

MULTICULTURAL HISTORIANS: THE ASSAULT ON WESTERN CIVILIZATION AND DEFILEMENT OF THE HISTORICAL PROFESSION, PART II: THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

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META-EMPIRICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS IN MULTICULTURAL HISTORY

Part I of this article dealt mainly with Patrick O'Brien's writings on the Scientific Revolution.¹ The present article continues my examination of recent scholarship on the Scientific Revolution, beginning with a review of Toby Huff's *Intellectual Curiosity and the Scientific Revolution: A Global Perspective*² by Ting Xu and Khodadad Rezakhani in the *Journal of World History*, a leading journal in the field.³ Both authors completed their PhDs in Western universities, respectively at the London School of Economics (LSE), and UCLA; both have been closely associated with the Global Economic History Network (GEHN) headed by Professor O'Brien. Both came to England as international students (Rezakhani first coming to obtain a master's degree at the LSE), and both appear to be citizens or permanent residents in Western countries. Xu is currently teaching at Queen's Law School, Belfast, and Rezakhani is back at LSE as a "Research Officer."

The GEHN is the product of cooperation across five partner institutions (LSE, the University of California-Irvine, UCLA, Leiden University, and Osaka University). It promotes England to the world and to potential international students as an ideal cosmopolitan place for the mixing of cultures and races against the "parochial" identity of the British

¹ Ricardo Duchesne, "Multicultural Historians: The Assault on Western Civilization and Defilement of the Historical Profession, Part I: Patrick O'Brien on the Scientific Revolution," *The Occidental Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 53–72.

² Toby Huff, *Intellectual Curiosity and the Scientific Revolution: A Global Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

³ Ting Xu and Khodadad Rezakhani, "Reorienting the Discovery Machine: Perspectives from China and Islamdom," *Journal of World History* 23, no. 2 (June 2012): 401–12.

past. The “Mission Statement” of GEHN, in operation since 2003, and consisting of some 49 international academics backed by numerous grants, distinctly states that this network “seeks to broaden and deepen people’s understanding of themselves, their cultures and their states by *extending the geographical spaces* and lengthening the chronologies that most historians normally take into their narratives and analyses” (emphasis added).⁴ It further states, and this passage is worth quoting and clarifying:

Aspirations to transcend the confines of personal, local, national and European history go back to Herodotus and were certainly present in histories published in the medieval era of Christendom. They blossomed in secular form during the Enlightenment, almost disappeared during the centuries which witnessed the Rise of the West, but have revived again during recent decades of intensified globalization and multiculturalism. (Emphasis added.)

The claim is that Europeans were generally seeking to “transcend” their national parochialism from ancient times through to the Enlightenment era. But then they became too flattered with their dominion over the world during the nineteenth century (“the Rise of the West”) and, consequently, they lost interest in overcoming their ethnocentric biases; however, with the intensification of globalization and multiculturalism, there has been a revival of this transcendence, so that Europeans are escaping their confining nationalisms. Never mind that the Greeks only granted citizenship to ethnic members of the *polis* and that during the nineteenth century Europeans were exceptionally curious (anthropologically) about other cultures, eagerly writing the histories of non-Europeans in a scholarly manner.

The point to note is that the professors working or hired into this program, including the students, are expected to accept this political mission. Multiculturalism is accepted without definition, without analysis, and without debate about its costs to Europeans. The research publications of the members of GEHN, in their varying ways, are consistent with the mission statement. The central premise of multiculturalism—that all cultures are equal in achievements and merit—is accepted *ab initio*. GEHN takes it for granted that England’s (and Europe’s) “intensified

⁴ GEHN, “Mission Statement.”

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/economicHistory/Research/GEHN/network/GEHNMission.aspx>

globalization" ought to come with multiculturalism (and mass immigration), without making it a subject of research. Nor is there any interest in asking whether Asian nations, too, should be experiencing globalization while undermining their own national identities and inviting their countries to be flooded by immigrants.

The history mandated by GEHN, then, cannot be seen in neutral, purely empirical terms, but as an ideological mission to promote an interpretation of Europe's history that suits the increasingly multiracial character of Western nations and is consistent with cultural egalitarianism. This does not mean that there are no debates over various factual matters and comparative assessments of the regions of the world. However, the overall tenor and objective of the program is geared toward the internationalization of a particular ideology of European culture from a pro-immigrant, multicultural perspective.

Maxine Berg, a major GEHN member and Director of the Global History and Culture Centre (GHCC) at the University of Warwick, eloquently expresses the same aim: a "global approach to historical questions and research."⁵ The mission is not to encourage a global history because it is a more empirically in tune with the evidence, but to promote a "global culture," and a new way of writing the history of Europe by "going beyond borders and pursuing wider concepts of connectedness and cosmopolitanism." Included among her many appointments and fellowships are European Research Council Fellow (2010–2014), and Director of the European Research Council Fellowship project, "Europe's Asian Centuries: Trading Eurasia 1600–1830." Regarding the latter, Berg writes triumphantly that "the 21st Century has witnessed a new Asian ascendancy over the West. Europe has lost the manufacturing catalyst of textiles, ceramics and metal goods back to India and China."

Don't expect to find a similar expression about the ascendancy of Europe "over Asia" after 1500. To the contrary, any talk of "ascendancy" by the West has been suppressed unless it is about imperialism and unfair trade advantages; England may have experience the "first" industrial revolution but this can only be explained in terms of "Chinese, Indian, and African antecedents."⁶

⁵ Maxine Berg, ed., *Writing the History of the Global: Challenges for the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press/British Academy, 2013).

⁶ Patrick O'Brien, "Provincializing the First Industrial Revolution," Working Papers of the Global Economic History Network (GEHN) No. 17/06 (2006).

The Marxist orientation of the GHCC's teaching and research is apparent in a booklet celebrating its fifth anniversary:

Focal points developed based on the specialism of Centre members, including the material culture of global connections, post-colonial theory, comparisons in technology, frameworks of local and regional histories, Chinese cities in global context, Caribbean and Spanish American trade and slavery, African decolonization, Indian Ocean diasporas, and South and East Asian health and medicine.⁷

The "Selected Publications" from its members are overwhelmingly about Europe's slave colonies, and Asia's and Africa's liberation and beautiful cultural tapestries—thus ignoring: (1) the slavery that was endemic throughout the non-Western world, and (2) the unique role Europeans played in abolishing slavery for moral reasons.⁸

The review of Huff's *Intellectual Curiosity and the Scientific Revolution* by Xu and Rezakhani cannot be adequately evaluated without an awareness of these meta-empirical objectives. Both Xu and Rezakhani are leftist in their politics, believers in multiculturalism and mass immigration, and well-trained in the prevailing academic orthodoxies. Rezakhani can be easily classified as an Iranian nationalist thoroughly committed to Marxist or world-systems theory, steeped in the anti-Western writings of Immanuel Wallerstein, Janet Abu Lughod, James Blaut, and Andre Gunder Frank. He is an enthusiastic advocate of "an alternative, non-Eurocentric, and truly global history." Xu is quieter; her parents survived Mao's Cultural Revolution, but she has embraced Western cultural Marxism, though she likely has no idea what this term means; either way, she lists Kenneth Pomeranz's Marxist text, *The Great Divergence*,⁹ as one of the "seminal" books in her education, along with

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/economicHistory/Research/GEHN/GEHNPdf/WorkingPaper17-POB.pdf>

⁷ *Global History and Centre at the University of Warwick: 2007–2012 5th Anniversary*.

