The Agenda for Nationalism

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Nationalism has once more appeared on the agenda of world affairs. Recently, it was reported that some august meeting of European diplomats had pronounced that with "the collapse of communism" (that was the term used in the American news report; what was meant was presumably the collapse of Soviet socialism), the principal danger to world peace was now posed by the resurgence of nationalism in different parts of the world. Since in this day and age a phenomenon has first to be recognised as a "problem" before it can claim the attention of people whose business it is to decide what the public should be concerned with, nationalism seems to have regained sufficient notoriety for it to be liberated from the arcane practices of "area specialists" and made once more a subject of general debate.

However, this very mode of its return to the agenda of world politics has, it seems to me, hopelessly prejudiced the discussion on the subject. In the 1950s and 60s, nationalism was still talked about as a feature of the victorious anti-colonial struggles in Asia and Africa. But simultaneously, as the new institutional practices of economy and polity in the post-colonial states were sought disciplined and normalised under the conceptual rubrics of "development" and "modernisation", nationalism was already being relegated to the domain of the particular histories of this or that colonial empire. And in those specialised histories defined by the unprepossessing contents of the colonial archives, nationalism as an emancipatory idea was finding it difficult to survive the countless revelations of secret deals, manipulations and the cynical pursuit of private interests.

By the 1970s, nationalism had become a matter of ethnic politics, the reason why people in the Third World killed each other, sometimes in wars between regular armies, sometimes more distressingly in cruel and often protracted civil wars, and increasingly, it seemed, by resorting to technologically sophisticated and virtually unstoppable acts of terrorism. The leaders of the African struggles against co-

lonialism and racism had spoilt their records by becoming heads of corrupt, fractious and often brutal regimes, Gandhi had been appropriated by such marginal cults as pacifism and vegetarianism, and even Ho Chi Minh in his moment of glory was caught in the unyielding polarities of the Cold War. Nothing, it would seem, was left in the legacy of nationalism to make people feel good about it.

This recent genealogy of the idea explains why nationalism is now being talked about as though it was a dark, elemental, unpredictable force of primordial nature threatening the orderly calm of civilised life. What had been successfully relegated to the outer peripheries was now picking its way back towards Europe, through the long-forgotten provinces of the Habsburg, the Czarist and the Ottoman empires, and was now poised to open up a whole new "Eastern Question". Like drugs, terrorism and illegal immigration, it was one more offering of the Third World which the West could do without, but was powerless to prevent. So? Call in the experts, find out more about it, and see what can be done to control it! That is what it says on today's public agenda for nationalism.

Judging from the current discussions on the subject in the media, it would seem that the Western public would be greatly surprised if they were told that not many years ago nationalism was generally talked about as one of Europe's most magnificent gifts to the rest of the world. It is also not often remembered today that the two greatest wars of the twentieth century, engulfing as they did virtually every part of the globe, were brought about by Europe's failure to manage its own ethnic nationalisms. Whether of the "good" variety or the "bad" (I use both "good" and "bad" in quotes), nationalism was entirely a product of the political history of Europe. Notwithstanding the celebration of the various unifying tendencies in Europe and of the political consensus in the West as a whole, there may be in the recent amnesia on the origins of nationalism more than a hint of anxiety about whether it has quite been tamed in the land of its birth.

In all this time, the "area specialists", the historians of the colonial world, working their way cheerlessly through musty files of administrative reports and official correspondence in colonial archives in London or Paris or Amsterdam, had of course never forgotten how nationalism arrived in the colonies. Everyone agreed that it was a European import; the debates in the 1960s and 1970s in the historiographies of Africa or India or Indonesia were about what had be-

come of the idea and who was responsible for it. These debates between a new generation of nationalist historians and those whom they dubbed "colonialists" were vigorous and often acrimonious, but they were largely confined to the specialised territories of "area studies"; no one else took much notice of them.

Nine years ago, it was one such "area specialist" who managed to raise once more question of the origin and spread of nationalism in the framework of a universal history. Benedict Anderson[1] demonstrated with much subtlety and originality that nations were not the determinate products of given sociological conditions such as language or race or religion; they had been, in Europe and everywhere else in the world, imagined into existence. He also described some of the major institutional forms through which this imagined community came to acquire concrete shape, especially the institutions of what he so ingeniously called "print-capitalism". He then argued that the historical experience of nationalism in Western Europe, in the Americas and in Russia had supplied for all subsequent nationalisms a set of modular forms from which nationalist elites in Asia and Africa had chosen the ones they liked.

