85 [87]

⁹² Ibid: p. 131 [135]

⁹³ Ibid: p. 332 [348]

here go into of how one becomes thrown into the world, this probably have to do with the process of socializing children (here Wittgenstein's ideas about how the child learns it first language can be of interest). The important point here is that when one starts to using language and acting intentionally one has already been thrown into a "world".

Heidegger's insights are major of importance for my investigation. For one thing they are a complement to my definition of "culture" above, I use Heidegger's insights to justify my statement that culture to a great extent determine not only our actions and behavior but also the way we experience reality. I think that it is fair to say that the "world" into which Dasein is thrown is a cultural world, this because it determines the *meaning/significance* of objects. Man is essentially a cultural animal and as such he is "in-the-world", a cultural world within which reality is *always already* disclosed beforehand.

I want to stress that Heidegger's insights indeed can be used in my investigation. The hammer-example is perhaps not the best one to illustrate how Heidegger's concept of "world" is very similar to the concept of "culture" used here. The hammer is experienced *as* a hammer all over the world and this seems to imply that (almost) the whole of the world population is "in" the same "world". If I conceive of "world" as "culture" does not the fact that the hammer is experienced *as* a hammer basically everywhere imply that there exists a universal global culture (since the hammer *means* the same to almost all people)? This does not necessarily have to be the case, it can be the case that all particular "worlds" have similarities in that they all contain "what-fors", "in-order-tos" and "for-the-sake-of-whichs" that makes it possible for the hammer to *be* a hammer. However, that such similarities exist does not mean that a universal "world" exists, this can be illustrated if one applies Heidegger's insights when analyzing objects of more symbolic nature. We can use the *burqa* as an example: the burqa is probably very differently experienced by Frenchmen in France than by Afghans in Afghanistan. One can argue that this is because that most Frenchmen in France is "in" a "world" that is not the same as the "world" that most Afghans in Afghanistan are "in". Frenchmen and Afghans are children of different cultures, they are "in" different "worlds" and that is why the burqa often evokes feelings in France that it seldom evokes in Afghanistan. Thus, even though it perhaps was not (I do not know) Heidegger's intention to provide a definition of "culture" by his concept of "world" I think that "world" have many similarities with the concept of "culture"/"form of life" and, this being the case, "world" will be used as an complement do my initial definition of "culture" above.

My argument so far has been that there is no global "world" "in" which all human beings are. But will we see the rise of such a common global culture on which new forms of global politics (such as cosmopolitan democracy) can build? This question I will try to answer in the next chapter, always with Heidegger's insights present in the back of my head.

5 Globalization and Culture

The main purpose of this essay is to enquire into the possibilities of that other “present”. If we want to gain some understanding of the possibilities of another “present” we first need to understand the present “present”, something which I have tried to do in this essay. As mentioned, the concept “the present” is borrowed from Michel Foucault and denotes *our* contemporary “culture”/“form of life”/“world” in which *we* dwell and are constituted as subjects. However, *we* – the people of the world – do not dwell in the same “world” and are thus differently constituted; the present “present” is a “present” of particular cultures. As shown in the chapter on national imagination, culture and politics are interpenetrating and mutually constitutive and democratic politics seems to imply a shared form of life (i.e. culture) that it becomes meaningful for a political framework to encompass. Of course, state-led social engineering and cultural politics is sometimes successful in promoting cultural unity and homogeneity but the absence of a world state makes the creation of global cultural unity from above unthinkable. Cosmopolitan democracy seems to imply the universal adoption of a global culture and since this global culture (due to the absence of a world state) will not be imposed from above we need to investigate if it can emerge from below, hence the task of this chapter.

The chapter will be divided into two parts. The first part deal with what can be called the “global human condition”. The argument is that we are now living in “one” world and changes and events must be studied not as isolated but as occurring in a global context. There are different dimensions within this global human condition such as economic, political, and cultural and these dimensions are interpenetrating and mutually affective. Nonetheless my focus will be on the cultural dimension. There is a debate among scholars about the duration of this global human condition: some argue that it is as old as the hills while others argue that it is quite novel. My argument is that even though global interconnectivity can be said to have existed for a very long time we have, from a cultural perspective, seen an intensification and a qualitative change dating back 150 years or so (around the time when the telegraph and telephone were invented); hence in terms of intensification in “cultural flows” we can speak about a new epoch. But does this new epoch imply that a new global/cosmopolitan “present” will emerge in due course? To answer that question is the aim of part two of this chapter. In short the argument in part two will be that the particularity of cultures that makes it possible for particularity to become a problem hinders the emergence of universality, i.e. a universal global culture.

