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THE GREEK-ROMAN INVENTION OF CIVIC IDENTITY VERSUS THE CURRENT DEMOTION OF EUROPEAN ETHNICITY

RICARDO DUCHESNE

OBJECTIVES FRAMING THIS ESSAY

The invention of a civic identity attached to a city-state was the first magisterial contribution of the Greeks to Western civilization—without which their other accomplishments would have been impossible. Broadly speaking, a citizen in a Greek city-state was an adult male resident with a free status, able to vote, hold public office, and own property. Citizenship was a new form of identity introduced in Greece in the seventh century BC, developing in varying ways in different cities in the course of the next centuries. It was intended as a challenge to traditional tribal identities, in order to bring unity of purpose among city residents, a general will to action to communities that had long been naturally divided along class and kinship lines. But, contrary to the prevailing interpretation, the Greeks did not practice, or originate, a form of citizenship politics “regardless of nationality or race.” The reason this interpretation is popular today is that it fits the goal of delinking Western nations from a shared ethnic identity, as well as promoting the notion that Western nations were always meant to be cosmopolitan places with a welcome mat for humanity based on shared liberal values.¹

The Romans are said to have continued this principle of civic identity “regardless of nationality and race,” but on a much larger scale, beyond the city of Rome, across the Italian peninsula, after the so-called Social War (91–88 BC), when all free residents of Italy were granted citizenship, and across the Empire, when the entire free population of the Empire was granted citizenship in AD 212. The Romans are also said to have invented legal practices and institutions based on highly rationalized concepts applicable to all peoples of the Empire regardless of

¹ Going back to ancient times, Derek Heater writes: “For two and a half millennia numerous Western political thinkers have believed that a world state or world citizenship or both were desirable and possible.” See *World Citizenship and Government: Cosmopolitan Ideas in the History of Western Political Thought* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), ix.

creedal orientations and ethnic particularities. According to Philippe Nemo, for example, the Romans formulated “an increasingly abstract legal vocabulary,” consisting of “words and formulas without reference to the religions or institutions of specific ethnic groups”; laws were not validated by reference to some sacred source; “myth and custom were no longer perceived as the origin of the law.”² Rather, laws were based on judicial reasoning alone, and only those laws that were ultimately in agreement with the natural order of things, with one eternal and unchangeable natural law, of universal application, common to all humans, were “true.”

One objective of this essay is to argue that, while it is true that the Greeks invented a new form of political identity associated with separate city-states, and the Romans eventually extended this form of civic identity across the Empire, both the Greeks and Romans retained a strong sense of being a people with shared bloodlines as well as shared culture, language, mythology, ancestors, and traditional texts. This essay will maintain that the civic form of identity was a novel and necessary feature in the history of Western civilization, which should be praised, but without losing sight of the concrete reality that this new identity was constructed along strong ethnic lines. We must avoid projecting to the past our current understanding of civic membership “irrespective of race.” This current interpretation of civic identity occurred much later in Western history with new origins and new social characteristics best traceable to the post-World War II era. Envisioning the history of Western civilization as the progressive unfolding of a civilization for the entire human species misses many discontinuous epochs of the West. The idea that we can find the seeds of our current cultural Marxist regime in the ancient past as an epoch already nurturing institutions and values that would eventually give recognition to the “deepest aspirations of humans across the world,” and encourage Europeans to forego their particular heritages and ethnic identities, is wrong.

Connected to this, another objective of this essay is to challenge the acceptance by not a few European New Right (ENR) thinkers of this liberal account of the West. The ENR is correct to reject the current Western project of creating a common humanity based on universal principles, but it is mistaken in identifying most of the West’s intellectual history with this project, and in viewing the uniquely Western emphasis on the

² Philippe Nemo, *What Is the West?*, trans. Kenneth Casler (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2004), 19–22.

individual's capacity for free and rational argumentation as inherently abstract, multiracial, and multicultural.

Since I identify with the ENR, let me contextualize further my disagreements with the ENR, or with some of the authors associated with this group. Much of what the ENR deems to be inherently loathsome about Western civilization—egalitarianism, obsession with economic growth, a linear view of history, cultural arrogance, globalism—it blames on deep-seated tendencies within the Western tradition. The works of ENR intellectuals, such as Pierre Krebs's *Fighting for the Essence*, Alain de Benoist's *Beyond Human Rights*, Tomislav Sunic's *Homo Americanus*, and Alexander Dugin's *The Fourth Political Theory* (though not Guillaume Faye's *Why We Fight*) tend to view the history of the West in a negative light, particularly the entire experience of the West as a Christian civilization.³

These tendencies are fully crystallized in Dugin's *The Fourth Political Theory* to the point that he identifies American neoconservatism and liberalism with Western civilization as such, relying on Frankfurt School thinkers, Boasian anthropology, and postmodernists (Michel Foucault, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jean Baudrillard) to paint a picture of the West as the sickest, most destructive civilization in human history. Everything awful about the world—consumerism, environmental despoliation, plutocratic manipulation, erosion of ethnic and traditional differences—is explained by him as a direct product of the metaphysical orientation of the West. Dugin writes:

In order to adequately understand the essence of liberalism, we must recognize that it is not accidental, that its appearance in the political and economic ideologies is based on fundamental processes, proceeding in all Western civilization. Liberalism is not only a part of that history, but its purest and most refined expression, its result.⁴

³ Pierre Krebs, *Fighting for the Essence: Western Ethnocide or European Renaissance?*, trans. Alexander Jacob (London: Arktos, 2012); Alain de Benoist, *Beyond Human Rights: Defending Freedoms*, trans. Alexander Jacob (London: Arktos, 2011); Tomislav Sunic, *Homo Americanus: Child of the Postmodern Age* (Charleston, SC: BookSurge, 2007); Alexander Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, trans. Mark Sleboda and Michael Millerman (London: Arktos, 2012); Guillaume Faye, *Why We Fight: Manifesto of the European Resistance*, trans. Michael O'Meara (London: Arktos, 2011).

⁴ Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, 140.

It is as if the West was from the beginning oriented towards our present-day pro-immigration regimen, driven by a rationalist logic dedicated to the reduction of cultural qualities to measurable quantities, by an individualizing logic that seeks to free all individuals from any collective identities, and by a progressive view of history that ranks cultures in terms of how close they approximate the liberal-democratic aims of a West envisioned as the master culture. There can be no denying that these characteristics came out of the West. The question is whether we can attribute them to the West *per se* from its origins or through much of its history.

Christianity, more than any other factor, is blamed for the main maladies facing the world today. Alain de Benoist writes in *Beyond Human Rights* that “Christian universalism” – the proclamation of the “moral unity of mankind” according to which all humans belong to a universal community – “contains the seeds of all later developments of the idea of fundamental equality.”⁵ He traces the modern idea that all humans are born with the same natural rights to the Christian idea that each human being is the equal possessor of a soul that is spiritually transcendent and independent of any racial or cultural identity. He then connects the modern concept of natural rights to the effort of current human rights advocates to create a world order based on universally agreed upon values. De Benoist also attributes to Christianity a fanatical millennialism characterized by continuous moral crusades to remake the world in its own image.

On the other hand, ENR thinkers tend to view Greek and Roman values as fundamentally different from and unconnected to later modern developments in the West. The problems with this interpretation of the West begin with the assumption that Christianity was uninfluenced by the rational universalism of ancient Greek philosophy. The problems continue with the complete absence of a contextual appreciation of the way Christianity developed into a universal Church by drawing on, and actually making use of, the worldly reality of the *Pax Romana*. St. Augustine conceived his vision of the unity of mankind and the idea of a universal social bond *inside* the Roman Empire. He could not have done so outside this actual territorial unity. Christianity did consecrate the vision of the unity of mankind, but this development was not inherent to the New Testament; it took place centuries after within the cultural matrix of Greco-Roman civilization. It is the case, moreover, that the Christian

⁵ De Benoist, *Beyond Human Rights*, 29.

understanding of the "unity of mankind" could not have been about racial unity since Europeans began to study in a scientific manner relationships between biology, environment, and culture, as well as propose a new science of human taxonomy, the first people to do so, in the eighteenth century, during the Enlightenment, as I hope to show in future essays.⁶

I will also address in the future, starting with this essay's appreciation of the Greek and Roman invention of civic identity, the ways in which rationalism and universalism are inherent features of the West since ancient Greek times, and, in this vein, point to the inescapable relation between the West's unique creativity and expansionary dynamism and its rationalism and individualism, which is not to say that these isms are unconnected to later developments leading to the current malaise. The German sociologist Max Weber was correct in detecting in Western civilization a "specific and peculiar rationalism" from ancient Greek times on. The West fostered ideas and values with universalistic ambitions, rationalizing in the course of time all spheres of life, unlike any other civilization, cultivating a methodology for the study of nature, which all cultures in the world, however, have come to imitate irrespective of their ethnic and religious identities. But the West's universalizing logos goes beyond modern science and the formal rationalism Weber had in mind, for it was characterized by other attributes we have come to identify as *Faustian* and which are not ultimately rational in origin, but are uniquely European and intrinsically connected to the superlative achievements of the West. It would be wrong to say that this Faustian energy is inherently human, since it has been peculiarly exhibited by Europeans only through their history, traceable to their prehistoric Indo-European lifestyle on the Pontic steppes, even though it involves a rationalizing (and in this respect, universalizing) logos that has sought to extend itself across the world right into outer space.⁷