Anderson's book has been, I think, the most influential in the last few years in generating new theoretical ideas on nationalism, an influence which of course, it is needless to add, is confined almost exclusively to academic writings. Contrary to the largely uninformed exoticisation of nationalism in the popular media in the West, the theoretical tendency represented by Anderson certainly attempts to treat the phenomenon as part of the universal history of the modern world.

How do I, living and working in the non-European post-colonial part of the world, view this tendency? I will use my answer to this question as e peg on which to hang my remarks on the theoretical problems besetting the study of nationalism.

I have one central objection to Anderson's argument.

If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain "modular" forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the

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[1] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1983.

post-colonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anti-colonial resistance and post-colonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain for ever colonised.

I object to this argument not for any sentimental reason. I object because I cannot reconcile it with the evidence on anti-colonial nationalism. The most powerful as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity with, but rather on a difference from the "modular" forms of the national society propagated by the modern West. How can we ignore this without reducing the experience of anti-colonial nationalism to a caricature of itself?

To be fair to Anderson, it must be said that he is not alone to blame. The difficulty, I am now convinced, arises because we have all taken the claims of nationalism to be a political movement much too literally and much too seriously.

In India, for instance, any standard nationalist history will tell you that nationalism proper began in 1885 with the formation of the Indian National Congress. It might also tell you that the decade preceding this was a period of preparation when several provincial political associations were formed. The period prior to that, from the 1820s to the 1870s, was one of "social reform" when colonial enlightenment was beginning to "modernise" the customs and institutions of a traditional society and the political spirit was still very much that of collaboration with the colonial regime: Nationalism had still not emerged.

This history, when submitted to a sophisticated sociological analysis, cannot but converge with Anderson's formulations. In fact, since it seeks to replicate in its own history the history of the modern state in Europe, nationalism's self-representation will inevitably corroborate Anderson's decoding of the nationalist myth. I think, however, that as history, nationalism's autobiography is fundamentally flawed.

By my reading, anti-colonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins political battle with the imperial power. It does this by dividing the world of

social institutions and practices into two domains - the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the "outside", of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology - a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual on the other hand was an "inner" domain bearing the "essential" marks of cultural identity. The greater one's success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one's spiritual culture. This formula is, I think, a fundamental feature of anti-colonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa.

There are several implications. First, nationalism declares the domain of the spiritual its sovereign territory and refuses to allow the colonial power to intervene in that domain. If I may return to the Indian example, the period of "social reform" is actually made up of two very distinct phases. In the earlier phase, Indian reformers look to the colonial authorities to bring about by state action the reform of traditional institutions and customs. In the latter phase, although the need for change is not disputed, there is a very strong resistance to allowing the colonial state to intervene in matters affecting "national culture". The second phase, in my argument, is already the period of nationalism.

The colonial state, in other words, is kept out of the "inner" domain of national culture; but it is not as though this so-called "spiritual" domain is left unchanged. In fact, it is here that nationalism launches its most powerful, creative and historically significant project: To fashion a "modern" national culture which is nevertheless not Western. If the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being. In this, its true and essential domain, the nation is already sovereign, even when the state is in the hands of the colonial power. The dynamics of this historical project is completely missed in conventional histories in which the story of nationalism begins with the contest for political power.

Let me point out a few areas within this so-called "spiritual" domain which nationalism transforms in the course of its journey. I shall confine my illustrations to Bengal with whose history I am most familiar.