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/ghcc/140197_ghcc_a5_7th_proof.pdf

⁸ Kevin MacDonald, "Empathy and Moral Universalism as Components of White Pathology: The Movement to Abolish Slavery in England," *The Occidental Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 39–63.

⁹ Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*¹⁰ and other books which condemn Western neoliberal imperialism.

In using the term "meta-empirical," I am drawing loosely on Ludwig Wittgenstein's argument that all discursive claims are ultimately framed by language games which the proponents of particular discourses do not subject to probing questions, but accept for moral or politically motivated reasons. I would not thereby conclude that the evidence a discourse marshals in support of its claims is subsidiary or incidental to its normative goals or that it is all a matter of language games contesting for rhetorical and political influence. Different discourses generate different types of evidential support, and some discourses have a keener appreciation and commitment to the evidence available. But Wittgenstein is correct to alert us to the presence in all discourses of language games or meta-political norms which stand independently of the evidence and are generally taken for granted.

The meta-empirical norms of multicultural historians are not explicitly stated in their arguments, but the promotion of diversity and immigrant racial mixing is certainly a key norm driving their historical interpretations. In the review-essay under examination these norms are understated, neutralized, and normalized, as if they were purely methodological in character; accordingly, their advocates don't feel obligated to offer justifications for them. Xu and Rezakhani thus write gently in their conclusion:

His [i.e., Huff's] comparative study could have been more persuasive if he had adopted a framework of "two-way comparisons." Instead of asking "why not" questions, such reciprocal comparisons establish what was similar about Chinese/Islamic and European proto-science before examining what was different. Instead of asking simply "Why Europe?" and "Why not China or the Islamic world?" historians need to observe and elaborate upon similarities while appreciating contrasts. (412)

Xu and Rezakhani cite Pomeranz's *The Great Divergence* and Bin Wong's *China Transformed* as exemplary examples of this "two-way" comparative "method."¹¹ It should be called "attitude" rather than

¹⁰ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944).

¹¹ Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

“method.” From this “two-way,” “reciprocal” perspective, Pomeranz and Wong concluded that Europe and Asia were “surprisingly similar” in their institutions and economic development as late as 1800. The industrial revolution was a late occurrence arising from a series of fortunate accidents and “conjunctural” tendencies within the “capitalist international economy.” It is not that Pomeranz and Wong did not collect any evidence; actually, they were both quite astute in gathering evidence. But their evidence was framed according to an attitude in which the industrial revolution had to be seen as equally probable in both Europe and Asia. With this method, there can never be a prognosis, a foreseeing, an examination of extrapolative indicators, in such a way that one region is given priority (or not) in the search for indicators; rather, the investigator is precluded from “assuming” that one region or country *did* (or *did not*) experience an industrial revolution first.

Huff, however, is an old-school historian, who goes for evidence where he thinks it is likely to be, searching as well for contrary evidence and contradicting arguments. When he started *Intellectual Curiosity and the Scientific Revolution*, he was not guessing or “supposing” that Europe invented the telescope and microscope; the evidence was already irrefutable that it *did*, and that Asia *did not*. But for Xu and Rezakhani, this is not a “two-way” approach; Huff is not being “reciprocal,” that is, mutual and equivalent in his suppositions. He made the mistake of posing the “binary” question: why *did* Europe embrace the invention of telescopes and microscopes? And, conversely: why did China, Mughal India, and the Ottoman Empire *not* show curiosity for these quintessential instruments of scientific discovery? These instruments were actually brought to China and India, but their elites showed little enthusiasm for them.

The second instance in which Xu and Rezakhani silently exhibit this multicultural normative evaluation of the evidence comes in the contrast they draw between Huff’s “clash of civilizations” approach and their “dialogue of civilizations” approach. The word “clash” is defined in dictionaries as: “To collide with a loud, harsh, usually metallic noise; to create an unpleasant visual impression when placed together; a conflict, as between opposing or irreconcilable ideas; an encounter between hostile forces.” The word “dialogue” is defined in reverse terms: “conversation between two or more persons; an exchange of ideas or opinions, especially a political or religious issue, with a view to reaching an amicable agreement or settlement.”

Clearly, Huff does not have the right attitude. Whereas Xu and Rezakhani are frankly trying to debate in a good-natured, give-and-take

manner, Huff is setting Europe above Asia, creating an unpleasant impression among Chinese and Iranian students, who may feel left out, and nurturing an aggressive, strident attitude among European natives, who may exhibit vain pride.

The Greeks were the first to nurture the idea that truth is best attained through a dialogue rather than commandments imposed from above as was the norm in the East. This dialogical style was adopted by Islamic scholars early in the ninth century, but as a way of determining Islamic orthodoxy through consensus. The scholastics of medieval Europe developed this method in a more intricate direction, along the lines of the following schema: (1) thesis and counter-thesis; (2) arguments for the thesis; (3) objections to the argument; (4) replies to the objections; (5) pseudo-arguments for the counter-thesis; and (6) replies in refutation of the pseudo-arguments.¹² Catholic scholastics would engage major works by renowned authors, read them thoroughly, then compare the book's theories to other sources, and through a series of dialogues they would ascertain the respective merits and demerits of these sources.

This did not imply that any argument expressed by anyone was taken to be on an equal footing and therefore deserving to be considered along with currently accepted ideas. Today, world historians are misusing this dialectical method to push through the notion that the ideas the West achieved through this method are incomplete unless they are integrated with the claims of other civilizations. Some are even pushing the absurd and destructive concept of "Euroislam"¹³ or "Islam-Christian Civilization"¹⁴ as a way to create a more dialogical culture in Europe.

Xu and Rezakhani thus reference Arun Bala's book, *The Dialogue of Civilizations in the Birth of Modern Science*, for its ability to portray the rise of Newtonian mechanics as a friendly conversation involving Chinese mechanical inventions and cosmological views, Indian computational techniques and atomic hypotheses, Arabic planetary and optical theories, and Greek ideas.¹⁵ Bala's dialogical explanation can be summed up in one sentence: Europe's overseas explorations opened the intellectual

¹² George Makdisi, "The Scholastic Method in Medieval Education: An Inquiry into Its Origins in Law and Theology," *Speculum* 49, no. 4 (October 1974): 640-61.

¹³ Bassam Tibi, "Europeanizing Islam or the Islamization of Europe," in *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, ed. Peter Katzenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁴ Richard Bulliet, *The Case for Islam-Christian Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

¹⁵ Arun Bala, *The Dialogue of Civilizations in the Birth of Modern Science* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

corridors of communication and exchange of ideas providing the impetus for the Renaissance and the birth of modern science and philosophy in Europe.¹⁶ H. Floris Cohen demolished this pseudo-argument in one effective paragraph:

Bala's point of departure is that in the history of science a "dialogue of civilizations" is a priori plausible and is *not* in any given case in indispensable need of empirical evidence. He gives body to the point by means of the following criterion, meant to be more strict than Needham's apparent "everything goes" in this regard: "If, shortly after a new corridor of communication opens between a culture A and a culture B, and great interest [is] shown by A to understand B, a theme becomes dominant in A similar to a dominant theme in B, then we can presume that the development of the theme in A was due to the influence of B, even if the new theme had existed as a recessive theme in A prior to contact between the cultures." In practice Bala has now given himself sufficient leeway for what he goes on to do in the remainder of his book. Without a shred of empirical evidence he allows critiques of Ptolemy in the Arabic world to affect Copernicus' thinking, or fifteenth/sixteenth century Indian mathematicians to contribute to Newton's discovery of the calculus, or Shen Kua's late-eleventh century discovery of magnetic declination to culminate in Kepler's laws.