⁶ Nicholas Hudson, "From 'Nation' to 'Race': The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 247-64; Guido Abbattista and Rolando Minuti, "The Problem of Human Diversity in the European Cultural Experience of the Eighteenth Century: An Introduction," *Cromohs*, no. 8 (2003): 1-4, URL: http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/8_2003/abbamindiv.html

⁷ Ricardo Duchesne, "Oswald Spengler and the Faustian Soul of the West," *The Occidental Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (Winter 2014-15): 1-22. To be clear, and in fairness to de Benoist, he is not wrong in attributing to the West a powerful natural rights orientation, with roots in Christianity's emphasis on the dignity of singular individuals, theorized in the modern era in the writings of Grotius, Pufendorf, Locke, Kant, and in the contemporary writings of John Rawls, wherein individuals are said to have inherent rights

The cultural Marxist versions of universalism, egalitarianism, and individualism dominating the West today have a connection to the Western past, but these connections are incredibly complex and need to be assessed in full awareness of the discontinuous character of this civilization, its many novelties, epochal breakthroughs, original departures, and the recent workings of hostile elites and hostile ideologies driven by agendas that cannot be directly attributed to thinkers or intellectual currents of the past, but which are best understood as recent phenomena, belonging to the modern era, possibly the “radical Enlightenment,” or even as recently as the post-World War II period.⁸ I will argue here, in a

in abstraction from any socio-historical context. He is right in mounting a critique of this natural rights tradition by relying on another Western lineage which includes Burke, de Maistre, James Harrington, and contemporary communitarians like Charles Taylor, all of whom in different ways emphasize “membership in a political community, without which talk about the freedom of individuals would be devoid of actual social supports and meaning. My disagreement is that de Benoist, as far as I know, or any other ENR thinker, has yet to give account of the ways in which European communities were fundamentally different from standard traditional communities in the non-Western world, precisely because they valued the freedom and rationality of individuals, attributes which involve a distancing between the reasoning self and his community, for a free rational agent is a being who is able to *differentiate* himself from his surrounding, and thereby rely on his reason, which does not mean, as Hegel taught us, that the reasoning individual is a singular self who dictates what is right, universally, in isolation from the community, since this thinking self was socially created by a very particular community, which supports him and participates with other individuals in the evaluation of his arguments.

⁸ Kevin MacDonald’s assessment of the relationship between the ideals of the Enlightenment, or Western individualism generally, and the current policies of mass immigration, is superior to anything I have read from the ENR. I strongly recommend his thorough review essay titled “Eric P. Kaufmann’s *The Rise and Fall of Anglo-America*,” published in *The Occidental Observer* (July 29, 2009) (<http://www.theoccidentalobserver.net/articles/MacDonald-Kaufmann.html>). MacDonald criticizes Kaufmann’s argument that Anglo-Americans simply took the “ideals of the Enlightenment to their logical conclusion” in giving up their ethnic hegemony and opening the United States to Third World immigration after 1965. MacDonald, of course, is well known for emphasizing “the Jewish role in the decline of Anglo-America,” but what many underestimate about MacDonald’s thesis is his subtle appreciation of the ways American WASPs long combined a strong sense of ethnic identification with a tendency, in his words, “toward individualism and all of its implications: individual rights against the state, representative government, moral universalism, and science.” He knows too well “the strong strands of American culture that have facilitated” mass immigration, and how Anglo-American individualism, with its “relative lack of ethnocentrism,” facilitated more radical notions of individualism in the 1960s that were completely opposed to any notion of America as an Anglo-European nation. But he does not thereby condemn the individualism of America’s original WASP cul-

preliminary way, that our current conception of civic citizenship, separate from any form of ethno-nationalism identified in purely negative terms as xenophobic and violent, is a phenomenon that should be traced back, theoretically speaking, to the writings, during the twentieth century, of Hans Kohn, Karl Deutsch, Ernest Gellner, and Eric Hobsbawm.

THE GREEK INVENTION OF POLITICS

We should praise the ancient Greeks for being the first historical people to invent the abstract concept of citizenship, a civic identity not dependent on birth, wealth, or tribal kinship, but based on laws common to all citizens. The Greeks were the first Westerners to be politically self-conscious in separating the principles of state organization and political discourse from those of kinship organization, religious affairs, and the interests of kings or particular aristocratic elites. The concept of citizenship transcended any one class but referred equally to all the free members of a city-state. This does not mean the Greeks promoted a concept of civic identity "regardless of their lineage and ethnic origin."

This separation of politics from other social spheres came with the creation of city-states across the ancient Greek world sometime between 1200 and 650 BC, and their subsequent development, in varying political ways, in the centuries thereafter. The city-state or polis was a new type of community dedicated to the promotion of a general will to action among diverse kin groups and classes based on a set of laws, statuses, offices, and institutions (*nomos*) applying equally to an otherwise socially diverse group. It is believed that by the sixth century BC the polis had "proved itself as a successful institution . . . exportable throughout the [Greek] Mediterranean . . . in Italy [and] the coast of Asia Minor."⁹

Much has been written about what led the Greeks to group themselves into city-states; Charles Freeman reasons that it likely came out of necessity, the need to form more cohesive communities in a landscape populated by many hostile neighbors. Bruce Thornton thinks that it emerged "through the growth of a new class of men: those of the 'middle,' neither aristocratic big men nor serfs dependent on the powerful

ture, not even its universalism and rationalism, aware that these cultural currents have been the driving forces behind America's economic and scientific dynamic. Equally important, he carefully shows that Americans, for all their individualism, were quite explicit in their ethnic attachments through their history until radically novel notions about the meaning of individualism and universalism began to spread in the 1960s.

⁹ Charles Freeman, *The Greek Achievement: The Foundation of the Western World* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 90.

landlords." He has in mind small independent farmers associated with a new style of hoplite or armored infantry fighting. These men nurtured a new way of thinking and form of rule that

protected their agrarian interests, ensured equality among landholding citizens, fostered justice, and avoided the dangers of class alliances and feuds, as well as the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of an aristocratic elite or one man.¹⁰

Thornton's interpretation of the social origins of the polis comes from his excellent book, *Greek Ways: How the Greeks Created Western Civilization*. In a chapter titled "The Birth of Political Man," he surveys the writings of ancient Greeks who voiced this new consciousness of moderation and justice between the extremes of wealth and poverty, particularly in opposition to the excessive wealth and unrestrained militaristic behavior of power-hungry aristocrats prone to disrupt the unity of city-states by pursuing the interests of their own clan. He cites Solon, the great Athenian statesman of the early sixth century:

I have made laws for the good man and the bad [i.e. noble and commoner] alike,/and shaped a rule to suit each case, and set it down.¹¹

Solon sought to overcome the endless, divisive squabbling of clannish aristocratic men in the name of harmony, the "middle," good order, avoidance of extremes, hubris, and the insatiable desire for more honors and wealth on the part of tyrannical rich men. He aimed to promote the general (universal) good of the community. To this end, debt slavery was abolished and those who had been sold abroad were allowed to return as free men. The intention was to support a free, self-sufficient peasantry against the greed of big landowners. To weaken the particularistic, family-oriented division of the city into aristocratic clans, Solon divided the population into four administrative classes according to the amount of produce yielded by their landholdings. The most powerful political offices were reserved for the wealthiest class, "but this was an aristocracy of wealth rather than one of birth and the old aristocratic

¹⁰ Bruce Thornton, *Greek Ways: How the Greeks Created Western Civilization* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000), 111.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 113; bracketing in text.

clans now had no privileges other than as a result of their wealth."¹²

Other offices were open to the second and third classes, and there was a right of appeal against the decisions of the high officeholders. Solon is also said to have created a Council of Four Hundred with members chosen from each tribe, creating thereby a form of political rule and unity above clannish norms and interests. Solon discouraged the use of family funerals as a means for aristocrats to parade or display their clan's power, encouraging instead public commemoration of the city's dead. Finally, and most important of all, he provided an all-embracing code dealing with the laws of the state, criminal law, family relationships, and commercial activity. The citizens of Athens were to be governed in common by this code of laws rather than ruled by the arbitrary tribal whims of particular aristocrats.

