

EMMANUEL TODD

**LINEAGES
OF
MODERNITY**

A HISTORY OF HUMANITY FROM THE
STONE AGE TO HOMO AMERICANUS

Lineages of Modernity

For Laurent

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A History of Humanity from the Stone Age
to *Homo Americanus*

Emmanuel Todd

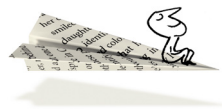
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FOREWORD

Nobody who reads Emmanuel Todd could have been surprised by the election of Donald Trump. Before the businessman and reality television star shocked the world by becoming President of the United States, the French social scientist and public intellectual had anatomized the conditions that made such a disruptive event possible: the polarization of American society as a result of the hollowing-out of American manufacturing by globalization, and the failure of a foreign policy that masked the limits of American power with what Todd called ‘theatrical micromilitarism’.

Had Todd written his pessimistic analysis in 2014, he would have been prophetic enough. But he published it in 2001, in his book *After the Empire: The Breakdown of the American Order*. At the time, conventional wisdom held that the post-Cold War emergence of the United States as the sole remaining superpower had inaugurated an age of ‘unipolarity’. European and Japanese alternatives to Anglo-American neoliberal capitalism had failed. Countries that wanted to grow needed to obey the rules of the Washington Consensus – liberalization, deregulation and privatization. And history had ended, according to Francis Fukuyama. Liberal democracy was the final outcome of humanity’s political evolution, and the chief threat to the human race in the future would be boredom.

This was not the first time Todd had been at odds with the elite consensus on both sides of the Atlantic. A quarter of a century earlier, following the US withdrawal from Indochina, the Soviet Union appeared to many to be more powerful than ever. In 1976, in response to claims that the Central Intelligence Agency downplayed the Soviet threat, President Gerald Ford appointed then-Director of Central Intelligence George H. W. Bush to organize a ‘Team B’ of outside experts who, after re-evaluating intelligence reports, claimed that the CIA had consistently underestimated Soviet strength.

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In the same year, then only twenty-five years old, having examined Soviet social indicators such as increasing infant mortality rates, Todd published *The Final Fall: An Essay on the Decomposition of the Soviet Sphere*. As in 2001, when writing about underlying American weakness, in 1976, when writing about underlying Soviet weakness, Todd was prematurely and unfashionably correct. If *Untimely Meditations* were not the title of a collection of essays by Nietzsche, it would make an apt summary of Todd's work.

That work is virtuosic in its variety and impressive in its depth, ranging from a study of the elites of pre-First World War Europe, *Le Fou et le prolétaire* (1979), to social developments within Muslim societies, *A Convergence of Civilizations: The Transformation of Muslim Societies Around the World* (with Youssef Courbage, 2007). In an age of growing distance between scholastic university research and clickbait Internet punditry, Todd has managed, against the odds, to be an influential public intellectual as well as a rigorous scholar. Although Todd denies paternity of the term, his influence is said to have led French president Jacques Chirac to invoke the idea of 'the social fracture' in his 1995 campaign. And in 2015, the prime minister of France, Manuel Valls, denounced Todd's controversial book *Who Is Charlie? Xenophobia and the New Middle Class*, in which Todd argued that public demonstrations of solidarity with the victims of the terrorist attack on the staff of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* disguised currents of xenophobia and reaction in French society.

For nearly half a century, between publishing his insightful analyses of the Soviet Union, the United States and France, Todd has been constructing an impressive body of thought linking the values of historic and contemporary societies to different family systems. In *Lineages of Modernity: A History of Humanity from the Stone Age to Homo Americanus*, Todd unites his complementary roles as anthropologist and historian, scholar and public intellectual. The French thinker puts Anglo-American civilization at the centre of modern global history, writing that 'it was England and her daughter America who were, and remain, the true revolutionary nations'. Todd notes the paradox that it was the very fact that the individualistic Anglo-American family was primitive, in anthropological terms, that made possible the incubation of liberal modernity in Britain and its settler states. And he presents another paradox: at the very moment that the rest of the world is catching up with a previous wave of Anglo-American liberalism, Brexit and the Trump presidency may represent the next phase in Anglo-American liberal evolution, a check upon ultra-liberalism: 'The choice for advanced societies does not lie between elitism and populism, between openness and closure, but between negotiation and disintegration.'

For my part, I would hesitate to argue that a thinker who has been

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right so often about contemporary societies like the Soviet Union and the United States is wrong about the contemporary world. Whether readers agree or disagree with Emmanuel Todd, in *Lineages of Modernity*, they will find a worldview as revolutionary as the world revolution it describes.

Michael Lind

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

When the English language first appeared in the fourteenth century, its kingdom of 3 million inhabitants was just a tiny peripheral country on the edge of a Eurasia that had a population of 300 million. This language is now unifying the world. The Anglosphere – the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand – is characterized not only by its language, but by an individualistic family structure, and by a corresponding social and political temperament: in 2018–19 it had more than 450 million inhabitants. British globalization in the nineteenth century, followed by American globalization in the twentieth, generated a worldwide economic organization. Yet Britain remains an island and continues to amaze Europeans with its particularism – its habit of driving on the left, its royal family, its humour, its general refusal to conform. Solving the paradox of a culture that is not only tiny but particularistic, one that created the United States and shaped the world, is the central focus of this book.