This passage comes from Cohen's review essay, "From West to East, from East to West? Early Science between Civilizations."¹⁷ In his essay, he addresses other similarly argued books, as well as "Eurocentric" books, including Huff's, which he also criticizes. Cohen reproaches Huff for portraying Asians as a people lacking in intellectual curiosity; Huff should have investigated the reasons why Asians were not as enthusiastic for these scientific instruments. In Cohen's view, Huff failed to appreciate the rather different "cultural context" of Asians. It is "Eurocen-

¹⁶ *Dialogue of Civilizations* propelled Bala, from Singapore, into the international academic scene with visiting professorships at University of Toronto, Dalhousie University, and the University of Western Ontario, including conference presentations at the prestigious GEHN, with approving references by leading researcher, Patrick O'Brien. He is now seen, according to *Wikipedia*, as a foremost contributor to the "continuity thesis," and a major voice in the exhaustive debate on Thomas Kuhn's conception of the structure of scientific revolutions.

¹⁷ H. Floris Cohen, "From West to East, from East to West? Early Science between Civilizations," *Early Science & Medicine* 17, no. 3 (June 2012): 339–50.

tric" to presume that the Asians should have exhibited the same curiosity in respect to these instruments; and, besides, adds Cohen, Huff underestimates the resistance to science in Christian Europe proper.

Xu and Rezakhani offer a slightly more elaborated version of this same argument. They say that Huff "failed" to identify the cosmographical or world views of the Chinese; a cultural context, which included the particular ways in which Chinese scholars thought about astronomy, mathematics, mechanics, and so on, which "was strictly controlled by the state and was traditionally conceived in terms of 'correlations between man and the universe' or between the emperor and the heavens rather than an inquiry into the laws of motion and physics of some remote celestial sphere."¹⁸ It was not that the Chinese lacked curiosity, but that they inhabited a different cultural horizon.

This criticism actually reinforces the argument that Europeans were peculiarly scientific in a way that Asians (or the Chinese) were *not in profoundly cultural ways*. Cohen has done extensive research on the question at hand: why was there a scientific revolution in Europe and not elsewhere? What is the point of looking for scientific evidence in a non-European context and then, at the moment one finds out that this context lacked a scientific mentality, concluding that it is unfair to look for scientific motivations in that context?

This way of thinking (which Cohen has assimilated from multiculturalists, leading him to believe that Eurocentrism "still" dominates academia and must be moderated by his middle-of-the-road attitude) is plainly characterized by a "heads I win, tails you lose" style. Tails: "Don't be so Eurocentric in believing that Asians were not equally important to the rise of modern science." Heads: "Don't be so Eurocentric by assuming that Asians should have been as curious in the use of scientific instruments."

The focus of Xu and Rezakhani's review is to highlight the way Asians were the possessors of a legacy as important to science as that of the Europeans up until about 1500. They say that Huff ignores Islamic interest in the study of the vacuum and optics, citing an article from 1964 on the suction pump and a book on Islamic science from 1993. Actually, the vacuum was studied empirically only in the seventeenth century when Evangelista Torricelli produced the first laboratory vacuum in 1643. They attempt to dispute Huff's argument that only Europeans created universities with the institutional quality and autonomy to pur-

¹⁸ Xu and Rezakhani, "Reorienting the Discovery Machine," 408.

sue rationally based knowledge by briefly referring to some alleged Muslim “private foundations generating research comparable in range and quality to the medieval universities of the West.” But the only source they use to back this claim is an Iranian paper three pages long.

They rebuke Huff for relying heavily on *The Rise of Colleges*, a 1981 book by George Makdisi.¹⁹ But what is revealing here is that Makdisi is the author of an article published in 1974, “The Scholastic Method in Medieval Education: An Inquiry into Its Origins in Law and Theology”²⁰ (also cited above), which begins by referencing European scholars who long ago seriously acknowledged the extent of influence of Islamic scholarly culture on the West. Since ancient times, Europeans have acknowledged their debts to others; and throughout the twentieth century countless books and articles have been written by them on the history and accomplishments of other civilizations, and their influence on the West.

What multicultural world historians are doing today is something altogether dissimilar. The research has *never shown* that the sources of modern science were *not* primarily due to Europe’s internal culture and institutions. Instead, all the evidence has shown that Europeans were progenitors of multiple novelties and revolutions (if you read beyond one epoch and contrary to Cohen’s assumption that Western uniqueness is predicated on the seventeenth century): the inventors of universities, ninety-five percent of all the explorers in history,²¹ the cartographic revolution of the sixteenth century,²² the “long” military revolution from 1350 onward, successive industrial revolutions, the Enlightenment, the Greek “discovery” of the mind, politics, geometry, tragedy, and historical writing; the astounding (but until recently underestimated) Roman contribution to technology,²³ besides her much celebrated anticipation of “modern” legal principles; the singular European legacy in classical mu-

¹⁹ George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1981).

²⁰ Makdisi, “The Scholastic Method in Medieval Education.”

²¹ Ricardo Duchesne, “A Civilization of Explorers,” *Academic Questions* 25, no. 1 (March 2012): 65–93.

²² David Buisseret, *The Cartographic Revolution: Mapmaking in Western Europe, 1400–1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

²³ Unfortunately the prevailing view is still the one voiced by Moses Finley that Roman economy was “underdeveloped and underachieving.” Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973). But the research no longer supports this view; see David Mattingly, “The Imperial Economy,” in *A Companion to the Roman Empire*, ed. David Potter (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 283–97.

sis;²⁴ the printing revolution,²⁵ mechanical clocks, changing styles in clothing, architecture, poetry, and literature.

Because of the dearth of data supporting their views, world historians have tacitly decided to frame the debate within a rather pleasant-sounding view that calls for the tolerance and inclusiveness of alternative viewpoints, *notwithstanding the weight of the evidence*. Actually, Xu and Rezakhani don't even try to find evidence against Huff's research on telescopes and microscopes. They simply think that his research "runs contrary to a useful, multilinear study of scientific inquiry and diffusion in premodern world history."

Most of the counterpoints they bring are in the manner of "he says, she says." For example, they question Huff's observation that institutions of learning outside Europe did not enjoy an autonomous status, claiming that there were private academies in Asia that "resembled their European counterparts in other respects." But then they use other sources showing that "studies of the natural world in China became marginal to a concentration on moral and ethical philosophy—especially after Neo-Confucianism became the state orthodoxy from the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) onward."

What a great conversation! Huff says that madrasas were pious centers unlike the curriculum at European universities which, in the words of Edward Grant, "was overwhelmingly analytical and rational."²⁶ But this is too one-sided, so Xu and Rezakhani counter that "many of Europe's medieval universities were also pious, indeed monastic, foundations with closer ties to ecclesiastical and secular hierarchies than many madrasas of the post-thirteenth-century Islamic world." The scholarship prodigiously favors Huff's and Grant's position, but that's not the point. As long as the other side can come up with a source that creates an impression of "balance" and multicultural interconnections, the argument is taken seriously.