Although in *Uniqueness of Western Civilization* (hereafter *Uniqueness*) I barely wrote about the polis, and was uninformed generally about ethnic issues, I criticized Thornton (and Victor Davis Hanson) for overstating the importance of middling farmers in the origins of citizenship, or, ignoring the ultimate origins of this idea in the aristocratic individualism of Mycenaeans and prehistoric Indo-Europeans with their council of peers where open discussion with kings was customary.¹³ The further democratization of Solon's reforms by Cleisthenes and Pericles later on should not detract us from the lasting aristocratic spirit of the Greeks. As Freeman observes, using the work of Pauline Schmitt-Pantel, the community spirit of the city-states was

fostered as a result of the traditional aristocratic values being adopted by the citizens of the *polis* as a whole. The duty of defense passes from the warrior-hero to the hoplite. The aristocratic feast, hitherto reserved for those of wealth and good birth, becomes a city feast in which all citizens participate after a communal sacrifice and are eligible for equal shares. . . . Another feature of aristocratic Greece, the idealization of the naked male body. The *kouroi* [the standing naked males in marble] have to be seen as a statement and it seems to be one concerned with the preservation of aristocratic values. . . . This is a representation of *arete*, excellence, physical beauty allied to nobility of spirit.¹⁴

¹² Freeman, *The Greek Achievement*, 105.

¹³ Ricardo Duchesne, *The Uniqueness of Western Civilization* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 341–418, *passim*.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

This is just a glimpse of the aristocratic spirit that permeated Greek life—in the Olympic competitions, the philosophical contests in Plato’s dialogues, the rapid succession of original thinkers breaking new ground against the aura of their teachers, the theater festivals where writers competed for the adulation of the audience and for prizes, etc., as I examined in *Uniqueness*. But what I want to emphasize here is the immense novelty of the Greek invention of citizenship, a novelty undergoing much depreciation in current ENR circles where the “tribal or blood” commonalities of the pre-rational Homeric Greeks are idealized rather than the intellectual achievements.

For Aristotle, the highest good of all humans could be realized only inside a polis, a “community of families and aggregations of families in well-being, for the sake of a perfect and self-fulfilling life.”¹⁵ Without the creation of the polis, the Greeks would have failed to transcend the barbaric world of contesting tribal families. As Nietzsche also understood, the Greeks achieved their “civility” by re-channeling the destructive feuding and blood lust of their barbarian past and placing their strife under certain common rules within city-states.¹⁶ Everything we have come to identify with the greatness of the ancient Greeks—their invention of the literary forms of tragedy and comedy,¹⁷ their invention of dramatic theater in which they explored deep psychological and cultural conflicts,¹⁸ their invention of prose writing,¹⁹ their discovery of the mind,²⁰ their invention of logic,²¹ and much more—was made possible due to the prior invention of a political order based on rule by laws equally and universally applicable to all citizens. This point is barely, if at all, stressed in discussions of the Greek Miracle.

Scholars have long recognized that the Greek “invention of politics” was unprecedented and of crucial significance to the subsequent development of a political discourse in the West in which politics would cease

¹⁵ As cited in Thornton, *Greek Ways*, 124.

¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, “Homer on Competition,” in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁷ Alfred J. Church, *Stories from the Greek Comedians: Aristophanes, Philemon, Diphilus, Menander, Apollodorus* (London: Seeley and Co., 1893).

¹⁸ Philip Freund, *The Birth of Theatre* (London: Peter Owen, 2003).

¹⁹ Simon Goldhill, *The Invention of Prose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²⁰ Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought*, trans. T. G. Rosenmeyer (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953).

²¹ Dov M. Gabbay, ed., *Handbook of the History of Logic*, 11 vols. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2004–2012).

to be the purview of divine kinship "cloaked in the secrecy of the royal palace." The Greeks are known to have "discovered politics" itself²²—their belief that any citizen could deliberate rationally about political matters in a democratic manner. By the time of Pericles (495–429 BC), one of the main instruments of the government was its Assembly, which was open to rich and poor alike, and in which the most important issues of Athens were debated and motions approved or rejected. The business of the Assembly was determined by a Council of Five Hundred made up of fifty selected from each of the ten Greek tribes representative of all the males over the age of eighteen who were free residents of Athens and whose parents were Athenian, which amounted to about 1 out of 10 of all the residents. The Greeks also invented politics in opening most of the offices of the state and functions of public life to the majority of citizens.

Many aristocratic thinkers distrusted the abilities of most men to use their rational capacities properly, and questioned the notion that men were essentially rational creatures, but what is unique to the Greeks is the realization that politics should include contested debates by citizens rather than be monopolized by clannish aristocrats lacking an appreciation of the wider interests of the community. They sought unity among the citizen residents, and, to this end, they invented the idea of citizenship capable of deliberating on political matters.

ANCIENT GREEKS WERE NEITHER NEOCONS NOR MARXISTS

Certain influential accounts of the polis recognize the undeniable fact that most residents were excluded from politics, but they also want us to believe, in the words of Philippe Nemo, a liberal right-wing French-Jewish philosopher, that the Greeks developed "a form of citizenship in which individuals were abstracted from any other form of ethnic lineage." These words are taken from his *What is the West?* (2006), cited above. Nemo claims that the West nurtured such universal values as democracy, freedom, critical reason, science, and open markets.

There is no denying the West was different in seeking rational foundations for its beliefs and that Western history can be interpreted as a movement whereby reason expressed freely sought to establish itself as the sovereign authority of what can be accepted as valid by removing all reference to extra-rational notions, customs, and sacred sources. But Greek citizenship did not espouse an "abstract idea of the human per-

²² Christian Maier, *The Greek Discovery of Politics*, trans. David McLintock (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

son" "regardless of ethnic identity."²³ There was a more abstract idea of the members of the city-state, and the Greeks overall also developed a sense of membership as a free people ruled by laws in contrast to the Persians, but they did not develop an idea of citizenship without a strong sense of being a people with an ethnic identity. By ethnic identity I mean shared blood ties, tribal kinship, and shared culture, language, mythology, and traditional texts.²⁴

Bruce Thornton, an American neoconservative caught up in the frenzy that "we" are in a global war against Islam and that the West stands for universal rights, expresses a view similar to Nemo in the following:

Today, this idea [of citizenship], expanded to include all humanity, regardless of sex or country or race, lies at the heart of all attempts to create a just and free society.²⁵

Thornton is not saying that the Greeks already developed the idea of citizenship divorced from any emphasis on sexual and ethnic differences. He is, nevertheless, drawing a direct teleological line between ancient Greek citizenship and the current idea that the United States is a nation in which the civic bonds are solely based on abstract rights and allegiance to a state open in principle to any human without reference to religion, birthplace, and race. Nemo is implying the same. They are promoting the proposition that ancient Greece developed ideals of freedom and democracy for "humanity." Thornton regularly uses phrases about "our common humanity" and the "equality of all men" in relation to the Greeks.²⁶

²³ Nemo, *What is the West?*, 9, 12.

²⁴ I prefer the term blood or kin ties rather than race, since ethnicity captures specific cultural and kin group particularities within races, and, besides, the ancients did not yet have a well-defined biological understanding of the concept of race. It was only in the Enlightenment period that Europeans began to investigate the physiognomy and taxonomy of race. Of course, with our growing understanding of the genetics of racial groupings and our ability to trace racial groups genetically across geographical landscapes and through historical time, we can utilize this knowledge to understand better the racial movements of past peoples.

²⁵ Thornton, *Greek Ways*, 132.

²⁶ J. G. A. Pocock offers a more accurate picture of the Greek concept of citizenship in his essay, "The Ideal of Citizenship Since Classical Times," *Queen's Quarterly* 99, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 35–55. He describes the meaning of Greek citizenship as follows: "The classical account of citizenship as an Athenian 'ideal' is to be found in Aristotle's *Politics*. . . . In this great work we are told that the citizen is one who both rules and is ruled; . . . Citizens join each other in making decisions where each decider respects the

Cornelius Castoriadis, internationally known for his garrulous book, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1977), pushes this argument further, ascribing to the ancient Greeks the main tenets of cultural Marxism on the questions of nationality and sexual identity. He writes that the Greek concept of *nomos*—that one can create laws and alter those laws in the course of time—amounted “to explicitly putting into question the established institution of society.” “Nothing” was “sacred” or “natural” for the Greeks, he says; it was all about *nomos*, conventions and socially constructed identities.²⁷ He loves the term “radical imaginary,” which points to a very subjectivist assessment of what humans can do in arranging institutions. The Greeks apparently taught us that we can abolish natural differences between the sexes and races, and create a global community based on new significations of what is real and true irrespective of tradition and natural orderings. But in truth the Greeks never set up a polar opposition between *nomos* and nature (or *physis*) but, in varying ways, believed that human conventions were best when they reflected and sought to perfect, by bringing to fruition, what was potentially already in human nature. Greeks did exhibit a lofty appreciation of the human capacity to pursue ideals and to seek to perfect human nature through deliberate training—traits that were completely contrary to the despotic and fossilized conventions prevailing in the neighboring cultures. But this ideal was not a free-for-all form of individualism, driven by fanciful imaginations without a sense of hierarchy and nobility; nor was it outside the Homeric tradition exalting excellence and self-mastery.

There is now sufficient historical scholarship showing that the ancient Greeks saw themselves as members of a single *ethnos*. This scholarship

authority of the others, and all join in obeying the decisions they have made.” But Pocock then adds:

This account of human equality excludes the greater part of the human species from access to it. Equality, it says, is something of which only very few are capable. . . . For Aristotle the prerequisites are not ours; the citizen must be a male of known genealogy, a patriarch, a warrior, and the master of the labor of others.