I had to start from the emergence of *Homo sapiens* and reconstruct the history of the family systems of our species before I finally understood that, as so often, the problem was basically the solution. It was *because* it was peripheral and residual that England succeeded. Its dynamism, and even more so that of America, is the dynamism of the original *Homo sapiens*. Elsewhere, successive civilizations have had time to imprison themselves in complex constructions that are liable to paralyse human creativity.

The principle of conservatism of peripheral areas, familiar to linguists and anthropologists before the Second World War, explains why archaic anthropological, family, ideological and political systems remain as isolated pockets on the periphery of historical territories, while, conversely, the most elaborate constructions can be observed in the centre of the continental regions where they form continuous blocks. On a map of Eurasia, the nuclear family appears as a peripheral, and therefore

archaic, phenomenon. The central mass of the continent is occupied by dense, communitarian, patrilineal, anti-individualistic anthropological systems.

We can agree with many previous scholars that individualistic social systems nourish human creativity and experimentation. But we must accept that individualism is not an invention of modernity. It is the original state of humankind. If it is abolished, history grinds to a stop. The confinement of the individual in compact family blocks across the mass of Eurasia very gradually produced, between 2500 BCE and 1800 BCE, an educational, technological, economic and social paralysis. If history began in Sumer – with the city, writing and the state – it did so at a time when the family was not too oppressive, the status of women was elevated and children were brought up to be free. At the very most, in the middle of the third millennium BCE, we can detect a first densification of the family due to male primogeniture – a primogeniture that would be observed one and a half millennia later in China and more than three and a half millennia later in Japan and Germany. Primogeniture and the stem family, invented to transmit the family's possessions, initially produced a cultural and economic acceleration before leading, via an initial fossilization and then even more complex mutations that entailed a confinement of men and women, to a paralysis of history. As the geographical successor of Mesopotamia, Iraq is so weak and dominated today that it has become a training ground for various armies; in that country, the family, slowly developed over five thousand years of history, has become communitarian, patrilineal and endogamous, with rates of marriages between cousins in the order of 35 per cent. Meanwhile, England, which was for a long time on the margins of the civilized world, has kept its original nuclear family type, while acquiring agriculture, writing, the city and the state, all elements of civilization from the Middle East that passed via Greece, Rome and France. Protestantism has completed the purification of its nuclear family type, now 'absolute' in my terminology, destroying the undifferentiated and flexible kinship network that initially framed it. This, then, was the anthropological basis for the English take-off: the flexibility of the family system. My model of history, at this stage, is built on the ideas of Alan Macfarlane, who was my PhD examiner at Cambridge. But in my view England is not unique; its archaism is the remnant of a form that was once common to the whole of the human species, the survival of a concrete universal. In this preface, I extend to England this notion of the concrete universal, which I had not dared apply to any country other than America (see chapter 11), and I contrast it with the abstract ideological universal of France.

In the United States, the English family type, albeit somewhat transformed by cultural waves from the heart of Eurasia, instead reverted more closely to the original type of humanity. This is why it is *Homo*

americanus who appears in this book as the most legitimate successor of the original *Homo sapiens*.

This is the solution to the paradox of the Anglosphere, a peripheral archipelago surrounding Eurasia, but one whose individualistic dynamism has driven the history of the world since the English political revolutions of the seventeenth century and the industrial revolution of the late eighteenth century.

The English and the Americans

The hypothesis of a *Homo americanus* who is dynamic because he is close to the naturalness of origins does not seem too difficult to accept: continental Europeans perceive Americans not only as modernizers and experimenters, but also as a bit simple, not to say brutal and boorish. The English present us with the opposite image of sophistication, self-control and reserve, none of which suggests any naturalness. The contrast between the inhibited Englishman and the feisty American woman is a classic figure in cinema.¹ Yet, beneath the tangible surface of a certain English rigidity – self-control, social control – stemming from the earlier adoption by the higher social strata of more continental, more authoritarian family forms, and doubtless even more from Protestantism of a Calvinist hue – it is not too difficult to detect an English naturalness: a naturalness that has allowed and still allows England to speak to all human beings, and to be universal in a concrete way, like America. To begin with, let's note, for the record, the liberal economic system and the theory behind it. In England, they attained a strength and a level of abstraction that transformed the world, but in fact only modernized and formalized the spontaneous behaviour (predation, labour, acquisition and savings) of the original *Homo sapiens*, the hunter-gatherer and experimental farmer with little inclination for bureaucracy or Bolshevism. If we then proceed to more cultural matters, we find England affecting the world through its individualistic spontaneity. It invented the novel, then those so-called popular genres of crime and science fiction. The pop music of the 1960s, for its part, did more to undermine the strength of the Soviet regime than CIA-funded magazines.