This debate is no longer about scholarly comparisons, but about which views fit the creation of a diverse curriculum consistent with mass immigration into Western lands. European historical memory *and* truthful historical scholarship must not be allowed to stand in the way

²⁴ Harold C. Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers* (Preston, UK: Abacus Press, 2006).

²⁵ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

²⁶ Edward Grant, *God and Reason in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 102.

of this meta-empirical goal.

THE ABSURD GLOBALIZATION OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The Enlightenment, always viewed as a European phenomenon and respected in academia for its call upon “humanity” to subject all authority to critical reflection, is also enduring a fundamental revision as a movement that was global in origins and character. This is the view expressed in a recent article, “Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique,” authored by Sebastian Conrad, who holds the Chair of Modern History at Freie University, Berlin.²⁷ This is a “historiographical” assessment based on current trends in the global history of the Enlightenment, not an isolated paper. It was published in *The American Historical Review*, the official publication of the American Historical Association, and since 1895 a pre-eminent journal for the historical profession in the United States.

Conrad calls upon historians to move “beyond the obsession” and the “European mythology” that the Enlightenment was original to Europe:

The assumption that the Enlightenment was a specifically European phenomenon remains one of the foundational premises of Western modernity. . . . The Enlightenment appears as an original and autonomous product of Europe, deeply embedded in the cultural traditions of the Occident. . . . This interpretation is no longer tenable.

Conrad’s “critique” is vacuous, absurd, and unscholarly—a demonstration of the irrational lengths otherwise intelligent Europeans will go in their efforts to promote egalitarianism and affirmative action on a global scale. It is important for defenders of the West to see with clear eyes the extremely weak scholarship standing behind the prestigious titles and “first class” journals where these ideas are disseminated. Conrad’s claims could have been taken seriously only within an academic environment bordering on pathological wishful thinking. (He gratefully acknowledges nine established academic readers plus “the anonymous reviewers” working for the *AHR*). The intended goal of Conrad’s paper is not truth but the dissolution of Europe’s intellectual identity within a mishmash of intercultural connections.

It should be noted, again, that Conrad and the *AHR* are operating

²⁷ Sebastian Conrad, “Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique,” *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (October 2012): 999–1027.

within a normative context dedicated to diversity. The ploy to rob Europeans of their heritage is not an affair restricted to squabbling academics looking for promotion; it is now an established reality in every high school in the West. This can be partly ascertained from a reading of the 2011 AP World History Standard,²⁸ as mandated by the College Board, which was created in 1900 to expand access to higher education, with a current membership of 5,900 of the world's leading educational institutions. This Board is very clear in its mandate that the courses developed for advanced placement in world history (for students to pursue college-level studies while in high school) should "allow students to make crucial *connections* . . . across geographical regions." The overwhelming emphasis of the "curriculum framework" is on "interactions," "connected hemispheres," "exchange and communication networks," "interconnection of the Eastern and Western hemispheres," and so on. For all the seemingly neutral talk about regional connections, the salient feature of this mandate is on how developments *inside Europe* were necessarily shaped by developments occurring in neighboring regions or even the whole world. One rarely encounters an emphasis on how developments in Asia were determined by developments in Europe – unless, of course, they point to the destructive effects of European aggression.

Thus, the Board mandates the teaching of topics such as how "the European colonization of the Americas led to the spread of diseases," how "the introduction of European settlements practices in the Americas often affected the physical environment through deforestation and soil depletion," how "the creation of European empires in the Americas quickly fostered a new Atlantic trade system that included the trans-Atlantic slave trade," and so on. The curriculum is thoroughly Marxist in its accent on class relations, coerced labor, "modes of production," economic change, imperialism, gender, race relations, demographic changes, and rebellions. Europe's contributions to painting, architecture, history writing, philosophy, and science are never highlighted except when they can be interpreted as "ideologies" of the ruling (European) classes.

It is not that the curriculum ignores the obvious formation of non-Western empires, but the weight is always on how, for example, the rise of "new racial ideologies, especially Social Darwinism, facilitated and justified imperialism." Even the overwhelming reality of Europe's con-

²⁸ http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/repository/AP_WorldHistoryCED_Effective_Fall_2011.pdf

tribution to science and technology in the nineteenth and twentieth century is framed as a global phenomenon in which all the regions were equal participants.²⁹

Conrad's article will be seen as normal and readily accepted by future generations accustomed to this "scholarship." Conrad was most likely a student of diversity in Germany. His article seeks to show that recent research has proven false the "standard" Eurocentric interpretation of the Enlightenment. Conrad views this standard interpretation as the "master" narrative today, which continues to exist in the face of mounting evidence against it.

It is true that the Enlightenment is still viewed as uniquely European by a number of well-respected scholars such as Margaret Jacob, Gertrude Himmelfarb, and Roy Porter. In fact, it is the most often referenced Western legacy used by right-wing liberals (or neoconservatives) against the multicultural emphasis on the equality of cultures. These days, defending the West has come down to defending the "universal" values of the Enlightenment—gender equality, freedom of thought, and individual rights—against the "intolerant" particularism of other cultures. The late Christopher Hitchens, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Niall Ferguson, and Pascal Bruckner are some of the most notorious advocates of these values as universal norms that represent all human aspirations. The immigration of non-Europeans in the West poses no menace to them as long as they are transformed into happy consuming liberals.

I have no interest celebrating the West from this cosmopolitan standpoint. It is commonly believed (including by members of the European New Right) that the global interpretation Conrad delineates against a European-centered Enlightenment is itself rooted in the *philosophes'* exal-

²⁹ When I asked an American history teacher about the College Board examinations, he replied:

The Board has a monopoly on the entire AP [i.e., the Advanced Placement courses that are taken by most college-bound high school seniors] curriculum all across America and Canada and the rest of the world that buys into the program, i.e., "American schools" anywhere and everywhere. And yes, it is totally Marxist and it sickens me whenever the students have to regurgitate this totally one-sided perspective on the tests. Because the AP tests are based on the official curriculum, each AP World teacher must submit their syllabus to the Board for approval. If the Board does not approve, the school does not have the right to offer the test and the class is nullified. They have a tight grip on everything that goes on in the classroom, therefore. The trainings are something out of one of those university diversity trainings: anti-Western to the hilt. When they talk about European accomplishments, they do it tongue-in-cheek.

tation of "mankind." Conrad knows this; in the last two paragraphs he justifies his postmodern reading of history by arguing that the Enlightenment "language of universal claim and worldwide validity" requires that its origins *not* be "restricted" to Europe. The Enlightenment, if it is to fulfill its universal promises, must be seen as the actual child of peoples across the world.

This is all the more reason why Conrad's arguments must be exposed: not only are they historically false, but they provide us with an opportunity to suggest that the values of the Enlightenment are peculiarly European, rooted in this continent's history, and not universally true and applicable to humanity. For one thing, these values are inconsistent with Conrad's style of research. Honest reflection based on reason and open inquiry shows that the Enlightenment was exclusively European. The great thinkers of the Enlightenment were aristocratic representatives of their people with a sense of rooted history and lineage. They did not believe (except for a rare few) that all the peoples of the earth were members of a race-less humanity in equal possession of reason. When they wrote of "mankind" they meant "European-kind." When they wrote about equality they meant that Europeans have an innate *a priori* capacity to reason. When they said that "only a true cosmopolitan can be a good citizen," they meant that European nationals should enlarge their focus and consider Europe "as a great republic."