The first such area that of language. Anderson is entirely correct in his suggestion that it is "print-capitalism" which provides the new institutional space for the development of the modern "national" language. However, the specificities of the colonial situation do not allow a simple transposition of European patterns of development. In Bengal, for instance, it is at the insistence of the East India Company and the European missionaries that the first printed books are produced in Bengali at the end of the eighteenth century and the first narrative prose compositions commissioned at the beginning of the nineteenth. At the same time, the first half of the nineteenth century is when English completely displaces Persian as the language of bureaucracy and emerges as the most powerful vehicle of intellectual influences on a new Bengali elite. The crucial moment in the development of the modern Bengali language comes, however, in mid-century when this bilingual elite makes it a cultural project to provide its mother tongue with the necessary linguistic equipment to enable it to become an adequate language for "modern" culture. An entire institutional network of printing presses, publishing houses, newspapers, magazines and literary societies is created around this time, outside the purview of the state and the European missionaries, through which the new language, modern and standardised, is given shape. The bilingual intelligentsia came to think of its own language as belonging to that "inner" domain of cultural identity from which the colonial intruder had to be kept out; language therefore became a zone over which the nation first had to declare its sovereignty and which it then had to transform in order to make it adequate for the modern world.

Here the "modular" influences of modern European languages and literatures did not necessarily produce similar consequences. In the case of the new literary genres and aesthetic conventions, for instance, whereas the explicit critical discourse was undoubtedly shaped by European influences, the doubt also persisted that European conventions were inappropriate and misleading in judging literary productions in modern Bengali. This is one area where there is to this day a clear hiatus between the terms of academic criticism and those of literary practice. To give an example, let me talk briefly about Bengali drama.

Drama is the one modern literary genre which is the least commended on aesthetic grounds by critics of Bengali literature. Yet it is the form in which the bilingual elite has found its largest audience. When it appeared in its modern form in the middle of the nineteenth

century, the new Bengali drama had two models available to it: One, the modern European drama as it had developed since Shakespeare and Molière, and two, the virtually forgotten corpus of Sanskrit drama, now restored to a reputation of classical excellence because of the praises showered on it by Orientalist scholars from Europe. The literary criteria which would presumably direct the new drama into the privileged domain of a modern national culture were therefore clearly set by "modular" forms provided by Europe. But the performative practices of the new institution of the public theatre made it impossible for those criteria to be applied to plays written for the theatre. The conventions that would enable a play to succeed on the Calcutta stage were very different from the conventions approved by critics schooled in the traditions of European drama. The tensions have not been resolved to this day. What thrives as mainstream public theatre in West Bengal or Bangladesh today is modern urban theatre, national and clearly distinguishable from "folk theatre". It is produced and largely patronised by the literate urban middle classes. Yet their aesthetic conventions fail to meet the standards set by the "modular" literary forms adopted from Europe.

On the subject of modern literary forms, it may be worth pointing out that even in the case of the novel, that celebrated artifice of the nationalist imagination in which the community is made to live and love in "homogeneous time", the "modular" forms do not necessarily have an easy passage. The novel was a principal form through which the bilingual elite in Bengal fashioned a new narrative prose. In the devising of this prose, the influence of the two available models - modern English and classical Sanskrit - was obvious. And yet, as the practice of the form gained greater popularity, it was remarkable how frequently in the course of their narrative, Bengali novelists shifted from the disciplined forms of authorial prose to the direct recording of living speech. Looking at the pages of some of the most popular novels in Bengali, it is often difficult to tell whether one is reading a novel or a play. Having created a modern prose language in the fashion of the approved modular forms, the literati, in their search for artistic truthfulness, apparently found it necessary to escape as often as possible the rigidities of that prose.

Alongside the institutions of "print-capitalism" was created a new network of secondary schools. Once again, this was an area which nationalism sought to bring under its jurisdiction long before the domain of the state had become a matter of contention. In Bengal,

from the second half of the nineteenth century, it was the new elite which took the lead in mobilising a "national" effort to start schools in every part of the province and then to produce a suitable educational literature. Coupled with "print-capitalism", the institutions of secondary education provided the space where the new language and literature were both generalised and normalised - outside the domain of the state. It was only when this space was opened up, outside the influence of both the colonial state and the European missionaries, that it became legitimate for women, for instance, to be sent to school. It was also in this period, beginning with the last two decades of the nineteenth century, that the University of Calcutta was turned from an institution of colonial education to a distinctly national institution: In its curriculum, its faculty and its sources of funding.