Now, while it is true that male citizenship in Athens was eventually extended to every free male resident of the city regardless of social station, and Pocock is aware of this, it is also the case, as Pocock goes on to say, that the prerequisites Aristotle had in mind “persisted in Western culture for two millennia.”

²⁷ See his essay “Power, Politics, Autonomy,” in *Cultural-Political Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment*, ed. Axel Honneth, Thomas MacCarthy, Claus Offe, and Albrecht Wellmer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

is well articulated by Azar Gat in his recent book, *Nations: The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism* (2013). I will examine the paradoxical tendencies of this book below; for now it is worth noting that Gat endorses a strong definition of ethnicity based on kin-relatedness or blood relations, combined with a shared sense of cultural ancestry, though he then vitiates this definition altogether by adding that ethnicities are always changing and that Western states are immigrant ethnic states. Nevertheless, what he says about ancient Greeks is valuable:

In historical times they had a strong sense of being a single ethnos, which shared blood ties, language, a pantheon, mythology, traditional texts (Homer and Hesiod), cultic centers (Delphi) and, not least, the Olympic Games. All the others, non-Greeks, were barbarians.²⁸

This strong ethnos united all the Greeks despite their inter-Greek rivalries. Herodotus, at the time of their struggles with the Persians, referred to their sense of common cause, their pan-Hellenism, as the “kinship of all Greeks in blood and speech, and the shrines of gods and the sacrifices that we have in common, and the likeness of our way of life.”²⁹

At the same time, continues Gat, the Greeks were conscious of their division into four major dialects (each with their own subdivisions): Ionic, Doric, Aeolic, and Arcadian, each with its own sense of kinship, with a legacy of similar tribal names, shared by various city-states in each group. The city-states in turn constituted another level of ethnic identification, and it was at this level, I would add, that a sense of civic identity was added in order to produce a kin-civic identity. The history of Greek city-states, their rivalries and struggles with barbarians, is incomprehensible without an appreciation of both their wider sense of Greekness and their narrower, more tribal, sense of kinship, and kin-civic cities.

THE INTELLECTUAL ORIGINS OF CIVIC NATIONALISM VERSUS THE REALITY OF ETHNICITY

Before moving on to the Romans, I would like to offer some thoughts on the ideological atmosphere leading to the prohibition in Western social science of a biologically inclusive definition of ethnicity. First, the

²⁸ Azar Gat, *Nations: The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 73.

²⁹ Cited by Gat, *Nations*, 74.

idea that the Greeks were postulating a civic notion of the state, and the consequent demonization of ethnic nationalism in the West, cannot be divorced from the very successful theoretical effort of Hans Kohn, Karl Deutsch, Ernest Gellner, and Eric Hobsbawm to discredit any notion that Western nations were rooted in primordial ethnic identities.³⁰ None of these writers denied that people in the pre-modern era had a sense of communal kin affinities and shared culture within their respective tribes or localities. Their focus was on the ideology or the discourse of nationalism which grew rapidly in the late eighteenth century in Western Europe and then intensified throughout Central and Eastern Europe in the next two centuries. This nationalist discourse claimed that the nation-states of Europe were rooted in ancestral territories, national traditions, and national peoples. Kohn, Deutsch, Gellner, and Hobsbawm rejected this claim, arguing that the nation-state, with its corresponding ideology of nationalism, was a product of the modern era; the peoples of Europe that came to be identified with particular nation-states, Italians in Italy, Germans in Germany, Hungarians in Hungary, and so on, had never been conscious of themselves as nationalities belonging to a clearly demarcated territory.³¹ Their sense of nationalism was a "state of mind," in the words of Kohn, or an "invented tradition," in the words of Hobsbawm, produced in the modern era through mass propaganda, or through the "invention" of public ceremonies, the "invention" of national histories, official languages, and a whole host of national institutions, designed by political elites interested in forging powerful territo-

³⁰ Azar Gat, who is an Israeli, writes: "It is probably not a coincidence that the pioneering modernist theorists—Kohn, Deutsch, Gellner, Hobsbawm—were all Jewish immigrant refugees from central Europe. . . . All of them experienced changing identities and excruciating questions of self-identity at the time of the most extreme, violent and unsettling nationalistic eruptions. It was only natural that they reacted against all this" (Gat, *Nations*, 16-17).

³¹ I am grouping the ideas of these authors under a common theme, but readers should be aware that they differ in other respects, such as the dating of the origins of modern states, the reasons for their creation, the roles of particular elites, and their own ideological inclinations. For key works on civic nationalism as well as excellent evaluations of the main proponents, see Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2005 [1944]); Ken Wolf, "Hans Kohn's Liberal Nationalism: The Historian as Prophet," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, no. 4 (October-December 1976): 651-72; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983); Brendan O'Leary, "On the Nature of Nationalism: An Appraisal of Ernest Gellner's Writings on Nationalism," *British Journal of Political Science* 27, no. 2 (April 1997): 191-222; Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

rial states among previously scattered and loosely related rural communities lacking a sense of national-ethnic identity.

The claim that European nations had been founded on the basis of strong ethnic cores was thus rejected. The peoples of Europe, or the peoples who came to be associated with the respective nation-states of Europe, never had a clearly defined sense of ethnic and national identity. Nationalism was a superstructural phenomenon, an ideological weapon employed by political elites seeking to create powerful states with mass appeal, a national infrastructure, official languages, centralized taxation, national currency and laws; this occurred through the modern era, culminating in the nineteenth century. The exhortations of nationalists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries about the kin-ethnic roots of their nations were mere rhetorical ploys to convince the masses to support elite efforts at extending their power nationally over an otherwise disparate, never ethnically conscious, population consisting of multiple dialects, ancestries, and local loyalties.

With the experience of the world wars of the twentieth century, both within liberalism and Marxism, this critique of nationalism turned into a concerted critique of ethnic nationalism, which came to be associated with German militarism in World War I and with fascism thereafter. While Marxists, such as Hobsbawm, advocated working-class internationalism, liberal theorists such as Kohn, Deutsch, and Gellner formulated a strictly civic form of nationalism, while discrediting ethnic nationalism as both an artificial construct and as the source, in the words of Hobsbawm, of “demotic xenophobia and chauvinism” with no basis in reality.

Obviously, there were other intellectual currents percolating through the West, Frankfurt School ideas, civil rights in the United State, feminism, postmodernism, and, not to be underestimated, the pressure from corporate capitalists for cheap immigrant labor and consumer demand, coinciding and reinforcing each other in a grand effort to produce a totally new form of Western identity against the perceived dominance of European identity. Much has been written about these developments, but the writings of the progenitors of liberal or civic nationalism have been neglected. This subject deserves far more attention than I am offering here. Suffice it to say here that in Western countries civic nationalism has become the only accepted form of national identity. The meaning of civic nationalism is neatly captured in the first sentence of the *Wikipedia* entry:

Civic nationalism is a kind of nationalism identified by political philosophers who believe in a non-xenophobic form of nationalism compatible with values of freedom, tolerance, equality, and individual rights.

According to Hans Kohn,³² Western nation-states were civic from their beginning in the late eighteenth century. "Illiberal ethnic nationalism" was a phenomenon of Eastern Europe, Russia, and areas that adopted Fascism—places that focused on the ethnic character of the people rather than on individual rights. Civic nationalism came out of places where a strong middle class involved in commercial enterprise, with a tradition in natural rights, had developed; the members of this class were individualistic and inclined to envision modern states as voluntary associations of individual wills. This was a progressive class, or so argued Kohn, in wanting a form of citizenship based on laws originating out of the free reasoning of individuals; this class did not like states that sought to impose a culture, an ethnicity, and a tradition on its members. Ethnic nationalism, by contrast, come out of cultures lacking a middle class, driven by regressive classes suspicious of individual freedoms, and preferring states that impose on their people an irrational sense of ethnic collective identity inspired by emotions rather than by factual historical realities.³³

Academics, such as the ones I have mentioned above, would go on to examine earlier periods in Western history searching for the origins of those liberal values they deemed to be compatible with a non-

³² Azar Gat thinks that "all modernist writings [on nationalism] can be regarded as footnotes to Hans Kohn's seminal work" (Gat, *Nations*, 8). The foundational book of this modernist tradition is Hans Kohn's *The Idea of Nationalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2005 [1944]). But it is the Marxist Hobsbawm who is read and seen as the originator of these ideas in academia.