What concerns Conrad, however, is the promotion of a history in which the diverse cultures of the world can be seen as equal participants in the making of the Enlightenment. Conrad wants to carry to its logical conclusion the allegedly "universal" ideals of the Enlightenment, hoping to persuade Westerners that the equality and the brotherhood of mankind require the promotion of a Global Enlightenment.

Conrad blunders right from the start when he references Toby Huff's book, *Intellectual Curiosity and the Scientific Revolution*, as an example of the "no longer tenable" "standard reading" of the Enlightenment. First, this book is about the uniquely "modern scientific mentality" witnessed in seventeenth-century Europe, not about the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. It is also a study written, as the subtitle says, from "a Global Perspective." Rather than brushing off this book in one sentence, Conrad should have addressed its main argument, published in 2010 and based on the latest research, showing that European efforts to encourage interest in the telescope in China, the Ottoman Empire, and Mughal India "did not bear much fruit." "The telescope that set Europeans on fire with enthusiasm and curiosity, failed to ignite the same spark elsewhere.

That led to a great divergence that was to last all the way to the end of the twentieth century.”³⁰

The diffusion of the microscope met the same lack of curiosity. Why would Asia experience an Enlightenment culture together with Europe if it only started to embrace modern science with advanced research centers in the twentieth century?

This simple question does not cross Conrad’s mind; he merely cites an innocuous sentence from Huff’s book which contains the word “Enlightenment” and then, without challenging Huff’s argument, concludes that “this interpretation is no longer tenable.”

Conrad then repeats phrases to the effect that the Enlightenment needs to be seen originally as “the work of historical actors around the world.” But as he cannot come up with a single Enlightenment thinker from the eighteenth century outside Europe, he immediately introduces postmodernist lingo about “how malleable the concept” of Enlightenment was from its inception, from which point he calls for a more flexible and inclusive definition, so that he can designate as part of the Enlightenment any name or idea he encounters in the world which carries some semblance of learning. He also calls for an extension of the period of Enlightenment beyond the eighteenth century all the way into the twentieth century. The earlier “narrow definitions of the term” must be replaced by open-minded and tolerant definitions which reflect the “ambivalences and the multiplicity of Enlightenment views” across the world.

From this vantage point, he attacks the “fixed” standard view of the Enlightenment. Early on, besides Huff’s book, Conrad footnotes Peter Gay’s *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (1966–69),³¹ Dorinda Outram’s *The Enlightenment* (1995),³² Hugh Trevor-Roper’s *History and the Enlightenment* (2010),³³ as well as *The Blackwell Companion to the Enlightenment* (1991).³⁴ Of these, I would say that Gay is the only author who can be said to have offered a synthesis that came to be widely held, but only from about the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. In the first page of his book,

³⁰ Huff, *Intellectual Curiosity and the Scientific Revolution*, 5.

³¹ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966–69).

³² Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³³ Hugh Trevor-Roper, *History and the Enlightenment* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

³⁴ John Yolton, Pat Rogers, Roy Porter, and Barbara Stafford, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to the Enlightenment* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991).

Gay distinctly states that "the Enlightenment was united on a vastly ambitious program, a program of secularism, humanity, cosmopolitanism, and freedom."³⁵ In the case of Outram's book, it is quite odd why Conrad would include it as a standard account since the back cover alone says it will view the Enlightenment "as a global phenomenon" characterized by contradictory trends. The book's focus is on the role of coffee houses, religion, science, gender, and government from a cross-cultural perspective. In fact, a few footnotes later, Conrad cites this same book as part of new research pointing to the "heterogeneity" and "fragmented" character of the Enlightenment. However, the book makes no claims that the Enlightenment originated in multiple places in the world, and this is clearly the reason Conrad has labeled it as part of the "standard" view.

Conrad has no sources to back his claim that there is currently a "dominant" and uniform view. Gay, Outram, Trevor-Roper,³⁶ and other sources he cites later (to be addressed below), are not dominant, but evince instead what Outram noticed in her book (first published in

³⁵ Gay, *The Enlightenment*, 1:3.

³⁶ Designating Trevor-Roper's *History and the Enlightenment* as a "standard" account seems out of place. Trevor-Roper died in 2003; and when his book, which consisted mainly of old essays, was published, reviewers seemed more interested in Trevor-Roper the person than the authority on the Enlightenment. *The New Republic* (March 2011) review barely touches his views on the Enlightenment, concentrating on Trevor-Roper's lifetime achievements as a historian and man of letters. Anthony T. Grafton, "Learning and Pleasure, *The New Republic*, March 3, 2011.

<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/books-and-arts/magazine/84508/hugh-trevor-roper-oxford-review>

The *Washington Post* (June 2010) correctly notes that Trevor-Roper was an "essayist by inclination," interested in the details and idiosyncrasies of the characters he wrote about, without postulating a unified vision (Michael Dirda, "Book Review of Hugh Trevor-Roper's 'History and the Enlightenment,'" *Washington Post*, June 24, 2010.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/23/AR2010062305093.html>

The Blackwell Companion to the Enlightenment is a reference source encompassing many subjects from philosophy to art history, from science to music, with numerous topics (not demonstrative of a unifying/dominant view) ranging from absolutism to universities and witchcraft, publishing, language, art, music, and the theater, including several hundred biographical entries of diverse personalities. Better examples of a dominant discourse would have been Ernst Cassirer's *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1932) or Norman Hampson's *The Enlightenment* (New York: Penguin, 1968). Mind you, Cassirer's book was published in the 1930s and Hampson's survey in 1968. The views of neither author are now seen as "dominant."

1995): “the Enlightenment has been interpreted in many different ways.”³⁷ This is why Conrad soon admits that “at present, only a small—if vociferous—minority of historians maintain the unity of the Enlightenment project.” Since Gay died in 2006, Conrad then comes up with two names, Jonathan Israel and John Robertson, as scholars who apparently hold today a unified view. Yet, he then concedes, in a footnote, that these two authors have “a very different Enlightenment view: for Israel the ‘real’ Enlightenment is over by the 1740s, while for Robertson it only begins then.” In other words, on the question of timing, they have diametrically different views.

“Historiographical” studies are meant to clarify the state of the literature in a given historical subject, the trends, schools of thought, and competing interpretations. Conrad instead misreads, confounds, and muddles up authors and books. The reason Conrad relies on Outram, and other authors, both as “dominant” and as pleasingly diverse, is that European scholars have long recognized the complexity and conflicting currents within the Enlightenment at the same time that they have continued to view it as “European” with certain common themes. We thus find Outram appreciating the variety of views espoused during the Enlightenment while recognizing certain unifying themes, such as the importance of reason, “non-traditional ways of defining and legitimating power,” natural law, and cosmopolitanism.³⁸

Conrad needs to use the proponents of Enlightenment heterogeneity to make his case that the historiography on this subject has been moving in the non-Western direction he wishes to nudge his readers into believing. But he knows that current experts on the *European* Enlightenment have not identified an Enlightenment movement across the globe from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, so he must also designate them (if through insinuation) as members of a still dominant Eurocentric group.