As far as I am concerned, the most convincing proof of English naturalness is philosophical empiricism, because philosophy is supposed to distance us from the banality of the world. I come from a French family where the reading of A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic* was the equivalent of deciphering a Torah passage at your bar mitzvah. I fully accepted the way my family transmitted to me the idea of the superiority of British empiricism over continental rationalism, but I must admit that I have always perceived this philosophical empiricism as mere common

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Table P1 Distance from Anglosphere values

	<i>Authority</i>	<i>Equality</i>	<i>Endogamy</i>	<i>Feminism</i>	<i>Total distance</i>
Denmark	0	0	0	0	0
France (Paris Basin)	0	0.50	0	0	0.50
France (total)					1.25
Sweden	1	0.50	0	0	1.50
Russia	1	0.50	0	0	1.50
France (periphery)	1	0.50	0	0.50	2
Germany	1	0.50	0	1	2.50
Japan	1	0.50	0.50	1	3
China	1	0.50	0.50	2	4
Iran	1	0.50	1.50	3	6
Saudi Arabia	1	0.50	2	4	7.50

sense – the common sense of a *Homo sapiens* who doesn't want his mind to get muddled by words, who doesn't want to lose touch with the reality of the world. One could extend the list of examples of English naturalness, such as the importance in its high culture of poetry, an archaic literary form. English humour itself, more than just a particularism, is perhaps connected to the idea of staying in touch with the healthy roots of human nature. To abstain from laughing or smiling are things that have to be learned; the spirit of seriousness, unfortunately, is a cultural achievement.

In fact, is not the particularism of the English itself the manifestation of a certain human archaism? The original group always thinks of itself, as we shall see, in contrast with other groups: it is simultaneously separated, open and assimilative. The strong and early self-consciousness of the English did not prevent them from building America and absorbing into it those people who were fleeing from the over-dense, suffocating family systems of Eurasia, or the political autocracies that loomed over them. Anglo-American liberal democracy will also appear in this book as a peripheral archaism that succeeded.

The Anglosphere, then, is not simply dynamic. Across the whole world, its temperament touches the buried, free and flexible heart of original humanity, however transformed it has been by the history of the local culture, however constrained by the ways in which individuals and groups have been forced into rigid patterns. But to touch something does not mean that, as if by waving some magic wand, you can set it free. Throughout Eurasia, a transformation did after all take place, and it now seems that human beings in those parts of the world, far from being natural, are very unlikely to turn English or American overnight.

Distance from others

By 2017, in keeping with its tradition, or rather with the aptitude for change that stems from its particular family structure, the Anglosphere, once again, was starting to change. The absolute nuclear family, fostering the autonomy of children and uninterested in the issue of equality, tends to create major breaks between one generation and the next. That is why, in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the United Kingdom, and then the United States, were capable of getting rid of their peasants and then their workers in a few generations; since the Second World War, they have struck us as first social, then liberal, and soon no doubt they will seem national. By 1979–80, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan were symbols of the neoliberal turnaround. Brexit and the election of Donald Trump might also appear one day as the beginning of the Anglosphere's shift into its next stage.

The whole world is surprised, incredulous, shocked. How could those Anglo-Americans who had proposed, or imposed, their neoliberalism and globalization on us do such a terrible thing as become protectionist, or nationalistic? At the present stage, only the United States presents the two symptoms – with a surge in protectionism and ‘America first’ – since, for the British, free trade has been a matter of identity since the mid-nineteenth century. This was hardly the case under Cromwell, a great protectionist, and we can already sense in Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party the demand for a new focus on the industrial resources proper to the United Kingdom.

The world press is naively speculating on the emergence of new champions of free trade and the universal, as if China, Germany or (let's be really creative) the European Union, despite being in political, economic and ideological collapse, could produce ideological values that were simultaneously liberal and universal.

It is therefore at this stage important for the Anglosphere nations to position themselves, in terms of deep values, in relation to the world away from which they are temporarily moving. In the first part of this preface, I mentioned the seductiveness of Anglo-American culture to all the peoples of the world, suggesting an answer to the question, why do people love you? There remains the complementary question: why do people hate you, or, in a more moderate, targeted and pragmatic way: who are you close to, who are you different from? Who will your friends be, and who your enemies?

This book considers politics and the economy as superstructures and seeks the fundamental factors behind the movement of history in deeper layers of social life. Thus, the educational subconscious explains, first, the democratic moment as stemming from mass literacy and, subsequently,

the clash of elitism and populism as arising from the new stratification that has divided advanced societies into those educated to higher, middle and primary levels. In this representation of history, the origin of the rise in educational levels can be found in Jewish and then Protestant religious transformations. It identifies, beneath the ideological preferences of the various regions and nations, the unconscious action of old family values that should have been swept away by urbanization but which nonetheless end up being re-embodied in the multiple dimensions of social life in the electronic era.

These hidden family values explain the persistence, in continental Europe, Russia, China, Japan and elsewhere, of specific ideological temperaments, essentially resistant to the non-egalitarian liberalism of England and the United States. These national cultures are studied in detail in this book, in their historical depth, and in their interactions with the religious and educational layers of social life.