Another area in that "inner" domain of national culture was the family. This is where the assertion of autonomy and difference was perhaps the most dramatic. The European criticism of Indian "tradition" as barbaric had to a large extent focused on religious beliefs and practices, especially those relating to the treatment of women. The early phase of "social reform" through the agency of the colonial power had also concentrated on the same issues. It was in that early phase, therefore, that this area had been identified as essential to "Indian tradition". The nationalist move began by disputing the choice of agency. Unlike the early reformers, nationalists were not prepared to allow the colonial state to legislate the reform of "traditional" society. They asserted that only the nation itself could have the right to intervene in such an essential aspect of its cultural identity.

As it happened, the domain of the family and the position of women underwent considerable change in the world of the nationalist middle class. It was undoubtedly a new patriarchy which was brought into existence, different from the "traditional" order, but one which was also explicitly claimed to be different from the "western" family. The "new woman" was to be modern, but she would also have to display the signs of national tradition and therefore had to be essentially different from the "western" woman.

The history of nationalism as a political movement tends to focus primarily on its contest with the colonial power in the domain of the "outside", i.e. the "material" domain of the state. This is a different history from the one I have outlined. It is also a history in which na-

tionalism has no option but to choose its forms from the gallery of "models" offered by European and American nation-states: "Difference" is not a viable criterion in the domain of the material.

In this "outer" domain, nationalism begins its journey (after, let us remember, it has already proclaimed its sovereignty in the "inner" domain) by inserting itself into a new public domain constituted by the processes and forms of the modern (in this case, colonial) state. In the beginning, nationalism's task is to overcome the subordination of the colonised middle class. What this means is precisely to challenge the colonialist assertion that there must be a valid rule of colonial difference in the domain of the state.

The colonial state, we must remember, was not just the agency which brought the modular forms of the modern state to the colonies; it was also an agency which was destined never to fulfil the normalising mission of the modern state, because the premise of its power was a rule of colonial difference, viz. the preservation of the alienness of the ruling group. When a British governor of an Indian province said, in 1878, that the time had come to stop "shouting that black is white," he was not being metaphorical. "We all know," he said, 'that in point of fact black is not white... That there should be one law alike for the European and the Native is an excellent thing in theory, but if it could really be introduced in practice we should have no business in the country." What he was saying was not that the "theory" of representative government was false, nor that its truth was merely relative and contingent. Rather, he was insisting on a "practical" rule of colonial difference which would mark the points and the instances where the colony had to become an exception precisely to vindicate the universal truth of the theory.

As the institutions of the modern state were elaborated in the colony, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, the ruling European groups found it necessary to lay down - in lawmaking, in the bureaucracy, in the administration of justice, and in the recognition by the state of a legitimate domain of public opinion - the precise difference between the rulers and the ruled. If Indians had to be admitted into the judiciary, could they be allowed to try Europeans? Was it right that Indians should enter the civil service by taking the same examinations as British graduates? If European newspapers in India were given the right of free speech, could the same apply to Native newspapers? Ironically, it became the historical task of nationalism, which insisted on its own marks of cultural

difference with the West, to demand that there be no rule of difference in the domain of the state.

In time, with the growing strength of nationalist politics, this domain became more extensive and internally differentiated and finally took on the form of the national, i.e. post-colonial, state. The dominant elements of its self-definition, at least in post-colonial India, were drawn from the ideology of the modern liberal-democratic state.

In accordance with liberal ideology, the public was now distinguished from the domain of the private. The state was required to protect the inviolability of the private self in relation to other private selves. The legitimacy of the state in carrying out this function was to be guaranteed by its indifference to concrete differences between private selves - differences, that is, of race, language, religion, class, caste, etc.

The trouble is that the moral-intellectual leadership of the nationalist elite operated in a field constituted by a very different set of distinctions - those between the spiritual and the material, the inner and the outer, the essential and the inessential. That contested field over which nationalism had proclaimed its sovereignty and where it had imagined its true community was neither coextensive with nor coincidental to the field constituted by the public/private distinction. In the former field (the spiritual/material, inner/outer), the hegemonic project of nationalism could hardly make the distinctions of language, religion, caste or class a matter of indifference to itself. The project was that of cultural "normalisation", like, as Anderson suggests, bourgeois hegemonic projects everywhere, but with the all-important difference that it had to choose its site of autonomy from a position of subordination to a colonial regime which had on its side the most universalist justificatory resources produced by post-Enlightenment social thought.