In the end, the sources Conrad relies on to advance his globalist view are *not* experts of the European Enlightenment, but world historians (or actually, historians of India, China, or the Middle East) determined to unseat Europe from its privileged intellectual position. Right after stating that there are hardly any current proponents of the dominant view, and that “most authors stress its plural and contested character,” Conrad reverts back to the claim that there is a standard view inasmuch as

³⁷ Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 8.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 140.

most scholars still see the "birth of the Enlightenment" as "entirely and exclusively a European affair" which "only when it was fully fledged was it then diffused around the globe." Here Conrad finally footnotes a number of books exhibiting an old-fashioned admiration for the Enlightenment as a movement characterized by certain common concerns, though he never explains why these books are mistaken in delimiting the Enlightenment to Europe.

One thing is certain: these works go beyond Gay's thesis. Gertrude Himmelfarb's *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments* (2005) challenges the older focus on France, its anti-clericalism and radical rejection of traditional ways, by arguing that there were English as well as American "Enlightenments" that were quite moderate in their assessments of what human reason could do to improve the human condition, respectful of age-old customs, prejudices, and religious beliefs.³⁹ John Headley's *The Europeanization of the World* (2008) is not about the Enlightenment but the long Renaissance.⁴⁰ Tzvetan Todorov's *In Defence of the Enlightenment* (2009), with its argument against current "adversaries of the Enlightenment, obscurantism, arbitrary authority and fanaticism," can be effectively used against Conrad's own unfounded and capricious efforts.⁴¹

The same is true of Stephen Bronner's *Reclaiming the Enlightenment* (2004), with its criticism of activists on the left for spreading confusion and for attacking the Enlightenment as a form of cultural imperialism.⁴² These two books are a summons to the left not to abandon the critical principles inherent in the Enlightenment. Robert Loudén's *The World We Want: How and Why the Ideals of the Enlightenment Still Eludes Us* (2007), ascertains the degree to which the ideals of the Enlightenment have been successfully actualized in the world, both in Europe and outside, by examining the spread of education, tolerance, rule of law, free trade, international justice, and democratic rights.⁴³ His conclusion, as the title indicates, is that the Enlightenment remains more an ideal than a fulfilled program.

³⁹ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments* (New York: Vintage, 2005).

⁴⁰ John Headley, *The Europeanization of the World: On the Origins of Human Rights and Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁴¹ Tzvetan Todorov, *In Defence of the Enlightenment* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009).

⁴² Stephen Bronner, *Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Enlightenment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

⁴³ Robert Loudén, *The World We Want: How and Why the Ideals of the Enlightenment Still Eludes Us* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

What Conrad might have asked of these works is: why did they take for granted the universal validity of ideals rooted in the soils of particular European nations? Why did they all ignore the intense interest Enlightenment thinkers showed in the division of humanity into races? Why did all these books, actually, abandon the Enlightenment's own call for uninhibited critical thinking by ignoring the vivid preoccupation of Enlightenment thinkers with the differences, racial and cultural, between the peoples of the earth? Why did they accept (without question) the notion that the same Kant who observed that "so fundamental is the difference between these two races of man [i.e., Black and White] . . . as great in regard to mental capacities as in color," was thinking about "mankind" rather than about Europeans when he defined the Enlightenment as "mankind's exit from its self-incurred immaturity" through the courage to use [one's own understanding] without the guidance of another"?

Contrary to what defenders of the "emancipatory project of the Enlightenment" would have us believe, these observations were not incidental but reflections expressed in multiple publications and debated extensively. What were the differences among the peoples of different climes and regions? The general consensus among Enlightenment thinkers (in response to this question) was that animals as well as humans could be arranged in systematic hierarchies. Carl Linnaeus, for example, considered Europeans, Asians, American Indians, and Africans to be different varieties of humanity.⁴⁴

However, my purpose here is to assess Conrad's global approach, not to invalidate the generally accepted view of the Enlightenment as a project for "humanity." It is the case that Conrad wants to universalize the Enlightenment *even more* by seeing it as a movement emerging in different regions of the earth. The implicit message is that the ideals of this movement can be actualized if only we imagine its origins to have been global. But since none of the experts will grant him this favor, as they continue to believe it "originated only in Europe," notwithstanding the

⁴⁴ Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed., *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997). See also Aaron Garrett, "Human Nature," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Knud Haakonsen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1:160–233. There is a section in this chapter dealing with "race and natural character"; it is short, 20 pages in a 1,400-page work, but it is nevertheless well researched with close to 80 footnotes of mostly primary sources. One learns from these few pages that "in text after text" Enlightenment thinkers proposed a hierarchical view of the races.

variety and tension they have detected *within* this European movement, Conrad decides to designate these scholars, past and present, as members of a "dominant" or "master" narrative. He plays around with the language of postcolonial critiques—the "brutal diffusion" of Western values, "highly asymmetrical relations of power," "paternalistic civilizing mission"—the more to condemn the Enlightenment for its unfulfilled promises, and then criticizes these scholars, too, for taking "the Enlightenment's European origins for granted."

Who, then, are the "many authors" who have discovered that the Enlightenment was a worldwide creation? This is the motivating question behind Conrad's historiographical essay. He writes: "in recent years . . . the European claim to originality, to exclusive authorship of the Enlightenment, has been called into question." He starts with a number of sources which have challenged "the image of non-Western societies as stagnating and immobile": publications by Peter Gran on Egypt's eighteenth-century "cultural revival"; by Mark Elvin on China's eighteenth-century "trend towards seeing fewer dragons and miracles, not unlike the disenchantment that began to spread across Europe during the Enlightenment"; and by Joel Mokyr's observation that "some developments that we associate with Europe's Enlightenment resemble events in China remarkably."

This is pure chicanery. First, Gran's *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840* (1979) has little to do with the Enlightenment, and much to do with the bare beginnings of modernization in Egypt, that is, the spread of monetary relations, the gradual appearance of "modern products," the adoption of European naval and military technology, the cultivation of a bit of modern science and medicine, the introduction (finally) of Aristotelian inductive and deductive logic into Islamic jurisprudence.⁴⁵ Gran's thesis is simply that Egyptians were not "passive" assimilators of Western ways, but did so within the framework of Egyptian beliefs and institutions.

Mokyr's essay, "The Great Synergy: The European Enlightenment as a Factor in Modern Economic Growth," argues the exact opposite as the phrase cited by Conrad would have us believe.⁴⁶ Mokyr's contribution

⁴⁵ Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979).

⁴⁶ Joel Mokyr, "The Great Synergy: The European Enlightenment as a Factor in Modern Economic Growth," Society for Economic Dynamics Meeting Papers (April 2005).

<http://faculty.wcas.northwestern.edu/~jmokyr/Dolfsma.PDF>

to the rise of the West debate has been precisely that there was an “industrial” Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, which should be seen as the “missing link” between the seventeenth-century world of Galileo, Bacon, and Newton and the nineteenth-century world of steam engines and factories. He emphasizes the rise of numerous societies in England, the creation of information networks among engineers, natural philosophers, and businessmen, the opening of artillery schools, mining schools, informal scientific societies, numerous micro-inventions that turned scientific insights into successful business propositions, including a wide range of institutional changes that affected economic behavior, resource allocation, savings, and investment. There was no such Enlightenment in China, where an industrial revolution only started in the mid-twentieth century.