I would like to add here, in an attempt to glimpse the conflicts that lie ahead of us, a brief assessment of the anthropological distance between the Anglosphere and some of the other nations of the world. Most of the latter have been chosen for their strategic importance, but some smaller ones, such as Denmark or Sweden, are merely typical of this or that anthropological form.

Classical geopolitical analysis focuses on the conscious forces of social, political and economic life, mainly military and commercial rivalries. These two fields in which power is expressed do not correspond so closely these days. If we take the American point of view, Russia will appear militarily effective, but economically harmless; Germany, a formidable economic aggressor with a trade surplus of 8 per cent of GDP, is militarily harmless; China could perhaps just about be considered a double threat, economic and military, if its economy were not so dependent on globalized capitalism, and its army on Russian technology.

What I want to do here is very different. We can sense that the American and British national impetus is on the point of breaking the old alliance systems inherited from the Cold War, but we can also see that the elites of Washington and London are struggling to achieve the right adjustment of friendships and enmities, a little as if there were definitely sporting fixtures in the offing, but the teams had not yet been drawn up. Typical of this is the incredible Russophobia of the English elites, at the very same time as it is the European Union that is threatening the independence and integrity of the United Kingdom by its insistence on not settling the Irish border issue. The same determined anti-Russian hostility is paralysing the protectionist reorganization – anti-Chinese and anti-German – of the American economy.

Anthropological analysis can contribute to a clarification by measuring

the objective distance that lies between the deep values of nations. It is not a question here of explicit, theoretical, official political values, but of latent family values: the relationship to authority and equality, the relative closure of the group by endogamy, and the status of women.

I have therefore roughly estimated for each of the nations in Table P.1 *the distances between their latent family values and those of the absolute nuclear family of the Anglosphere*, which is liberal with regard to parent-child relations, indifferent to the principle of equality, exogamous and feminist. I have summed up these distances in a last column to obtain an overall distance. The data and developments that allow me to draw up this table can be found, as regards the advanced countries and China, throughout this book. For Iran and Saudi Arabia, I refer to the essay I wrote with Youssef Courbage on the demography of the Muslim world, *A Convergence of Civilizations*.² But in fact this table condenses forty-five years of research into, and familiarity with, family systems across the world.

We see that the Anglosphere is similar only to Denmark and the France of the Paris Basin in the dimension of authority, since no other nation in the table is characterized by the nuclear family and pure individualism. We also observe that the Anglosphere, indifferent to equality, and in this respect followed by Denmark alone, is situated in this dimension (on the family level, and not the economic or social level), equidistant from all other nations, whether these be egalitarian (France of the Paris Basin, Russia, China, Iran, Saudi Arabia) or inegalitarian (France of the periphery, Sweden, Germany, Japan). Endogamy is strong only in Iran and, even more, in Saudi Arabia. I mentioned the tolerance found in bygone days for some marriages between cousins in China and Japan. The scale of feminism is probably the most familiar, since women's emancipation is on the agenda of international organizations even if the reality of its development as studied in this book is often very different from what the fantasies of the UN or NGOs might suggest. All in all, we discover – and this comes as no surprise – an Anglosphere that is close to Scandinavia and the France of the Paris Basin, but, more unexpectedly, a little further from Germany than from Russia. Admittedly, as I explain in Chapter 18, Russia, authoritarian, egalitarian and communitarian, may appear to be the antithesis of the Anglo-American world, which is liberal, indifferent to equality, and individualistic: the anthropological contrast seemingly coincides with military rivalry. But the feminist dimension, as we will see, brings these strategic rivals closer together.

The most violent discordance between geopolitical alignment and anthropological distance is found in Saudi Arabia – communitarian, endogamous and anti-feminist to the highest degree. This ally and priority customer of the United States achieves the maximum score of 7.5 for its anthropological distance. If we accept the equation

maximum incomprehension + intimate association = hatred,

we won't find it too difficult to understand 11 September 2001.

More usefully when it comes to the future, such a tabulation can serve as an introduction to Chapters 16 and 17, where we will see how the United Kingdom and the United States stand out in terms of fundamental values from Germany and the mainland of Europe as a whole. In fact, anthropological analysis explains the ongoing split within the Western camp between a national and liberal component and an authoritarian continental component.

I must nevertheless point out that this sketch of human history, written by a Frenchman whose central focus is the Anglo-American dynamic, gives full importance to Germany, whose role in world history is considerable. Without Lutheranism and its demand for literacy for everyone, I would have needed to write a quite different sketch of history.

The crisis and the limits of anthropology

The division into primary, secondary and tertiary educational orders guarantees a persistent tension between the democratic principle and the oligarchic principle in all advanced societies, and therefore in British and American societies as they are now focusing more on national interests. In the postscript to this book, which appeared in the French edition, I follow others in emphasizing the need for a negotiation between those with a higher education and those with a primary education, between 'somewheres' and 'anywheres', in David Goodhart's terms. A viable world cannot fail to integrate the aspirations of some people to openness with the aspirations of other people to security. The choice for advanced societies does not lie between elitism and populism, between openness and closure, but between negotiation and disintegration. The existence of a massive intermediate category, schematically referred to here as 'those with a secondary education', reveals, rather reassuringly, that the fierce ideological struggle between Remainers and Brexiteers, between Trumpists and Clintonians, tends to exaggerate (due to the very dynamics of political competition) the dualistic character of social opposition. There is a vast world of people who are neither 'open' nor 'closed', but in search of an individual flourishing that does not exclude security.