5.1 I

According to Roland Robertson, globalization from a cultural perspective refers:

both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole.⁹⁴

With this definition in mind Robertson dates the take of period of cultural globalization to around 1870. In this period there was a very sharp increase in number and speed of global forms of communication (such as the telegraph and the telephone).⁹⁵ Robertson argues that the most adequate way to describe the general circumstance in which humans find themselves today is that of a “global human condition”.⁹⁶ People all over the world possess a consciousness that we live in “one” world and the rise of this consciousness is very much due to communication technology developed during the “take of period” but also due to newer technological innovations such as the television and the Internet. Thus, although Robertson argues that *minimal* globalization goes further back in time the period after 1870 have priority if we are interested in cultural globalization.

We can contrast the view of Robertson with that of the anthropologists Kajsia Friedman and Jonathan Friedman. They have adopted what they call a “global systemic approach”. According to that approach globalization is something that takes place within global systems:

There is no global space floating above the local. The global is in empirical terms the arena of interaction among localities. The global systemic refers to the logic or logics of such interactions, that is, the processes that emerge from such interactions. Globalization is a phenomenon that occurs *within* already existent global systems.⁹⁷

I will return to the concept “the local” in the succeeding part of this chapter. For now it suffices to make a few remarks on the global systemic approach. I cannot go in to an empirical debate with Friedman & Friedman; however, I think that they present some interesting insights when introducing their global systemic approach. For example:

[T]he isolated “tribes” of anthropological mythology are not leftovers from the Paleolithic, but historical outcomes.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Robertson, Roland, *Globalization. Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1992), p. 8

⁹⁵ Ibid: p. 59

⁹⁶ Robertson, Roland, “Mapping the Global Condition: Globalization as the Central Concept”, in: Featherstone, Mike (ed.), *Global Culture. Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1990), pp. 15-18

⁹⁷ Friedman, Kajsia & Friedman, Jonathan, “Introduction”, in: *Historical Transformations. The Anthropology of Global Systems* (Plymouth: Altamira Press, 2008), p. 4

⁹⁸ Ibid: p. 4

The point Friedman & Friedman are trying to make is that cultures have never been the isolated entities that often has been assumed in much anthropological theory. To understand a particular culture one must investigate how it has emerged from interactions within the global system. In this sense cultural globalization can be said to be as old as the hills:

[T]he global is not new, nor is globalization. The global is at least as old as commercial civilizations, and in more general structural terms, it is as old as human social organization.⁹⁹

I agree with Friedman & Friedman in this. However, I also agree with Robertson in that there was a “take off period” in the 1870s. To justify my standpoint a distinction between *weak*- and *strong* globalization is fruitful. This distinction is borrowed from Jonathan Friedman:

The prerequisite for strong globalization is the homogenization of the local contexts, so that the subjects in different positions in the system have a disposition to attribute the same meaning to the same globalized objects, images, representations, etc. Weak globalization entails that the local assimilates the global into its own realm of practiced meaning. *Strong globalization requires the production of similar kinds of subjects on a global scale.*¹⁰⁰

With this distinction in mind I think that it is plausible to conclude that weak globalization has a long history, cultures have for a long time interacted within a global system but this interaction has not led to the “emergence of similar kinds of subjects on a global scale”. For the most part of human history strong globalization has been unthinkable because the necessary structural conditions have simply not been in place. Robertson’s “take off period” designates a new epoch because this epoch is qualitatively novel compared to previous epochs in human history. With the emergence and spread of the telegraph, the telephone, jet-travel and perhaps even more important, the television and the Internet global cultural interaction has become much more intensive and a part of many people’s everyday life. This is not to say that the spread of these technological innovations are not themselves dependent upon, for example, economical condition such as the Capital’s constant search for new markets. In this sense one can say that globalization is a multidimensional phenomenon.¹⁰¹ I recognize that globalization is multidimensional and consist of a constant interpenetration between economic, political, and cultural processes. Despite this fact I think that it is fruitful, in particular investigations, to focus upon a particular dimension while recognizing that this dimension is embedded in a broader framework.