³³ Kohn thus wrote: "Nationalism in Germany did not find its justification in a rational societal conception; it found it in the 'natural' fact of a community, held together, not by the will of its members nor by any obligations of contract, but by traditional ties of kinship and status. German nationalism substituted for the legal and rational concept of 'citizenship' the infinitely vaguer concept of 'folk,' which, first discovered by the German humanists, was later fully developed by Herder and the German romantics. It lent itself more easily to the embroideries of imagination and the excitations of emotion. Its roots seemed to reach into the dark soil of primitive times and to have grown through thousands of hidden channels of unconscious development, not in the bright light of rational political ends, but in the mysterious womb of the people, deemed to be so much nearer to the forces of nature" (Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, 331).

xenophobic (non-ethnic) form of nationalism. Consequently, as historians began to examine the origins of civic nationalism, they were inclined to emphasize those traits in the past that pointed in a liberal direction, seeing in ancient Greece the initial sources of civic identity, tracing its evolution into ever more civic and cosmopolitan forms of citizenship, and interpreting this movement as a “progression” over and against tribally and ethnically oriented forms of identity and nationalism.³⁴

In the aftermath of World War II up until about the 1970s, the term “ethnicity” continued to be used in reference to different national groups and minorities, but only in a strictly cultural way divorced from all references to biological or racial traits. Every textbook in the social sciences in the 1950s and after came to endorse this culturalist definition. Combined with this definition, academics added an instrumental and/or functionalist definition, according to which ethnic identification was either a superstructural phenomenon behind which stood the real interests of ruling classes consolidating their power, or it reflected the functional requirements of a national system of education, administration, war-making, and overall modernization—the ideology of the managerial elite. Here is what Jonathan M. Hall says about this in a book addressing Greek ethnicity:

In the wake of the Second World War and more particularly the Holocaust the motives for treating ethnic identity as a valid area of

³⁴ Although Derek Heater’s book, *World Citizenship and Government: Cosmopolitan Ideas in the History of Western Political Thought*, cited earlier, is concerned with the development of cosmopolitanism in the West rather than civic nationalism *per se*, there is much to be learned from his account about the Western progression, in his estimation, from ethnic tribal commitments to a commitment for the human race across the planet. He traces civic citizenship to the Greeks but thinks they did not go far enough as evident in their prejudices against “Barbarians,” though ideas of “human oneness” were already brewing among them. He covers many Western figures pointing in the direction of cosmopolitan citizenship, such as the Stoic contribution to natural law and tolerance of all peoples in the name of world citizenship; Dante and the medieval ideal of a world monarchy; Erasmus and the denunciation of the artificiality of territorial state sovereignty, observing that by the seventeenth century “modern political cosmopolitan ideas were emerging, secular in intellectual tone, (often) federal in institutional plan, and freed from the obsession with the Roman Empire” (59). Then he writes about the Enlightenment’s faith in human rationality, popular sovereignty, and the possibility that “all national differences will fade into insignificance with the realisation that ‘we have the same objective: the preservation of natural rights’” (81), culminating in the UN Human Rights conventions about being a member of the community of the human race and having a sense of responsibility for the condition of the planet.

research were discredited. The subject of ancient Greek ethnicity was no exception, and scholars either practised a studied circumspection in this regard or else attempted to recast the ethnic groups of antiquity in a more sanitised role by substituting lexical terms such as "linguistic groups" or "cultural groups."

The anthropological response to the crisis of scholarship occasioned by the Second World War was the "instrumentalist" approach to ethnicity which proclaimed that ethnic identity was a guise adopted by interest groups to conceal aims that were more properly political or economic.³⁵

Hall then notes that this cultural-instrumental approach also came to be seen as inadequate in not being able to account for numerous post-World War II national liberation movements across the world that were self-consciously identifying themselves along bloodlines and viciously fighting for their "ancestral territories." What Hall leaves out, and should be kept in mind as we read this next passage, is that social scientists were starting to view ethno-kin identities in the non-Western world as progressive, not as fixed identities but as "negotiable" identities, in reference to "oppressed minorities" and without reference to genetic traits.

Yet the ethnic resurgences of the 1970s and 1980s presented a clear challenge to the validity of the instrumentalist approach; this prompted a renewed anthropological interest in the subject of ethnic identity . . . Current research tends to grant at least an intersubjective reality to ethnic identity, though it differs from pre-war scholarship on a number of important points. Firstly, it stresses that the ethnic group is not a biological group but a social group, distinguished from other collectivities by its subscription to a putative myth of shared descent and kinship and by its association with a "primordial" territory. Secondly, it rejects the nineteenth-century view of ethnic groups as static, monolithic categories with impermeable boundaries for a less restrictive model which recognises the dynamic, negotiable and situationally constructed nature of ethnicity. Finally, it questions the notion that ethnic identity is primarily constituted by either genetic traits, language, religion or even

³⁵ Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1–2.

common cultural forms. While all of these attributes may act as important symbols of ethnic identity, they really only serve to bolster an identity that is ultimately constructed through written and spoken discourse.³⁶

Clearly, this passage acknowledges that “a putative myth of shared descent and kinship” and “primordial territory” may play a role in the self-identification of groups, but then proposes that ethnicity is never static but rather is dynamic and “situationally constructed.” In the end, this ideology proposes that it is “ultimately constructed” through discourses. This is actually the state of the research on ethnicity today—a postmodernist mishmash seemingly playing multiple sides yet “ultimately” defining ethnicity in discursive terms very similar to Hans Kohn’s “state of mind” definition, while avoiding any substantive biological references. Hall does not reveal the political considerations underlying this renewed emphasis on ethnic kinship. He assumes it has been a purely academic affair performed by university professors pursuing the truth. He ignores the growing voices both for the ethnic authenticity of non-European minorities and for the inauthenticity of the civic character of western European nations. Just as the ethnic identities of non-Europeans were being heralded as liberating and progressive, the notion that Western nations were civic since the eighteenth century, or earlier, was increasingly subject to criticism due to their “discriminatory” treatment of minorities inside their borders, their imperial designs, and their “White only” immigration policies, which pointed to the presence of ethnic discrimination and thus the reality of ethnicity.³⁷

Of course, this is not quite how the revival of interest in ethnicity was interpreted by its proponents. Moreover, there is no denying that the idea that Western nations were grounded in civic values alone just

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁷ The civic/ethnic dichotomy was subject to much criticism, including the notion that Western European nations were tolerant liberal nations in contrast to Eastern European nations, and non-European nations generally; see Taras Kuzio, “The Myth of the Civic State: A Critical Survey of Hans Kohn’s Framework for Understanding Nationalism,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25, no. 1 (2002): 20–39; Stephen Shulman, “Challenging the Civic/Ethnic and West/East Dichotomies in the Study of Nationalism,” *Comparative Political Studies* 35, no. 5 (2002): 554–85. Among multiple publications on Europe’s lack of liberalism, see *Europe’s New Racism? Causes, Manifestations, and Solutions*, ed. The Evens Foundation (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002). On Canada’s “White racist state,” see Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

seemed out of touch with reality, regardless of one's political intentions. The leading critic of the concept of civic nationalism was Anthony D. Smith, starting with his book, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*,³⁸ and multiple publications since. His main contention was that modern nations were not created *ex nihilo* on the basis of civic values alone or because the ruling elites wanted to augment their authority through modern infrastructures; rather, nation-states were created on the basis of pre-existing ancestral ties and sense of historical continuity. A sense of nationhood predated the modern era and could be traced as far back as ancient times and throughout the world. The nations of Europe were not mere "inventions" or functional requirements of modernity,³⁹ but were factually rooted in the past, in common myths of descent, a shared history, and a distinctive cultural tradition. While the rise of modern industry and modern bureaucracies allowed for the materialization of nation-states in Europe, these nations were primordially based on a population with a collective sense of kinship.

Smith's work was undoubtedly fruitful in challenging the notion that Western nations were inherently civic. Yet, for all this, Smith's concept of ethnicity was more about the importance of past communities, a roughly defined territory, a language, artistic styles, myths and symbols, and states of mind, than about emphasizing any form of identity along bloodlines—actual common lineage and consanguinity. To be sure, an ethnic group cannot be categorized as a race, but his concept of ethnicity followed the mandated social science prohibition against the inclusion of biological referents, physical characteristics, skin color, body shape, and other features that have a racial dimension. Ethnicity was defined by Smith in terms of cultural traits and past historical memories.

Meanwhile, as Smith was busy writing historical works, and without his full awareness, an avalanche of ethnically oriented programs, hundreds of conferences, and thousands of academics were eagerly affirming the value of ethnicity, *but only* in relation to "oppressed" groups. Writing about this would require a separate paper. Perhaps the best way

³⁸ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 1986).

³⁹ The view that nationalism was necessitated by modernization, that nation-states were created in order to facilitate industrialization and raise the general level of education required for the functioning of a modern culture is best articulated by Ernest Gellner. Anthony D. Smith effectively criticizes this view in "Memory and Modernity: Reflections on Ernest Gellner's Theory of Nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism* 2, no. 3 (November 1996): 371–83.

to sum up our current obsession with ethnicity is to look at the mission statements of Ethnic Studies programs or departments. These are very vocal in claiming that race is a reality of the West that cannot be ignored because racism has been and continues to be one of the "most powerful social and cultural forces in American society and in modernity at large."⁴⁰ European culture cannot be defined in civic terms for the reason that Europeans have viewed themselves in racial terms and are responsible for "racializing"⁴¹ Africans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Natives.