The predominance of the national principle, the necessary framework for interclass negotiation, seems to be inevitable in the long run, since belonging to a territorial and linguistic group (the nation, these days) is, from the anthropological point of view, necessary for human life. A strange parallel comes to my mind. The Third International, socialist and workerist, collapsed in 1914 because the slogan 'Workers of

the world, unite!’ was unable to prevail over more primordial national identifications. In a world of open, explicit rivalries between the United Kingdom and continental Europe, between the United States and China, the implicit slogan of globalization, ‘Higher educated of all countries, unite!’ will probably not seem very convincing in the face of the need to belong to a territorial group. To those who doubt this, I recommend a meditation on the behaviour of football crowds at World Cup matches.

Anthropology also explains how Brexit and Trump emerge from a liberal and non-egalitarian tradition, and that the deep meaning of these emergences is not that they pose a ‘danger to democracy’. The innumerable essays currently being published in the United States, comparing Trump with Orbán, Putin, Lukashenko or Erdoğan, appear, in the light of historical anthropology, ridiculous. Let’s be reasonable: if the crisis of 1929 produced leaders as different as Roosevelt, Chamberlain, Blum and Hitler, how could the current crisis in neoliberalism lead to a convergence in ‘illiberal democracy’ or a uniform autocratic system?

There is indeed a crisis in the Anglo-American world, but these essayists wrongly insist on presenting it as a decline in liberal democracy, even though it was the inequalities of the years 1980–2015 that had endangered this same liberal democracy. The current contestation of the system should rather, in spite of certain unpleasant xenophobic aspects, be analysed as a return to the sources of primordial democracy. The non-egalitarian liberalism of the Anglosphere is still in place, and in principle it prohibits any serious drift into authoritarianism. Xenophobia, as explained in Chapter 11, is part of the original foundation of democracy, a political system that derives more from a group’s self-awareness than from internal egalitarian values. This indeed is why the Anglo-American populations, structured by the liberal but non-egalitarian values of the absolute nuclear family, moved over to modern democracy more easily than the French of the central regions, who are certainly more radical in their political demands but are rendered anarchic by the values of the egalitarian nuclear family.

However, we do not see family structures as a unique and absolute determinant. We have to admit that the inequalities of the Anglo-American world in the years 1980–2015 had gone ‘too far’, i.e. beyond the natural social potential of the absolute nuclear family. The latter defines brothers and sisters as different from each other, but in no way unequal in principle, as was the case in the German, Japanese, Rwandan or Basque stem family. If the empirical study of history allows us to discern the laws of association between family and ideology, it also obliges us to observe moments of dissociation when economic, social and ideological evolution becomes independent and transcends its determinations. This ‘take-off’ permits the temporary emergence of extremist systems, each of which, however, retains the characteristic

features of its original matrix: the runaway ultra-liberalism of the years 2000–15 may have ended up leading to an increase in the mortality rates of White Americans aged 45 to 54, but it wasn't Stalinism or Nazism!

Reflections on the Anglo-American revolution

I would like to end this preface with a confession: I have a sense of inadequacy concerning my description of the dynamics of the Anglo-American world, which I thought I had finally grasped after a prolonged investigation that began in Cambridge in 1971. My variables, admittedly schematic, are nevertheless important and allow quite a rich representation of societies, with family structures, the relation to the values of freedom and non-equality, group consciousness, racial sentiment, religious traditions, educational stratification, and levels of economic inequality and political authority, all leading to the un-Marxist view of the struggle between educational classes. But I have the feeling that, by superimposing my variables methodically, I have missed something essential. The description of an Anglo-American world that goes too far in economic inequality, i.e. beyond the natural social potential of the nuclear family, may put us on the trail of a more fundamental 'going too far' or 'going even further'.

Everything went too far in the Anglosphere: market freedoms, inequality, the denial of the nation. The radicalism of the globalist project, more and more detached from the old English conceptions of property, freedom and social responsibility, was, on the eve of Brexit and Trump, just about to present a clean slate, a new world of uprooted megalopolises filled with people from anywhere and everywhere. But even individualism, in the philosophical or religious sense, as the fundamental value of the Anglo-American world, may be going too far, or at least even further – I really do not know – and actually redefining human nature. Even though the question of rising inequality is still completely unresolved, the standard of living of working people continues to stagnate or fall, young adults are being trapped in a new poverty and the Black question in the United States and the European question in the United Kingdom are still not settled, the ideological debate on the overcoming of the duality between man and woman has become a burning issue. I am not speaking here as a reactionary ideologue, since I rejoice in the emancipation of women, fully endorse the legalization of same-sex marriage and am perfectly well aware of the universal moral dimension of the demand for transgender recognition. But, whether real or invented, the duality between man and woman has always been used by human societies to structure themselves, starting with the sexual division of labour among

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

hunter-gatherers. To manage without it will constitute a revolution that goes beyond all others.