⁹⁹ Ibid: p. 4

¹⁰⁰ Friedman, Jonathan, *Cultural Identity & Global Process* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), p. 204. *Emphasis added.*

¹⁰¹ Hopper, Paul, *Understanding Cultural Globalization* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 35, p. 83

In the rest of this essay I will investigate into the prospects of what Friedman calls “strong globalization”. We must ask: with the emergence of the structural conditions necessary (but not sufficient) for it will strong globalization unfold and result in the universal spread of a global culture? This is far from sure because, as Anthony D. Smith has argued:

To believe that ‘culture follows structure’, that the techno-economic sphere will provide the conditions and therefore the impetus and content of a global culture, is to be misled once again by the same economic determinism that dogged the debate about ‘industrial convergence’, and to overlook the vital role of common historical experiences and memories in shaping identity and culture.¹⁰²

There is a risk here that my investigation becomes speculative and far-fetched. To avoid falling into such lofty speculations as the Socrates in Aristophane’s *The Clouds* I will focus my investigation on “the present”. However, Foucault himself wrote that his critique of “the present” would not:

deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know.¹⁰³

Do I really have the right to rule out a future simply because that future does not fit into the narrowness of “the present”? Perhaps not. However, I am not going to propose that strong globalization is logically impossible; what I am going to say is that with “the present” in mind successful strong globalization has dire prospects.

5.2 II

Ergo, the structural conditions making strong globalization theoretically possible have emerged and have been in place for some time. Alas, a universal global culture cannot be deduced from their presence, there are other structures *within* this “global human condition” that can hinder us from reaching the end of history. Will these “structures” – these particular cultures – dissolve into something greater, into something universal? Of course, we cannot be sure of tomorrow: 1989 many inhabitants of Berlin thought that “The Wall” would remain “for hundreds of years”. However, there are walls that, even though they are invisible to the eye, appear to be far more solid than “die Mauer”. These are walls that provide people with feelings of safety; walls that many people are prepared to fight *for*, not against. Populations within these walls, as well as the exact shape of the walls themselves, might change. Nonetheless walls in plural are likely to remain and even though I see myself as more of a destruction- than a construction worker the rest of this part will very much be an account of the continued solidity of walls.

¹⁰² Smith, Anthony D., “Towards a Global Culture?”, in: Featherstone, Mike, *Global Culture. Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1990), p. 180

¹⁰³ Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment”, p. 46

There is not very much consensus within this field of investigation. In an attempt of bringing some order I will divide the rest of this part into three sections.

In the first section I will argue that culture has been increasingly deterritorialized: through transport- and communications technology “cultures” flow around the world, penetrating the life-worlds of many individuals. However, even though individuals all-over the world have access to the “same” cultural flows these flows are interpreted differently due to the fact that people are dwelling “in” different “localities”.

In the second section I thus argue that the processes within the “global human condition” must be understood as global-local dialectics: global processes are made meaningful within local contexts but at the same time these global processes are changing “the local”. Successful strong globalization would be the emergence of a single global locality, a global culture within which similar kinds of subjects are produced.

In the third part I argue that while localities will probably undergo structural changes they are likely to remain in the plural.

5.2.1 Cultural Deterritorialization and Global Flows

This is one aspect of what deterritorialization may involve: the ever-broadening horizon of relevance in people’s routine experience, removing not only general ‘cultural awareness’ but, crucially, the processes of individual ‘life planning’ from a self-contained context centered on physical locality or politically defined territory.¹⁰⁴

As mentioned previously it may be the case that there never was such a thing as “self-contained contexts centered on physical localities”. Nevertheless, I think that it is plausible to argue that with innovations in communications- and transport technologies culture and place have to a good extent become detached from each other; often one need not to be in a particular place to experience aspects of a particular culture. As Ulf Hannerz argues:

[T]his is a time when transnational connections are becoming increasingly varied and pervasive with large or small implications for human life and culture.¹⁰⁵

The “transnational connections” that Hannerz mentions are not one-directional: Congolese men travel to Paris and then back to Brazzaville again bringing influences back and forth; in Kabul a rock-festival takes place while Swedish tourists eat an Afghan buffet in London. You don’t even have to travel to come in to contact in to other cultures, you can sit comfortably in front of your television or your computer. Every day one experiences the intensified “deterritorialization