The result is that autonomous forms of imagination of the community were, and continue to be, overwhelmed and swamped by the history of the post-colonial state. Here lies the root of our post-colonial misery: Not in our inability to think out new forms of the modern community, but in our surrender to the old forms of the modern state. If the nation is an imagined community and if nations must also take the form of states, then our theoretical language must allow us to talk about community and state at the same. I do

not think our present theoretical language allows us to do this. I will end by illustrating this point with a brief digression on the etymology of the word for "nation" in the Bengali language: the word is jāti.

Consider the ways in which the word jāti can be used in Bengali. Any standard dictionary will first give the Sanskrit etymology of the word which means "birth", "origin". This will be followed by at least a dozen different senses in which the word can be used. Among these will be - I am quoting from one standard dictionary - (1) jāti as origin, such as Musalman by birth, Vaiṣnav by birth, a beggar by birth; (2) classes of living species, such as human jāti, animal jāti, bird jāti, etc.; (3) varna such as Brahman, Kshatriya, etc.; (4) lineage, clan, such as Arya jāti, Semitic jāta; (5) human collectivities bound by loyalty to a state or organised around the natural and cultural characteristics of a country or province (the dictionary adds in English "nation", "race"), such as English, French, Bengali, Punjabi, Japanese, Gujarati, etc.

Between these five entries, the range of meanings available to the word jāti is immense. Not only that; one could without any contradiction belong to several jāti, not simultaneously, but contextually, invoking in each context a collectivity in which membership is not a matter of self-interested individual choice or contractual agreement, but an immediate inclusion, originary, as it is by birth. We should not be surprised, therefore, when we find that the practice of politics often permits the imagining of collective solidarities to slide from one particular form to another, each activated contextually, but proclaiming each time a bond of kinship, a natural bond that unites all who share the same origin and who therefore must share the same destiny.

Consider the form of imaginative construction of large political solidarities through the union of several jāti. I bring you a text from 1876, an early phase in the genealogy of modern nationalist discourse in Bengal. Bhudev Mukhopadhyay is giving us his picture of the nationalist utopia emerging out of a counterfactual past, for this is "The History of India as Revealed in a Dream". It is 1761. The Maratha forces are ranged against the Afghan army of Ahmad Shah Abdali on the fields of Panipat. A messenger from the Maratha general arrives at Ahmad Shah's camp with an offer to allow safe passage to the Afghan forces should Ahmad Shah agree to leave India. The Afghan king agrees. There is then held a grand

council of all the rulers to India in which the following proposal is made:

"Although India is the true motherland only of those who belong to the Hindu jāti and although only they have been born from her womb, the Musalmans are not unrelated to her any longer. She has held them at her breast and reared them. Musalmans are therefore her adopted children.

"Can there be no bonds of fraternity between two children of the same mother, one a natural child and the other adopted? There certainly can; the laws of every of every religion admits this. There has now been born a bond of brotherhood between Hindus and Musalmans living in India."

Let us remember that for Bhudev, Indian nationalism is synonymous with Hindu nationalism. But he is a nationalist of a perfectly modern kind, because in this imaginary council, after the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam hands over the crown to the Maratha ruler Ramchandra, a constitution is promulgated more or less along the lines of the German Reich, with strongly protectionist economic policies which succeed, in this anti-colonial utopia, in keeping the European economic powers firmly in check. Yet, in order to think of a nation which includes both Hindu and Musalman jāti, albeit under the leadership of Hindus, Bhudev has to use the language, not of citizenship but of kinship.

Nevertheless, this imputation of kinship is clearly contextual. Bhudev would have been horrified if, for instance, someone had appealed to these imputed affinal ties to make a case, let us say, for marriage between Hindus and Muslims, or for that matter for eating the same food. Identities and solidarities within the language of jāti are contextually defined. The language affords the possibility of imagining new bonds of affinity, but it does this precisely by imposing restrictions on their free flow. There are no substantive affinities that define identify regardless of context.