While studying the Anglo-American societies engaged in this ultimate transformation of social life, I suddenly thought of Burke and his passionate denunciation of the 'metaphysical' principles of the French Revolution, principles that he thought were indifferent to the nature of real human beings. There is indeed something metaphysical about the Anglo-American world's quest for a society that abolishes differences between the sexes, or the genders, depending on your ideological point of view. Something more radical than the desire of the French revolutionaries at the end of the eighteenth century to cut their national territory up into equal departments and to abolish their traditional calendar. But this is exactly what Burke had refused to see: it was England and her daughter America who were, and remain, the true revolutionary nations, capable of dreaming the next step that human beings will take and the world that will follow.

INTRODUCTION: THE DIFFERENTIATION OF FAMILY STRUCTURES AND THE INVERSE MODEL OF HISTORY

The West lies in thrall to a strange sense of helplessness, despite a technological revolution that had apparently made everything possible. Goods, images and words can circulate freely and quickly. There are harbingers of a medical revolution that will allow human life to be wonderfully extended. One Promethean dream leads to another. Between 1999 and 2014, the proportion of Internet users worldwide increased from 5 per cent to 50 per cent. Countries have been transformed into villages and continents into districts.

In the most developed countries, however, the sense of decline is spreading, together with an inability to arrest it. In the United States, the median household income fell during the same period from \$57,909 to \$53,718.¹ The mortality rate of White Americans aged 45–54 has increased.² The revolt of the White electorate led, in November 2016, to the election of an unlikely and alarming candidate, Donald Trump.

In various ways, other democracies seem to be following America down this regressive economic and social path. The rise in inequality and the decline in the standard of living among the younger generation are virtually universal phenomena. Populist political forms of a new kind are rising up almost everywhere against the elitism of the upper classes. However, we can sense a certain variety in these imitations. While Japan seems to be turning in on itself, Europe, with Germany now at the helm, is turning into an immense hierarchical system, even more fanatical than the United States in its devotion to economic globalization.

There is no economic mystery

The economic explanation for these phenomena is easy to find. Critical analysis has largely managed to account for them since the early 1990s. Free trade and the free movement of capital, while permitting a rise in

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the rate of profit, have also led to a depression in ordinary incomes, a rise in inequalities, a deficit in global demand worldwide, and, at the end of a mad dash, the return of economic crises. Far from being emancipated by technology, the most advanced of the world's inhabitants are once more falling under the yoke. Job insecurity, declining living standards, sometimes even life expectancy: our modernity closely resembles a march towards servitude. For those who experienced the dreams of emancipation of the 1960s, the collapse of these hopes, in barely a generation, is astonishing.

Those interested in the economic mechanics of these phenomena have an abundant literature to refer to, including work by Joseph Stiglitz, Paul Krugman and Thomas Piketty on the dynamics of inequality and its depressive effects.³ Note that some economists have taken their discipline to its very limits: James Galbraith has revealed that ultra-liberals now rely heavily on the state to enrich themselves, while Pierre-Noël Giraud has demonstrated that the logic of the *Homo oeconomicus* could lead to the claim, in certain quarters, that some human beings are 'useless'.⁴

Still, most establishment economists are feeble or indeed conspicuously absent when it comes to the criticism of free trade. They dare not suggest that free trade might be moderated by a few mechanisms of control. Too daring a critique would jeopardize their positions in academia, or – even worse – in the profession's prize-giving system.⁵ This passivity is no great theoretical loss. We can find all we need on the real effects of free trade in Friedrich List's *The National System of Political Economy*, which dates back to . . . 1841. This is a classic: we can also read John Maynard Keynes's articles as well as a more recent book by Ha-Joon Chang, a Korean based in Cambridge, England.⁶ In my *L'Illusion économique*, written in 1997, I emphasized the depressive effect of unregulated trade on a globalized economy.⁷ We should also remember, quite simply, that Adam Smith, in *The Wealth of Nations*, did not envisage an untrammelled free market that would deny the reality of nations and their higher interests.

In spite of the high quality of all these studies, we must admit that the regression of the advanced world is not, as a purely economic phenomenon, a very interesting subject of study. What continues to fascinate me, on the other hand, is the feeling of powerlessness that persists despite our efforts at understanding: we have the diagnosis but we do nothing; we just passively witness the unfolding of the economic sequence.