¹⁰⁴ Tomlinson, John, *Globalization and Culture* (London: Polity Press, 1999), p. 115; Rantanen, Tehri, *The Media and Globalization* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), pp. 96ff

¹⁰⁵ Hannerz, Ulf, *Transnational Connections. Culture People Places* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.4

of cultures” which often appear “banal” to us.¹⁰⁶ But what ramifications will result from these “banalities”? Will this cultural deterritorialization, this multidirectional spread of cultures into every corner of the Earth eventually lead to homogenization and the universal spread of a global culture? Some Scholars argue that there exist a class of “cosmopolitans” sharing a common culture that traverse national boundaries:

Capitalist cosmopolitans have indeed traversed the globe, from early modern merchants to today’s World Bank officials and venture capitalists. They have forged relations that cross the borders of nation-states.¹⁰⁷

These cosmopolitans does not necessarily have to be capitalists exploring new markets, they can also be artists and intellectuals.¹⁰⁸ The point is that among these frequent travelers, who are spending more time with people originating from other cultures than with co-members of their own culture, there might develop a distinct culture and in this sense one can talk of homogenization taking place. However, this kind of homogenization (if it takes place at all) is surely an elite phenomenon. Most people live their life “in” their localities and it is within these localities that they experience the effects of cultural deterritorialization. Hence, to understand the potential effects of cultural deterritorialization we must first clarify what we mean by “locality”.

I attach a similar meaning to “locality” as Arjun Appadurai, that is, locality is where the production of meaning takes place. The scale and space of locality is an empirical question: localities can vary in size and scope.¹⁰⁹ As locality is where meaning is produced the word have a similar meaning as Heidegger’s concept “world” and human beings thus are “in” their localities since Dasein is “in-the-world” . “Locality”, “Form of life”, “World”, “Culture” – these are all different words but their meaning is basically the same in this essay. The nation appears to be the locality “in” which many people is (my investigation of national imagination seems to show that). Nonetheless the scope and shape of locality is an empirical question.

The essential point here is that humans are living “in” localities and this is what makes it possible for reality to appear meaningful for us. This fact one must keep in mind if one wants to investigate the implications of cultural deterritorialization.

¹⁰⁶ Beck, Ulrich, *Den kosmopolitiska blicken* (Göteborg: Daidalos, 2004), pp. 72ff

¹⁰⁷ Calhoun, Craig, “The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers: Towards a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism”, in: Vertovec, Steven & Cohen, Robin (eds.), *Concieving Cosmopolitanism. Theory, Context, and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 103

¹⁰⁸ Hannerz, Ulf, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture”, in: Featherstone, Mike, *Global Culture. Globalization, Nationalism and Modernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1990), pp. 242ff

¹⁰⁹ Appadurai, Arjun, *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 178, pp. 184f

5.2.2 Global-Local

Globalization does not necessarily or even frequently imply homogenization or Americanization, and to the extent that different societies *appropriate* the materials of modernity differently, there is still ample room for the deep study of specific geographies, histories, and languages.¹¹⁰

The globalization of culture is not the same as its homogenization, but globalization involves the use of a variety of instruments of homogenization (armaments, advertising techniques, language hegemonies, clothing styles and the like), which are *absorbed into* local political and cultural economies.¹¹¹

One argument against far-going global cultural homogenization, i.e. strong globalization, is simply that it is within the “world” that reality becomes meaningful. As human beings we are essentially “in-the-world” we “appropriate” and “absorb” the phenomena let loose by cultural deterritorialization into our “world”. The “same” phenomena are thus likely to affect people differently due to the fact that people are “in” different localities and this affects the way people interprets phenomena. And as the “same” phenomena are differently interpreted within different localities they are not the same phenomena in a strict sense. The hammer is a hammer in most “worlds” but it can also be a weapon, and thus:

[T]o understand how media and communications technologies and the flows that they generate are contributing to [cultural] globalization, then we need to examine how they are being *mediated* by individuals and groups *within different contexts*.¹¹²

Globe-wide phenomena are interpreted by people dwelling in different cultural localities and are thereby affecting people differently; this fact undermines claims made by theories of global cultural homogenization. But what about the localities themselves? Are they really static entities which resist change? Probably not:

[W]hile there is surely a tendency towards a local encompassment of the global in cultural terms, there is at the same time an encompassment of the local by the global in material terms. And there is, finally, a continuous articulation between the two processes.¹¹³

Cultural flows in the global system are interpreted within local contexts but, at the same time, these processes are also changing the structure of these localities. Exactly how global processes are interpreted and how they change the structure of localities can only be answered in empirical investigations and here is much work

¹¹⁰ Ibid: p. 17

¹¹¹ Appadurai, Arjun, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy”, in: Featherstone, Mike (ed.), *Global Culture. Globalization, Nationalism and Modernity*. (London: Sage Publications, 1990), p. 307

¹¹² Paul Hopper, *Understanding Cultural Globalization*, p. 85. *Emphasis added*.