The current divide between the Left and Right can be framed as a divide between multiculturalists who value the ethnic identities of non-Europeans and think it is necessary for these "minorities" to affirm themselves along racial lines as a way of fighting the "racialization" of Whites (who should not be allowed to identify themselves along bloodlines since they, and only they, are inherently racist), and assimilationists who emphasize the West's contribution to the development of a civic identity which abolishes all references to race and ethnicity and which speaks in the name of humanity. The writers I have examined here, who trace the roots of civic identity back to ancient Greece, are assimilationists, roughly speaking; even Castoriadis in his "Eurocentric" preoccupation with the contribution of the Greeks to the imaginative possibilities of humans to create societies unlimited by nature and traditions. The attitude of the multiculturalists toward the West is one of outright hostility, though there are some, such as Charles Taylor, who praise the West for progressively becoming more multicultural, and believe that the practice of civic identity was a movement leading to a political identity that is both liberal and multicultural.⁴² What is common to both these sides is their complete identification of any *affirmation* of European ethnicity with xenophobia and fascism. Smith's strictly historical investigation of the ethnic background of nations is tolerated. Progressives who call Western nations racist and celebrate the ethnic affirmation of non-

⁴⁰ These words are taken from the Department of Ethnic Studies at Berkeley University, "What is Ethnic Studies?"

<http://ethnicstudies.berkeley.edu/ethnicstudies.php>

⁴¹ 'Racializing' or 'racialized' is a common term used by academics to justify the identification of non-Whites in racial terms while denying that races exist and that Whites constitute a race; non-Whites can be categorized in racial terms because Whites racialized them, and until Whites cease to do so they can be identified as races with their own interests and racially oriented politics.

⁴² Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

Europeans are welcomed with open arms.

AZAR GAT'S POLITICALLY CORRECT SOCIOBIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

There is one current writer cited earlier, Azar Gat, Professor of Political Science at Tel Aviv University, who does appear to be offering a strong biological conception of ethnicity, in his book *Nations: The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism*. This book is said to be written from a "sociobiological perspective." The opening chapters and the conclusion state that nations "are rooted in primordial human sentiments of kin-culture affinity, solidarity, and mutual cooperation, evolutionarily engraved in human nature."⁴³ Agreeing with "much" of what Smith says, he still finds wanting his lack of emphasis on human nature, evolutionary theory, and unwillingness to break away from a culture-oriented perspective. He writes that ethnicity is "by far the most important factor" in national identity and that through history nations "overwhelmingly correlate with and relate to shared kin-culture traits."⁴⁴ Welcoming the application of evolutionary theory to explain human behavior, he writes:

Its [sociobiology's] relevance to our subject can be summarized as follows: people tend to prefer closer kin, who share more genes with them, to more remote kin or "strangers." As a propensity this is not necessarily conscious.⁴⁵

But it soon becomes apparent that Gat (despite his correct recognition that humans have strong genetic dispositions and that preference for one's kin is an evolutionary selected behavior, rather than an "irrational" "epiphenomenon of something else") is not willing to recognize, or even say anything about the rational ethnic dispositions of Europeans, but actually takes it as given that Europeans inhabit nations dedicated to the creation of new immigrant ethnic identities under the umbrella of a common culture that cannot but be defined in civic terms. Gat is quite effective in documenting the importance of kin-ethnic attachments and common culture for pre-modern states, including empires, as well as for the origins of modern European states and non-European states. This is why the summary I offered above of Greek ethnic identity relied on his work, and I will rely on it again (below) in regards to the Romans.

⁴³ Gat, *Nations*, 380.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

Yet, when it comes to the current Western nations experiencing mass immigration, it never occurs to Gat to consider the ancestral attachments and kin-relatedness of the peoples who have inhabited these lands the longest and who have transformed them into modern nations. He simply accepts without question the experience of mass immigration as if it were a natural occurrence consistent with the ethnic histories of Western nations. He proposes a new definition of ethnicity to deal with the reality of mass immigration, which is inconsistent with his sociobiological perspective. Indeed, he proposes an immigrant definition of ethnicity, by indicating that, while his definition of ethnicity is not restricted to culture, it views ethnicity as “an ongoing process” not exclusive to one ethnicity but capable of explaining the formation of “immigrant states” and how such states “habitually integrate new comers into a broad cultural and kin community.”⁴⁶

There is no space here to go over some of the things he says about Spain, France, Britain, and Canada. Highlighting what he says about the United States and Europe generally should suffice to illustrate his rather civic-oriented and ultimately multiculturalist approach when it comes to current European ethnic identity. Although Gat insists that American nationhood is not founded on liberal propositions alone, and that “there exists a very distinct American culture, widely shared by the large majority of Americans, and characterized by a common American-English language and all-pervasive folkways. . . . [which] has been powerfully shaped from the twentieth century on by the media and entertainment industry, most notably the press, Hollywood, and television,”⁴⁷ with a strong Anglo-Protestant lineage, he acquiesces to a cultural definition of America in viewing American ethnicity as a changing reality, not only with respect to diverse European immigrants, but with respect to post-1965 immigration policies, which he sees as a natural continuation of earlier trends. My point is not to deny that American ethnicity is changing, but to ask why he refuses say a word about “the deep human preferences toward one’s *own*”⁴⁸ that European Americans may feel in the face of mass immigration since 1965 from non-European nations. Or, if he thinks European Americans are satisfied with Mexican immigration, why is that the case, and does it mean, therefore, that American nationality is indeed strictly cultural? Or, could it be that Gat is unaware of the wider political and intellectual realities shaping the way Americans

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 386; italics in text.

think about ethnicity; and that European peoples, and only European peoples, are prohibited from affirming their ethnicity in the face of a system of mass immigration imposed across the Western world, and that social scientists such as Gat have been incentivized to go along with the program, unless they are willing to risk their careers?

Gat's effort to argue that America is a nation with an immigrant identity carries weight when one considers the pre-1965 immigration period, which, after difficult racial tensions resulting from the high levels of immigration from diverse European nations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, became a nation with a high degree of unity and a common culture by the 1950s, except for its non-European inhabitants, Africans and Native Americans. But he does not consider whether this immigrant identity was successfully nurtured due to the compatible ethno-European heritages of most immigrants. Instead, he takes it as given that America's post-1965 immigration patterns are the same as before, writing that "the Latino immigration is not fundamentally different from earlier waves of immigration in its gradual American acculturation."⁴⁹ While he is aware of challenges to this argument, he thinks he can emphasize America's ethnic immigrant identity simply by appealing to the common usage of the English language, ignoring how common Spanish is becoming in many localities across the United States and how Whites exhibit implicit patterns of racial separation in their choice of residential areas to raise their families and educate their children, notwithstanding their explicit claims about the benefits of diversity.

Having painted the United States as a nation with a uniquely immigrant ethnicity, he seems at a loss trying to account for the importance of ethnic identities in current European nations and Canada. "The phenomenon of mass immigration has transformed the map of identities in Western countries in recent decades."⁵⁰ How and why are current Europeans allowing their millennial ethnic identities to be radically diluted if ethnic nationalism is truly, in the words of Gat, "one of the strongest forces in history"? How did they overcome their genetic predisposition to have a preference for their own, and why is Gat taking mass non-White immigration to America as if it were a natural process or somehow part and parcel of Europe's national identity without even asking such a question? An honest sociobiological approach would have required asking such questions, but Gat only provides cultural Marxist

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 349.

proposals to the effect that “not a few immigrants and their descendants are in fact integrating, culturally and socially, well enough for them to be described as ‘joining the nation.’”⁵¹ But how are the original ethnic nationalities of Europe integrating with the new immigrants? If ethnic identity is so important, why are Europeans expected to accept, in his words, a “weakening connection”⁵² between their nation-state and their ethno-cultural heritage? In the end, Gat has no choice but to shift his take on ethnic identity in the direction of the liberal values Hans Kohn equated with Western nationalism; more than this, he has no choice but to endorse a liberal multicultural definition of Western identity.

Gat thinks a good indication in Europe of a common national culture is the recent “retreat” from multiculturalism which “has led to a reemphasizing in many Western countries of the official connection between (majority) culture and polity,”⁵³ but he never brings up any shared aims among immigrants, a majority culture, and the state. To repeat, the one factor he can muster in the name of a common immigrant culture is the fact that immigrants are learning the language of the immigrant nations. How about patriotic attachments to past European symbols, folk songs, legendary historical figures, food – shared traits can be categorized in ethnic-kin terms? Not a word. Instead we get the usual attitude that things must be working since there is no civil war, immigrants are trying to be successful economically and to educate their children. The only common culture that seems to be tying together Western immigration is cultural Marxism, an ideology imposed from above, without democratic consent, by bureaucratic elites convinced that diversity is an improvement and that Europeans are racist unless they interbreed with millions of non-Whites. He regularly cites Will Kymlicka, calling him “the chief theorist of liberal multiculturalism” in a sympathetic manner, without ever bringing to attention Kymlicka’s open call for an end to any intrinsic links between the nation-states of Europe and any form of ethnicity that can be called “European.” Is it not quite revealing that the same author who writes a book dedicated to a sociobiological approach on the ethnic roots of nations ends up sympathizing with the foremost advocate of an end to all deep links between the states of the West and their ancestral ethnicities?⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 350.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ See my essay, “Will Kymlicka and the Disappearing Dominion,” *The Quarterly Review* (April 22, 2014) (<http://www.quarterly-review.org/will-kymlicka-and-the->

ROMAN LEGAL RATIONALISM

The claim that the Roman Empire was a legally sanctioned multiracial state is another common trope used by cultural Marxists to create an image of the West as a civilization long working itself toward the creation of a universal race-mixed humanity. The majority of scholars agree that Rome's greatest contribution to Western civilization was the development of a formal-rational type of legal order characterized by the logical consistency of its laws, the precise classification of its different types of law, the precise definition of its terms, and its method of arriving at the formulation of specific rules wherein questions were posed, various answers from jurists were collected, and consistent solutions were offered. It was a legal order committed to legal decisions based on fairness and equity for all citizens.