The great recession of 2008–9 gave the impression that a return to a Keynesian type of action with the restoration of tariff barriers was necessary. Insufficient demand is in fact the central concern of Keynes's famous *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, and a minimum of common sense leads to the conclusion that, without protectionism,

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a revival in the domestic economy leads to the creation of demand for one's neighbours rather than for oneself. For a short time, American, English and French newspapers all came together to celebrate Keynes's comeback. Robert Skidelsky, the greatest of his biographers, even wrote a book with the title *Keynes: The Return of the Master*.⁸

The years 2010–15, however, forced us to realize that this lucidity had evaporated. During the 2016 US presidential election, the eruption of the debate on free trade and protectionism led by Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump took establishment journalists and politicians by surprise and made eminent economists very angry. Sixteen Nobel laureates and two hundred members of the most prestigious American universities petitioned against Trump and in favour of free trade, without succeeding in convincing the American people, whose living conditions, insensitive to the beauties of the theory, were continuing to deteriorate. How can we explain today the persistent intellectual backwardness of those specialized elites who, after denying the deadly effects of free trade in the United States and Europe, are now denying Trump's election? How can we explain this multidimensional refusal of the reality of the world, by serious people who have studied their subject at length? That's the real mystery.

Between 2010 and 2016, then, the march to inequality resumed and the global shortfall in demand became ever more threatening. The growth rate in emerging countries fell, reaching zero in Brazil. China itself, the factory of the world, is suffocating in an industrial pollution worthy of the nineteenth century, teetering on the verge of a crisis with incalculable geopolitical consequences. In this floundering economic world, whose political systems are in disarray, we are warned ever more insistently, day by day, that populism is a threat to our 'values' and that we must defend them. But what values, basically? Inequality? Poverty? Insecurity? Ah, no, sorry: it's 'liberal democracy', a now hollow concept emptied of its founding values – i.e., the sovereignty of the people, the equality of human beings and their right to happiness.

Thus, what we need to explain is not strictly speaking economic. It is rather the absence of any *real* awareness, i.e. one that would lead to action – this absence is what the historian of the present must understand. But in order to do so, we have to admit that the movement of history is not limited to the economic sphere alone, and that certain vital transformations occur in the deeper layers of social life.

The structures I am going to discuss are banal, obvious even, but we will be forced to admit that they are even more decisive for human actions than is the economy: they include education, religion, the family and, finally, the nation, which represents only the belated and current form of group belonging, without which the life of *Homo sapiens* is deprived of meaning.

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I will be putting forward an anthropological vision of history, but let me make it clear that I will not be professing the slightest scorn for economics: however insignificant the establishment economists may be, whether they are academics or mercenaries of the banking system, this must not lead us to reject economic analysis as such. Let us keep in mind the very useful postulate of the rational individual, the selfish *Homo oeconomicus*; but let us never forget that *Homo oeconomicus* does not act in a vacuum, but has capabilities and goals defined by the group, family, religion and education. There is indeed a logic of markets. It is even true, as Bernard Mandeville had stated in 1714 in *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices and Public Benefits*, that capitalism uses all the least altruistic features in human beings, all that is worst from the moral point of view, to make the most efficient productive system work. In 1776, in *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith delivered a less aggressive vision of this economic optimization based on an aggregation of the selfish traits of individuals. But that is precisely the point: the moral problematic of Smith should inspire us to explore the depths of a social life that goes beyond the economic system alone – depths in which the mental transformations that define the conditions of economic activity are produced.

The crisis in advanced countries

It is so easy these days to show that the immense upheaval of the world that is happening in front of us cannot be grasped by political economy. To understand this, we will stick to the most advanced countries. The current difficulties of Brazil and China rid us of the illusion that history is now decided by these countries as they catch up with the rest. It is in the United States, in Europe and in Japan that the rules of the game of economic globalization have been defined. It is this 'triad' which, since 1980, has put to work the newly literate working populations of the Third World, crushing its own workers' wages and raising (to put it mildly) the overall rate of profit. The domination of the ageing advanced world is perhaps even better expressed by its ability to attract a labour force trained elsewhere, sucking in from its periphery workers, technicians, computer scientists, nurses, artists and doctors as it needs them, thus ensuring its own survival by a veritable act of demographic predation. This plundering of human resources is much more serious than that of natural resources, because, on a certain level, it jeopardizes the development of those countries that are now taking off, by depriving them of their executives and middle classes.

Thus, world power has not shifted decisively. In fact, it is in that old European power, Russia, that the only independent force in the globalized

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system has managed to maintain itself. The protagonists of the Second World War are still at the helm of world history. But they themselves are experiencing a shift of such magnitude that it is necessary to speak of an anthropological mutation comparable to the Neolithic revolution even more than to the industrial revolution. Like sedentarization and agriculture, the transformation under way is causing an upheaval in the way of life of the human species in all its dimensions. Let us look at its most important elements.