¹¹³ Jonathan Friedman, *Cultural Identity & Global Process*, p. 12

to be done. I will only make some general remarks regarding this issue, my argument is that the structure of localities will probably change but particular localities are likely to remain.

5.2.3 Not All That Is Solid Melts into Air

The end-state of strong globalization would be a global “locality” (an universal global culture) in which similar kinds of subjects would be produced. These subjects would all understand each other both in actions and words and they would experience reality in the same way because they would all be “in” the same “world”. However, perhaps a global culture:

answers to no living needs, no identity-in-the-making. [...] The central difficulty in any project to construct a global identity and hence a global culture, is that collective identity, like imagery and culture, is always historically specific because it is based on shared memories and a sense of continuity between generations.¹¹⁴

I don't think “lack of historical specificity” must be included in a definition of “global culture”. What I do think is that the particularities of cultural localities hinder the development of universal historical specificity. Surely, as global processes are made meaningful within localities structural changes of these localities may take place:

[A]s these local subjects engage in the social activities of production, representation, and reproduction (as in the work of culture), they contribute, generally unwittingly, to the creation of contexts [...] ¹¹⁵

Localities will probably change, perhaps profoundly, as a result of the high degree of cultural deterritorialization. But as Appadurai implies, the exact composition of new contexts (i.e. localities) is hard to predict for the process is not an intentional one. Thus, the results of this global-local dialectic which is taking place is not only the indigenization of global processes, it is also the changing of the localities in which the global processes are interpreted. It may be the case that cultural localities become increasingly (inter)mixed in the sense that they are made up of sources drawn from other cultures.¹¹⁶ However, increased intermixing of different cultural localities is not the same as universalization. The particular cultures of today which man is “in” (since Dasein is essentially “being-in-the-world”) serve a need: they provide man with the “meanings”, which Nietzsche argues, has become a condition of life. To be “in” a historically specific culture provide a comfort to man and prevents him from falling prey to nihilism. Anthony D. Smith argues that

¹¹⁴ Anthony D. Smith, “Towards a Global Culture?”, p. 180

¹¹⁵ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 185

¹¹⁶ See for example: Nederveen Pieterse, Jan, *Globalization and Culture. Global Mélange* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), p. 86, p. 91

past and present cultures have served precisely the need of giving comfort to human beings by making loss, grief and death meaningful.¹¹⁷ As man, according to Nietzsche, once upon a time became “a visionary animal” he became addicted to meaning, an addiction that is satisfied by being “in” a culture. Hence my investigation of national imagination shows, I think, that the nation (as secular religion) evokes such passion from many because it provides many humans with the “meaning” that the need in order to live a happy life. By this I don’t mean to say that the nation is the cultural locality, the “world”, in which all humans are “in” but I do think that one must understand national imagination if one wants to understand the “present”.

The fact that, throughout human history, humankind’s “meaning-addiction” has been satisfied by particular cultures seems to be something that prevents the current global-local dialectic to result in the universal spread of a global culture. To me it seems impossible for a global culture to be specific to the degree required of it if it is to serve the need that particular cultures have done up to this point. The walls that encompass us seem solid indeed.

¹¹⁷ Smith, Anthony D., *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (London: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 22-24

6 Conclusion

Cosmopolitan democracy is advocated by many because globalization, it is argued, has made both problems and ways of solving those problems global in scope. However, as argued in this essay there is a mutually affective relationship between politics and culture. Human beings are “in” the same culture and share a common form of life within which meaningful behavior and experience is possible. It is meaningful for people sharing a common culture to be encompassed, and regulated, by a common framework of political institutions. The present “present” is a “present” where different people are “in” different particular cultures and cosmopolitan democracy cannot thrive in such circumstances: when particular claims of culture are in conflict with those of the Cosmopolis people are likely to stick to and, fight for, their culture because it is only within culture that humans’ craving for meaning is satisfied. For cosmopolitan democracy to be plausible the universal spread of a global culture seems to be required.