It is political discourse of the "modern" kind which insists that these collectivities have a fixed, determinate, enumerable form, and, if there are several to which an individual can belong, that there be a priority among them. Only in post-colonial India, where the modern nation-state has come into existence, does it become possible to ask: "Are you a Muslim first or an Indian first?" The

"modular" forms of the modern state demand that the contextuality of a concept such as jāti be erased and that identities be given a fixity. It is the politics of those modular forms of the modern state which encourages and legitimises the violent hatred preached by the current protagonists of political Hinduism in India today.

A fundamental change effected in the discursive domain of "modern" politics in the colonial period was the impoverishment of the earlier "fuzzy" sense of the community and an insistence upon the identification of community in the "enumerable" sense. Earlier, communities were fuzzy, first, in the sense that a community did not claim to represent or exhaust all the layers of selfhood of its members, and second, in that the community, though definable with precision for all practical purposes of social interaction, did not require its members to ask how many of them there were in the world. It was the colonial regime which, once firmly in place in the second half of the nineteenth century, sought to fashion the conceptual instruments of its control over an alien population by enumerating the diverse communities which, in the colonial imagination, comprised the society over which it had been destined by History to rule. Historians have shown how caste and religion became established both conceptually and instrumentally as the sociological keys to the numerical description of Indian society. That this was not a classificatory scheme which resided exclusively in the colonial imagination has also been documented, because it shaped in turn the subsequent forms of mobilisation among Indians seeking representation in the state domain - representation, that is, by caste and religion.

But in the days when the nation was being produced imaginatively without it having the actual shape of a state, there seemed to be many possibilities of communities which colonial knowledge would have declared as too radically distinct to come together into large political solidarities. The period of the Khilafat-Noncooperation movement in 1920-21 is an obvious instance. Conventional historiography often explains this solidarity as the result of a conscious policy of "alliance" pursued especially by Gandhi and the Ali brothers. However, as our example from Bhudev's utopian history showed, the idiom of love and kinship in which the nationalist imagination sought to cast the relation between the Hindu jāti and the Muslim jāti can hardly be said to belong to a discourse of group interests and alliances, even when, as in Bhudev's case, the partnership between different jāti was not on the basis of equality.

More interesting are the instances of sanctions imposed by such political collectivities upon those suspected of deviating from community norms. We know of the "social boycott" which was a widespread phenomenon at the time of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal in 1905-09. The forms of punishment traditionally imposed for violation of caste rules were at this time imposed on those accused of violating the injunctions of the "nation" - offences such as trading in foreign goods or collaborating with government officials, for instance. Even in the rhetoric of the topmost leaders of the movement, the slide from one sense of jāti to another, from caste to nation, seemed fairly unproblematical.
I do not believe that the imaginative possibilities afforded by the fuzziness of the community have disappeared from the domain of popular political discourse. On the contrary, I suspect that with the greater reach of the institutions and processes of the state into the interiors of social life, the state itself is being made sense of in the terms of that other discourse, far removed from the conceptual terms of liberal political theory. The notions of representation and the legitimation of authority, for instance, have taken on a set of meanings in the popular domain of contemporary Indian politics which it would be impossible to describe, let alone justify, in the terms of a theory of interest aggregation or of the rationalisation of authority. Our helplessness in understanding events such as the elections since 1977 or the sudden rise and demise of "ethnic" movements or the inexplicable fluctuations in the authority of particular political leaders seems largely due to the fact that we lack a theoretical language to talk about this domain of popular political discourse.

The difficulty, I suggest, is that the discourse of the modern state cannot find an adequate theoretical language to talk about community. Complicit as it still is in producing the historical narrative of capital, as Anderson has once again demonstrated, it can only treat community as something that has been superseded. What is really a lack in our theoretical vocabulary appears to us, non-European analysts of non-European societies, as a historical lack in society itself.

The result is that the history of the community and that of the state continue to remain out of joint and often in open antagonism, as testified by the simultaneous and often antagonistic existence in most countries of Asia and Europe (and now, suddenly of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union!) of a state which dominates without

being hegenomic and of several hegemonic projects still in search of dominance. The problem, it seems to me, is not that we have exhausted the forms of imagining new communities, but rather that we are unable to think of new forms of the state. What the study of nationalism suggests, in other words, is a new theoretical approach to the modern state. That is the theoretical agenda today.