His citation of Elvin’s observation that the Chinese were seeing fewer dragons in the eighteenth century cannot be taken seriously as indicating a Chinese Enlightenment, and neither can vague phrases about “strange parallels” between widely separated areas of the world. Without much analysis but through constant repetition of globalist catchphrases, Conrad cites works by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Arif Dirlik, Victor Lieberman, and Jack Goody. None of these works have anything to say about the Enlightenment. Some of them simply argue that capitalist development was occurring in Asia prior to European colonization. Conrad deliberately confounds the Enlightenment with capitalism, globalization, or modernization. He makes reference to a section in Jack Goody’s book *The Theft of History* with the subheading “Cultural Similarities in East and West,” but this section is about (broad) similarities in family patterns, culinary practices, floriculture, and commodity exchanges in the major post-Bronze Age societies of Eurasia.⁴⁷ There is not a single word about the Enlightenment! He cites Arif Dirlik’s book, *Global Modernity in the Age of Global Capitalism* (2009), but this book is about globalization.⁴⁸

Conrad’s historiographical study is a travesty intended to dissolve European specificity by way of sophomoric use of sources. He says that the Enlightenment was “the work of many authors in different parts of the world.” What he offers instead are incessant strings of similarly worded phrases in every paragraph about the “global context,” “the

⁴⁷ Jack Goody, *The Theft of History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 118–22.

⁴⁸ Arif Dirlik, *Global Modernity in the Age of Global Capitalism* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009).

conditions of globality," "cross-border circulations," "structurally embedded in larger global contexts." To be sure, these are required phrases in academic grant applications assessed by adjudicators who can't distinguish enlightening thoughts from madrasa learning based on drill repetition and chanting.

A claim that there were similar Enlightenments around the world needs to come up with some authors and books comparable in their novelty and themes. The number of Enlightenment works during the eighteenth century numbered, roughly speaking, about 1,500.⁴⁹ Conrad does not come up with a single book from the rest of the world for the same period. Halfway through his paper of 20+-pages he finally mentions a name from India, Tipu Sultan (1750–99), the ruler of Mysore "who fashioned himself an enlightened monarch." Conrad has very little to say about his thoughts. From *Wikipedia* one gets the impression that he was a reasonably good leader, who introduced a new calendar, new coinage, and seven new government departments, and who made military innovations in the use of rocketry. But he was an imitator of the Europeans; as a young man he was instructed in military tactics by French officers in the employment of his father. This should be designated as imitation, not invention.

Conrad also mentions the slave revolt in Haiti led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, as an example of the "hybridization" of the Enlightenment. He says that Toussaint had been influenced by European critiques of colonialism, and that his "source of inspiration" also came from slaves who had "been born in Africa and came from diverse political, social and religious backgrounds." Haitian slaves were presumably comparable to such Enlightenment thinkers as Burke, Helvétius, d'Alembert, Galiani, Lessing, Burke, Gibbon, and Laplace. But no, the point is that Haitians made their own original contributions; they employed "religious practices such as voodoo for the formation of revolutionary communities." Strange parallels indeed!

He extends the period of the Enlightenment into the 1930s and 1940s hoping to find "vibrant and heated contestations of Enlightenment in the rest of the world." He includes names from Japan, China, India, and the Ottoman Empire, but, like Tipu Sultan, what all of them did was to simply introduce elements of the European Enlightenment into their countries. He rehearses the view that these countries offered their own

⁴⁹ This is an approximate number obtained by counting the compilation of primary works cited in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, 2: 1237–93.

versions of modernity. Then he cites the following words from Liang Qichao, the most influential Chinese thinker at the beginning of the twentieth century, reflecting on his encounter with Western literature: "Books like I have never seen before dazzle my eyes. Ideas like I have never encountered before baffle my brain. It is like seeing the sun after being confined in a dark room." Without noticing that these words refute his argument that Asians were co-participants in the Enlightenment, Conrad recklessly takes these words as proof that "the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century was not the intellectual monopoly of Europeans." It does not occur to him that after the eighteenth century Europe moved beyond the Enlightenment, exhibiting a dizzying display of intellectual, artistic, and scientific movements: romanticism, impressionism, surrealism, positivism, Marxism, existentialism, relativism, phenomenology, nationalism, fascism, realism, and countless other isms.

In the last paragraphs, as if aware that his argument was mostly make-believe, Conrad writes that "an assessment of the Enlightenment in global history should not be concerned with origins, either geographically or temporarily." The study of origins, one of the central concerns of the historical profession, is thusly dismissed in one sentence. Perhaps he means that the "capitalist integration of the globe in an age of imperialism" precludes seeing any autonomous origins in any area of the world. World historians, apparently, have solved the problem of origins across all epochs and regions: it is always the global context. But why is it that Europe almost always happens to be the progenitor of the cultural novelties of modernity? One unfortunate result of this effort to see Enlightenments everywhere is the devaluation of the actual Enlightenment. If there were Enlightenments everywhere, why should students pay any special attention to Europe's great thinkers? It should come as no surprise that students are coming out with PhDs incapable of making distinctions between high and average achievements.

The originality of the Enlightenment stands like an irritating thorn in the march toward equality and the creation of European nations inhabited by rootless cosmopolitan citizens without ethnic and nationalist roots. Regardless of what the actual evidence says, the achievements of Europeans must be erased from memory, replaced by a new history in which every racial group feels equally validated *inside* the Western world. In the meantime, the rise of Asians *as Asians* continues unabated and celebrated in Western academia.

HYBRID FABRICATIONS VERSUS GREEK ORIGINALITY

Another recent example of the way history is being written and taught today is quite visible in a review in *The Guardian* of a book edited by Tim Whitmarsh, *The Romance Between Greece and the East*.⁵⁰ This book was portrayed as a major breakthrough in scholarship recasting the ancient Greek world "from an isolated entity to one of many hybrid cultures in Africa and in the East." Strictly speaking, there is little original about Whitmarsh's book; it is framed along the same lines as Martin Bernal's earlier attempt in *Black Athena* (1987) to place the origins of Greece in Africa and the Semitic Near East.⁵¹ Whitmarsh calls the argument that the Greeks owed their brilliance to themselves, their own ethnicity as Indo-Europeans, a "massive cultural deception."

In our Western world of immigrant multiculturalism any idea attributing to Europeans any achievement—without including as co-partners the Muslims, Africans, and Orientals—is designated as a massive deception. The scholarship promoted by our current elites demands a view in which Europeans don't exist except as hybrids, borrowers, and imitators. But the historical and archeological evidence adduced by Whitmarsh and multiculturalists in general never goes beyond showing that there were connections between the Greeks (or Europeans generally) and their neighbors. They have an easy time showing what many have shown before, that the Greek mainland was connected to the Mediterranean world via trade, travelling, colonizing activities, and the residence of some Greeks outside Greece.

They also repeat as new discoveries what European scholars had already started showing in the eighteenth century, that ancient Greece was preceded by Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations and that the Indo-Europeans who arrived in the Greek mainland and established the Mycenaean civilization in the early second millennium borrowed some basic civilizational tools from these older civilizations, including some mythological motifs and the alphabet from the Phoenicians. From these general borrowings, and without even caring to understand the unique world out of which the Mycenaeans came (a world originating in the steppes, characterized by horse riding, chariot fighting, aristocratic lib-

⁵⁰ Charlotte Higgins, "Ancient Greece, the Middle East, and an Ancient Cultural Internet," *The Guardian*, July 11, 2013.