We are unlikely to ever see the rise and spread of such a global culture. In the chapter on national imagination we saw that creation and spread of culture can be a result of political efforts undertaken by the state (even though such “cultural engineering”, as Anthony D. Smith argues often seems to draw upon already existent “cultural resources”). But there exists no world-state which can promote a global culture and neither is one likely to ever exist (from many perspectives a world-state would be a terrible thing since it would require such an enormous amount of power). The question then becomes whether we will see the unfolding and universal spread of a global culture from “below”. My answer is no, for various reasons. For one thing, global processes that results from cultural deterritorialization do not result in universalization because these processes are made meaningful within different “worlds”/cultural localities and thus affects people differently. Although the global-local dialectic (the confrontation with global processes by local subjects that are “in-the-world”) also results in structural changes of the cultural localities themselves this does not mean that localities are dissolving into a global culture. The particular cultural localities of the past and the present which human beings are “in” serve a need in that they provide their subjects with the “meanings” that they so badly need in order to be calm and happily go on with their daily lives. The “truth” of nihilism is not good for life; hence, “error” (as Nietzsche conceived of it) might be among the conditions of life. The fact that particular cultural localities (at present the nation is the most common) have served this fundamental human need successfully throughout the whole of human history hinders the unfolding and spread of a global culture since such a culture cannot claim the “historical specificity” particular cultures so successfully adhere to. Thus the existent particularity that makes it possible for particularity to be thought of as problematic itself stands in the way for the

solution of the problem of particularity. The existence of particular cultures, “forms of life”, “worlds” which human beings are “in” stand in the way for the emergence of a global culture and this also means that cosmopolitan democracy is very unlikely to ever emerge and be successful.

7 Executive Summary

The most general aim of this essay is to examine some aspects of human reality and their potentiality. It is argued that humans are essentially cultural animals and that there is a fundamental and mutually affective relationship between culture and politics and from this perspective the plausibility of cosmopolitan democracy is examined.

To examine potentiality one needs knowledge about actuality. Hence, the in the first main part is devoted to “the present”. The concept “the present” is used in this essay to denote contemporary human reality and it is argued that the present “present” is a “present” of cultural particularity and it is in this context that the nation-state is meaningful. In the first part the emergence of national imagination is analyzed and a reading of leading theories on the nation and nationalism shows that national imagination is the result of the productive relationship that exist between culture and politics. The examination of theories about the nation and nationalism shows us that modern national imagination is to a great extent a result of politics, that is, a state-led effort. Nonetheless, this state-led effort has in many cases often drawn upon pre-existing cultural resources.

An important argument in the essay is that cosmopolitan democracy implies the universal spread of a “global culture” and the example of national imagination shows that such a global culture, in theory, can result from political efforts. However, the absence of a “world-state” means that it is not possible for a global culture to be imposed from above. The absence of a world-state means that in order to examine the possibility of the emergence of a global culture necessary for cosmopolitan democracy an examination of the possibilities of the emergence of a global culture from “below” must be undertaken, a reading of sociological- and anthropological theories about “cultural globalization” is useful to achieve some understanding in this matter. The examination of such theories about cultural globalization is undertaken in the last main chapter of the essay and the conclusion resulting from that examination is that even though globalization has lead to cultural deterritorialization cultural flows are differently interpreted due to the fact that people lives “in” different particular cultures.

The specific way these particular cultures are constituted will probably change but the global state of cultural particularity is not likely to change. Why? An important reason is that existing particular cultures serves a fundamental human need. Human beings are cultural animals and this means that humans experience the world as significant and behave in meaningful ways. Culture and “meaning” are inseparable: it is only “within” culture that the existence of meaning is possible. An examination of the philosophy of Nietzsche and Heidegger shows us that meaningfulness is essential to human beings: in order to live a normal and happy life human beings need meaningfulness. Meaningfulness is atmosphere, nihilism is vacuum and one cannot breathe in vacuum. The fact

that throughout history particular cultures have provided this meaningfulness is something that makes the emergence of a global culture implausible and this fact makes the prospects for cosmopolitan democracy dire indeed.

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