The early Romans, before the Republic was established in 509 BC, lived according to laws established through centuries of custom, much

disappearing-dominion/). Keep in mind that ethnicity includes cultural traits, and that Kymlicka is a multiculturalist calling as well for a break of any links between Western states and European cultural traditions in the name of liberal democratic values viewed as human values, with special collective rights for non-Europeans to compensate for the discriminatory habits of Europeans. This call to eliminate all links with not only kin-related European aspects but also European culture has been intensifying in our universities, with claims that it amounts to a form of "cultural racism" to expect immigrants to learn the histories, folkways, and cultural norms of European peoples. See Arash Abizadeh, "Does Liberal Democracy Presuppose a Cultural Nation? Four Arguments," *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 3 (September 2002): 495-509.

As if this were not enough, the last two decades has witnessed a mushrooming literature insisting Europeans must endorse a broader sense of cosmopolitan identity over the notion that a citizen has to be someone residing within a particular civic nation. All humans have rights and none should be excluded from the democratic rights afforded to citizens. Immigrant *residents* should have the same rights as the citizens of any European nation. Insane as this idea may seem, it is an academic industry backed by numerous lucrative grants and conferences headed by jet set luminaries such as Seyla Behabib (a Turkish-American holding the prestigious title of "Eugene Meyer Professor of Political Science and Philosophy" at Yale University), Gerard Delanty, Martha Nussbaum, and Jürgen Habermas. In the words of Delanty, "It might be concluded that for cosmopolitan citizenship the fundamental criterion of citizenship is no longer birth, as is the case with most kinds of national citizenship, but residence and the cultivation of a critical discourse of identity as multilayered." As long as you arrive into a Western territory, and reside there by walking around and breathing, you not only should have civic rights but are the embodiment of a new "multilayered" identity. See Gerard Delanty, *Citizenship in a Global Age: Society, Culture, Politics* (Philadelphia: Open University Press: 2000), 67. As little as Azar Gat may be aware of this civic citizenship = cosmopolitan immigrant, he writes approvingly of immigration and a "new" European identity.

like every other culture in the world, each with their own traditions, each ruled by what Max Weber called “traditional law,” a type of authority legitimated by the sanctity of age-old practices. Traditional law tended to be inconsistent and irrational in its application. During Republican times, the Romans created, in 451 BC, their famous Twelve Tables, which established in written form (*leges*) their centuries-old customary laws (*iures*). The Twelve Tables covered civil matters that applied to private citizens as well as public laws and religious laws that applied to social fields of activity and institutions. These Tables were customary but they also constituted an effort to create a code of law, a document aiming to cover all the laws in a definite and consistent manner.

Weber associated “formal-rational authority” with the rise of the modern bureaucratic states in the sixteenth century, but legal historians now recognize that he understated the “formal-rational” elements of both medieval Canon law and Roman law.⁵⁵ By the time we get to the writings of Q. Mucius Scaevola, who died in 82 BC, and his fellow jurists, we are dealing with attempts to systematically classify Roman civil law into four main divisions: the law of inheritance, the law of persons, the law of things, and the law of obligations, with each of these subdivided into a variety of kinds of laws, with rational methods specified as to how to arrive at the formulation of particular rules. These techniques to create and apply Roman law in a rationally consistent and fair manner were refined and developed through the first centuries AD, culminating in what is known as Justinian’s Code, a compilation of all existing Roman law into one written body of work, commissioned by Emperor Justinian I, who ruled the Eastern Empire from AD 527 to 565. Initially known as the Code of Justinian, it consisted of (1) the Digest, a collection of several centuries of legal commentary on Roman law; (2) the Code, an outline of the actual law of the empire, constitutions, pronouncements; and (3) the Institutes, a handbook of basic Roman law for students. A fourth part, the Novels, was created a few decades later to update the Code.

This legal work is now known as the Corpus of Civil Law, considered to be one of the most influential texts in the making of Western civilization.⁵⁶ More specifically, some see it as the foundation of the “Papal

⁵⁵ Harold J. Berman and Charles J. Reid Jr., “Max Weber as Legal Historian,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Weber*, ed. Stephen Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁵⁶ Peter Stein, *Roman Law in European History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Revolution" of the years 1050–1150, which Harold Berman has identified as the most important transformation in the history of the West. The ecclesiastical scholars who made this legal revolution, by separating the Church's corporate autonomy, its right to exercise legal authority within its own domain, and by analyzing and synthesizing all authoritative statements concerning the nature of law, the various sources of law, and the definitions and relationships between different kinds of laws, and encouraging whole new types of laws, created not only the modern legal system, but modern culture itself. This is the thesis of Berman's book, *Law and Revolution, Vol. 1: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*.⁵⁷

There are flaws with Berman's book (simply stated, he underestimated much of what was accomplished before and after 1050–1150), but he is right to emphasize not just this Papal revolution but the common Western legal heritage of the peoples of Europe neglected by the nationalist historians of the nineteenth century, and, of course, by some ENR intellectuals who prefer "pagan" law. Here I want to criticize recent works which argue that the Roman legal system broke decisively with any notion of ethnic identity by formulating a legal system "for all of humanity." This is not easy; there is a universalizing logic inherent to Western civilization, which becomes all the more evident in the development of Roman law, which deliberated and encoded legal principles in reference to all human beings as possessors of reason in common and as inhabitants of a multiethnic Roman community. I don't intend to fabricate arguments about the racial self-awareness of Romans and the particularistic language of Roman law. But I will nevertheless try to show that Roman legal ideas cannot be used to make the claim that Romans invented a legal system for a "multicultural and a multiethnic state" – teleologically pointing towards the creation of our current immigrant state in which racial identities are abolished and a race-less humanity is created. There is vast temporal and cultural space between Rome and our current state of affairs.

In *What Is the West?*, Philippe Nemo has a chapter on Rome with the title, "Invention of Universal Law in the Multiethnic Roman State," in which, to start with, he contradicts his earlier assertion that Greek citizenship was "regardless of ethnicity," as he admits that Greek city-states were "ethnically homogeneous."⁵⁸ But Nemo now thinks he has a tight case to persuade us that with their contribution to law "the Romans rev-

⁵⁷ Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution, Vol. 1: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

⁵⁸ Philippe Nemo, *What Is the West?*, 17.

olutionized our understanding of man and the human person” wherein all reference to ethnicity was disregarded. His first line of argument is that, as the Romans expanded beyond Italy and created a multiethnic empire, and foreign subjects came under their sovereignty,

it became necessary to use ordinary words and formulas without reference to the religions or institutions of specific ethnic groups so that they could be understood by everyone. This, in turn, encouraged the formulation of an increasingly abstract legal vocabulary.⁵⁹

I would express the implications of this expansion across multiple ethnic lands as follows: with non-citizens inhabiting the empire, to whom the current laws for citizens did not apply, jurists developed “laws of nations” or laws that applied to all people, foreigners and non-citizens as well as citizens. In connection to this, they also began to reason about the common principles which all peoples should live by – the laws that should be “natural” to all humans (rooted in “natural law”). But this form of reasoning about law was not merely a circumstantial reaction to the problem of ruling over many different categories of people; it was a form of reasoning implicit in the process of reasoning itself. The development of an increasingly abstract vocabulary resulted from the application of reason (as opposed to customary thinking) to the development of law; abstraction is inherent to the process of reasoning and results from the process of generating definitions, classifications and concepts, recognizing common features in particular instances and individual cases, and generating different types of laws and different terms. As Aristotle writes in his *Posterior Analytics*, inductive reasoning “exhibits the universal as implicit in the clearly known particular” (bk 1, chap. 1).

Essentially what the Romans did was to apply Greek philosophy, particularly the Aristotelian inductive logic of moving from experience to certainty or probability, by coalescing together in one’s mind the common elements in the particular cases observed. Roman jurists were trained to be very practical about their legal reasoning, and rather than debating ultimate questions about justice, they went about deciding what was the best legal course of action in light of the stated facts, and, in this vein, they classified Roman law into different kinds of law in a systematic fashion, as was evident in the treatises of Q. Mucius Scaevola.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

The point I am driving at is that just because the Romans were developing legal concepts that were increasingly abstract and without reference to the customs of particular groups, it does not mean they were trying to create a multiracial state with a common system of law, or a nation dedicated to racial equality.