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/jul/11/ancient-greece-cultural-hybridisation-theory>

⁵¹ Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

eralism, and an ethos of heroism that was vividly captured in the Homeric epics of the eighth century BC, an ethos absent in the Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh*), the multicultics rush to conclude that the achievements of the archaic and classical Greeks—such as Pindar, Sophocles, Thucydides, Aeschylus, Anaxagoras, Anaximander, Euripides, Thales, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle—were “hybrid” achievements.

In order to persuade their audience that there is more to these obvious connections (which older scholars never denied), Whitmarsh et al. then wrap their plain facts in a postmodernist package with neon signs flashing “dialogue,” “intertwining,” “multivoiced conversations,” “polyglossia,” “the arts of cultural mediation,” “deep intercultural understanding.” How could a student deny such “profound” words and phrases; indeed, how can anyone be so harsh as to disagree with such a peaceful image of Greeks conversing with Africans and Semites and thereby creating a culture by and for humanity? Whitmarsh admits as much: “In a way, what we are saying is modish, it’s multicultural, it’s a model almost resembling the internet projected back on to the ancient world.”

He adds:

There is a strongly political dimension to the kind of claim I am making, and you would probably find that most people who were pushing for a very hybridised vision of the Greek world would . . . be naturally more left-leaning and have their own idealised view of the ancient world as a place of opportunity and hybridisation.

Whitmarsh insists that this multiculti vision projected onto the past fits with “the archaeological data.” Although I have not read his edited book, there is nothing in this review, not an iota of evidence or even logic that substantiates his thesis. The review mentions, as an example of Greek hybridity and borrowing, the fact that Herodotus was born in Asia Minor in a city named Halicarnassus—“a city that during the Persian wars was part of the Persian Achaemenid empire, ruled by Queen Artemisia, herself half Halicarnassian and half Cretan.” From this trite observation about a hybrid ruler of a city, we are then asked to conclude that the “father of history” was a hybrid himself! As if unsure of his footing, Whitmarsh begs the question: “Herodotus’s *The Histories* is a predominantly Greek-voiced text, but that doesn’t mean that we should quieten all the other voices that can be detected within it.”

This is pure posturing, manipulation, and fraud. The importance of Herodotus is not only that he was the first to write a historical account based on the orderly collection of sources available at the time, but that he produced the first ethnographical account of the customs, lifestyles, and myths of other peoples. Here we have a Greek showing objectivity, interest, and real appreciation of non-Greeks. Rather than mention these virtues, the multicultics have nothing to say beyond interpreting his work as hybrid and borrowed. The fact that he exhibited an ethnographic interest is interpreted by them as an indication that he is a hybrid rather than as an example of a uniquely Greek trait. Then they have the nerve to accuse the admirers of Herodotus of being promoters of a self-contained view of the Greeks, when it is the other way around: we admire him because he was unique both as a historian and as an ethnographer. This duplicitous manner of reasoning is being inflicted on our students across the West at the highest levels of academia, with the support of governments and the media!

The review mentions "another culturally hybrid work . . . a story that recasts the Macedonian conqueror [i.e., Alexander the Great] as secretly Egyptian, so the story of his annexation of Egypt becomes one not of conquest but of the return of pharaonic rule." Whitmarsh says that this story "is forged in a very distinctive culture in which there are Greeks and Egyptians working together. And it tells the story of Alexander the Great in Egyptian-friendly terms."

In this context Whitmarsh asks, "What if what we think of as the classical world has been falsely invented as European?" In other words, what if we think that Alexander was an Egyptian and that his conquest of Egypt was a friendly return by a native to his original homeland? After all, the older view that he was a Greek Macedonian was "invented." Therefore, not just "what if," but let us argue that the "archeological record" actually supports this view of Alexander as more correct and more suitable to the transformation of England into an immigrant nation. It was precisely this type of mythological thinking about history that Herodotus and Thucydides sought to rectify!

Whitmarsh is quite open that "in this story of interconnectedness and hybridity . . . there lie enormous intellectual and humanist opportunities."

There are three million Muslims in Britain, many of them learning an ancient language already. There's no reason why, in 50 years' time, undergraduate courses shouldn't be packed with people

studying Arabic and Greek culture side by side. Of course, this already exists in a limited way, but it's not a cultural phenomenon at the moment and these worlds mostly exist entirely separately, but it seems to me there's nothing natural in that.

The Greeks cannot be seen separately from the Near East because that view does not fit an England filled with Muslims "studying Arabic and Greek culture side by side." Because of this contemporary political agenda, the ancient Greek world must be seen as having emerged together with the Near East "side by side."

One of the discursive strategies Whitmarsh and all multicultics employ in advancing this idea of interconnections is to create a false polarity according to which those who believe in Greek originality are automatically designated as holding a view of ancient Greece "as . . . hermetically sealed from outside influence." This is a deceitful straw man—a willful attempt to mislead students and the public at large. Classical scholars have never written that Greece owed nothing to the Near East. Burckhardt, like many others since, was plainly aware of the material tradition that the Greeks inherited from outside. The Greeks "themselves," he wrote, "did not generally begrudge other nations their inventions and discoveries."⁵² Western civilization textbooks have always started with Mesopotamia and Egypt, just to teach students that Greece was not a self-made civilization.

What, then, is the bone of contention? It is that multicentric historians want to go beyond claims of borrowings to argue that Greece was not original at all. They refuse to let their brains contemplate the thought that Greek originality does not preclude acknowledgment of debts to earlier civilizations.

What troubles Whitmarsh et al. is the undeniable reality of Greek originality, far above anything ever seen in the East to this day. How can this originality be squared with the multicultural egalitarianism which is now mandated, under penalty of censure and ostracism, in all public institutions in Britain? The only solution is to trample upon the historical record, confound the issues, and misinform the students in order to stay within the dictates of immigrant multiculturalism.

Whitmarsh et al. are so caught up inside the complacent blind box of diversity = egalitarianism that they cannot even fathom a simple ques-

⁵² Jacob Burckhardt, *The Greeks and Greek Civilization* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1958 [1898]), 136.

tion: If Greece was connected to the East and presumably the East was connected to Greece, why did all the achievements happen in Greece rather than throughout the Mediterranean? Beyond the Greeks, if Europeans were connected, as other historians now say about every creative epoch in Europe's history – the Scholastic Age, the Renaissance, the Age of Discovery, the Scientific Revolution(s), the Military Revolution(s), the Cartographic Revolution, the Enlightenment, the Romantic Era, the German Philosophical Revolutions from Kant to Hegel to Nietzsche to Heidegger – why do all these achievements always happen in Europe? Why are Eastern cultures and multicultics always piggybacking on Europe's achievements rather than the East's own in order to show that it was all about connections?

Don't expect them to pose these questions. Whitmarsh's book is part of a decades-old effort to create an academic culture in which European students are thoroughly acculturated to forget the accomplishments of their ancestors while being readied to remember the amorphous make-believe achievements of a hybridized humanity imposed from above by corporations seeking cheap docile workers and by liberals seeking docile students accustomed to Orwellian doublespeak.

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