There is clearly a connection between universalization and subjecting the legal system to a rational process that engenders an abstract language that bespeaks of a common humanity. That is why Western thinkers always write in terms of "man," "humanity," "mankind," even if they are really thinking of themselves, be they Greeks, Romans, or Germans. Westerners created a universal language in the course of becoming—the only people in this planet to do so—self-conscious of the "human" capacity to employ its rational faculties in a self-legislating manner in terms of its own precepts, rising above the particularities of time, custom, and lineage, and learning how to reason about the universal questions of "life" and the "cosmos." Europeans are the true thinkers of this planet, the only ones who freed their minds from extra-rational burdens and requirements, addressing the big questions "objectively" from the standpoint of the "view from nowhere," that is nobody's in particular. But we should realize that it is the view of European man only, and that abstract concepts do not amount to a call for equality, mass immigration, or race mixing.

ROMANITAS

Now, it is also the case, as Nemo points out, that with the emergence of the Hellenistic world after Alexander the Great's conquests (331–323 BC), Greek Stoics philosophized about a common humanity (in the context of the combination of Greeks, Persians, Syrians, Egyptians, and other groups within this world) with a common nature. It is also the case that Stoicism was very influential among Romans, who produced their own Stoics, Marcus Aurelius and Seneca. Influenced by the Stoics, Roman jurists developed the idea of natural law which Cicero described as follows:

True law is right reason in agreement with nature; it is of universal application. . . . And there will not be different laws at Rome and at Athens, or different laws now and in the future, but one eternal and unchangeable law will be valid for all nations and all times,

and there will be one master and ruler, that is God, over us all, for he is the author of this law.⁶⁰

How can one disagree with Nemo that the Romans bequeathed to us the idea that we should envision a New World Order in which all the peoples of the earth are ruled by universal laws regardless of ethnicity and other particularities? Add to this the fact that, with the Edict of Caracalla issued in AD 212, all free men in the Roman Empire were given Roman citizenship. Citizenship had long been reserved for the free inhabitants of Rome, and then extended to the free inhabitants of Italy, but this edict extended citizenship to multiple ethnic groups.

Still, it would be a great mistake to envision Roman citizenship as a conscious effort on the part of ethnic Romans to recognize the common humanity of all ethnic groups. Firstly, as Gat has observed about empires generally, ethnicity was no less an important component of the makeup of empires than domination by social elites over a tax-paying peasantry or slave force. "Almost universally they were either overtly or tacitly the empires of a particular people or ethnos."⁶¹ While it is true that Italy, from the beginning of Rome's ascendancy, did not consist of a single ethnos as was the case with ancient Greece, it is worth noting that as Rome became a major power by defeating the Latins in west-central Italy, it continued its march to supremacy in the Italian Peninsula by forming an alliance with Latin city-states, which "belonged to the same ethnic stock"⁶² as the Romans, speaking the same language and sharing a similar culture. Through this alliance, the Romans defeated the Etruscans and Samnites. When Hannibal's armies were on the verge of defeating Rome, after Cannae (216 BC), it was only the Latins and other thoroughly Romanized communities of central Italy, revealingly enough, that remained loyal to Rome, whereas the Samnites, Greeks, Etruscans, and Celts either deserted Rome or were in open rebellion.

Gat qualifies this by noting that it was the "cultural component of ethnic identity" among the expanding Romans that played the major part in the consolidation of an empire with a strong ethnic identity. In short, as Romans defeated all other ethnic groups in Italy, they imposed a process of acculturation to Roman ways, elite connections, military service, and eventually the granting of citizenship. Citizenship was granted to all Italian residents after the so-called Social War of 91-88 BC.

⁶⁰ Cited by Nemo, *What is the West?*, 21.

⁶¹ Gat, *Nations*, 111; italics in original.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 75.

Gat writes that

if ethnic differences in Italy were still noticeable at the beginning of the first century BC, they had practically disappeared by the end of that century. By the time of Augustus, the concepts of Roman and Italian had become virtually identical.⁶³

It should be added that Roman/Latins were so reluctant to grant citizenship that it took a full-scale civil war, the Social War or Marsic War, for them to do so, even though Italians generally had long been fighting on their side helping them create the empire. Gat neglects to mention that all the residents of Italy (except the Etruscans, whose status as an Indo-European people remains uncertain) were members of the European genetic family. As the process of Romanization continued, in AD 212 the entire free population was given citizenship status, which is to say that before this rather late date in Rome's history, the vast majority of those who held Roman citizenship were from Italy; moreover, historians agree that the only reason the Emperor Caracalla extended citizenship was to expand the Roman tax base. All in all, the acquisition of citizenship came in graduated levels with promises of further rights with increased assimilation; and, right until the end, not all citizens had the same rights, with Romans and Italians generally enjoying a higher status.

Moreover, as Gat recognizes, Romanization was largely successful in the Western half of the empire, in Italy, Gaul, and Iberia, all of which were Indo-European in race, whereas the Eastern Empire retained its upper crust Hellenistic culture, with a mass of Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Judaic, Persian, and Assyrian peoples following their ancient ways, virtually untouched by Roman culture. The process of Romanization and expansion of citizenship was effective only in the Western (Indo-European) half of the Empire, where the inhabitants were White; whereas in the East it had superficial effects. This is the conclusion reached in Warwick Ball's book, *Rome in the East* (2000); Roman rule in the regions of Syria, Jordan, and northern Iraq was "a story of the East more than of the West."⁶⁴

Rome was not a civic polity devoted to a trans-racial order, notwith-

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁶⁴ Warwick Ball, *Rome in the East: The Transformation of an Empire* (London: Routledge, 2000), 443.

standing the veritable effects of Romanization.⁶⁵ It is no accident that the roots of the word “patriot” go back to Roman antiquity, the city of Rome, expressed in such terms as *patria* and *patrius*, which indicate city, fatherland, native, or familiar place, and worship of ancestors.⁶⁶ Roman ethnic identity was strongly tied to the city of Rome for centuries; George Mousourakis writes of “a single nation and uniform culture” developing only in the Italian Peninsula as a result of extending citizenship, or naturalizing non-Roman Italian residents.⁶⁷ While Rome has been called a melting pot of races, the Italian-born inhabitants of this city, not citizens from elsewhere, made up 95 percent of the population at the height of the Empire.⁶⁸

CONCLUSION

I have two general concluding statements. First, it would be anachronistic to project back to the ancient Greeks and Romans an ingrained disposition for a civic state without ethnic identity. Civic nationalism was uniquely Western, but it is important to be aware of the West’s discontinuous development, conflicting ideologies, and recent undertakings by hostile forces, rather than tracing the West’s current pathological obsession with diversity back to Greek (or Christian) times. In trying to understand our immigration policies and the obsession with diversity, we would gain important insights if we were to concentrate on the forces that led to the separation of civic and ethnic nationalism in the West, coupled with the celebration of ethnic minorities, rather than assuming that civic nationalism is a universal ideology inherently opposed to European particularisms.

⁶⁵ See Janet Huskinson, ed., *Experiencing Rome: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Routledge, 2000), for a collection of essays pushing the Romanization argument as far as possible, the spread of Roman architecture, economic exchanges, administration, clothing, Latinization, civic government, yet generally agreeing that Romanization did not penetrate into the common people outside Italy, remaining limited to the upper echelons of the citizenry.

⁶⁶ Kenneth Minogue, *Politics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chap. 3, “The Romans: The Real Meaning of Patriotism.”

⁶⁷ George Mousourakis, *The Historical and Institutional Context of Roman Law* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 156.

⁶⁸ See Jean Manco, *Ancestral Journeys: The Peopling of Europe from the First Venturers to the Vikings* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2013), 199. Manco plays up the “melting pot” cliché, then dismisses the concerns of Roman authors “who railed against immigration” by offering this 95 percent figure. The people who spoke proto-Italo-Celtic were Indo-Europeans, associated with the Bell Beaker Folk, migrating to Italy in the third millennium from the Carpathian Basin.

Second, the sensible response one should reach on examining the debate between civic and ethnic nationalism is that the historical research validates the idea that European nation-states were founded around a strong ethnic core even if there were minorities coexisting with majorities. The states of Western Europe developed liberal civic institutions within the framework of this ethnic core. Sociobiological research further supports the natural inclination of humans to have a preference for their own kin. This biologically based research demonstrates that humans cannot be abstracted from an ethnic collective. The claim that such a preference is an irrational disposition imposed from above by regressive elites is false. Ethnocentrism is a rationally driven disposition consistent with civic freedoms. Civic freedoms are consistent with a collective sense of kin-culture. What is not consistent with rationally based research, with individual rational decision making, and with our collective kin-dispositions, are the claims that Western nations were civic in origins, and the current enforcement of mass immigration without allowance of open rational debate.