- *Massive enrichment* of all, but especially of the middle and working classes, between 1920 and 1960 in the United States, between 1950 and 1990 in Europe and Japan; sudden rise in the standard of living, with countless psychological effects.
- *Sudden drop in birth rate between 1960 and 1980.*
- *Increased longevity* and ageing populations on a scale never seen in history. The median age of Europeans fluctuated between 20 and 25 years until the middle of the twentieth century. In 2015, it was 41.7 years.⁹ That of the English who carried out the 1688 Revolution was about 25 years. The industrial revolution in Britain brought it down to 20 years in 1821, and it was still 22 years in 1871. But in 2015 it reached 40 years. In 1900, the median age of Americans was 22.9 years; in 1950 it was 30.2 years. The increase in post-war birth rates temporarily brought it back to 28.1 years around 1970. It rose to 38.3 years in 2015, an increase of ten years in just forty-five years.
- *Dramatic increase in educational level.* The development of secondary and higher education systems – from the inter-war period in the United States, after 1950 in Europe and Japan – led to a new cultural stratification, tending to figures of 40 per cent higher educated, 40 per cent long-term educated and 20 per cent of a ‘remainder’ ranging from those ‘without diplomas’ to ‘functional illiterates’.
- *Women overtaking men in educational terms* with, again, significant differences between advanced nations. This is the most impressive change in the eyes of a specialist in family structures.
- *Terminal erasure of religion*, probably including in the United States.
- *Collapse of the model of marriage inherited from religious times.*

We could extend the list and give many more examples of fundamental transformations.

If we take these transformations, presented in Table 0.1 in no particular order, into account, we gain a singularly enriched vision of the one-dimensional individual of the economists: we can maintain the hypothesis that human behaviour is rational while wondering what happens to the

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Table 0.1 Life expectancy and ageing

	<i>Life expectancy</i> 2015		<i>Median age</i>		<i>Ageing</i>
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	1950	2015	1950–2015 in years
United States	76	81	30	38.3	8.3
United Kingdom	79	83	34.9	40	5.1
Australia	80	84	30.4	37.5	7.1
Canada	79	84	27.7	40.6	12.9
Germany	78	83	35.3	46.2	10.9
Sweden	80	84	34.2	41	6.8
Japan	80	87	22.1	46.5	24.4
South Korea	79	85	19	40.6	21.6
France	79	85	34.7	41.2	6.5
Italy	80	82	28.6	45.9	17.3
Spain	80	85	27.5	43.2	15.7
Russia	65	76	23.3	38.7	15.4
China	73	78	23.7	37	13.3
Middle East	71	76	20.8	26.3	5.5

Source: UN data

existential objectives of human beings when they become, statistically, richer, older, more educated, more feminine and less numerous . . .

It is of course in observing the evolution of these real individuals that we will discover the historical conditions behind the feeling of powerlessness that has swept through the most advanced societies. To grasp it in all its complexity, we will have to investigate not just the economy but three other fields of investigation, all deeply affected by this evolution: education, religion and the family. Membership in the national group is a constant, a structural element whose action we will need to assess, abstaining from fantasies about its potential disappearance and thus going against the grain of the ultimate dream of globalizing ideology. And let us immediately provide the right answer to the question asked at the beginning of this book: if we do not understand what is happening today in the world, it is because economics, as the dominant ideology, is a magician of false consciousness that hinders any complete description of the world. When historical anthropology selects the essential aspects and defines accurately their respective importance, economics deems that what is of primary importance is in fact secondary, or rather mistakes the effect for the cause and the cause for the effect.

The conscious, subconscious and unconscious levels of societies: economics and politics, education, family and religion

A simplified pastiche of Freud's model of the mind will allow us to proceed to a stratified representation of human societies and their movement. On the surface of history, we find what is conscious, the economy of economists – what the media tell us about on a daily basis, and which neoliberal orthodoxy assures us, in a bizarre reversal of Marxism, is decisive. Politics is also conscious, of course – noisily so, one might even say.

Going deeper, we find a subconscious level of society, namely education, a layer that citizens and commentators can perceive as important when they think of their real lives, but which orthodoxy refuses to fully accept as decisive, denying its powerful action on the conscious layer. Parents know that the fate of their children – economic success, survival or disaster – will depend on their academic performance. It is easy for people to imagine that an educationally efficient society will succeed economically. The achievements of Finnish and Korean schools explain the exceptional economic careers of their pupils. To the extent that the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) has made the comparison between the educational performances of different nations one of its statistical preoccupations, it can be said that the subconscious is no longer very far from the conscious, even if this intellectual bureaucracy finds it difficult to admit that educational performance is more dependent on religious and family traditions than on economic investment.

This is because, if we go even deeper, we find the true unconscious of societies: family and religion, in their complex interaction.

Family structures – authoritarian or liberal, egalitarian or inegalitarian, exogamous or endogamous depending on the country – determine, unbeknown to those who form them, political values and educational performances. I put forward this twofold hypothesis in the early 1980s in two books, *La Troisième Planète* and *L'Enfance du monde*.¹⁰

I noted that the map of communism as it stood in the late 1970s matched the map of a specific peasant family system, found in Russia, China, Vietnam, Yugoslavia and Albania; this was a form that combined a father with his married sons, and it was authoritarian as regards the relations between parents and children, egalitarian in the relations between brothers. Authority and equality, indeed, represent the hard core of communist ideology, and the coincidence between family and ideology was not difficult to explain. It resulted from a sequence at once historical and anthropological: urbanization and literacy break down the communal peasant family; the latter, once it has disintegrated, releases into general social life its values of authority and equality; individuals

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emancipated from paternal constraint seek a substitute for their family servitude in fidelity to a single party, in integration by the centralized economy, or in KGB control (in the Russian case).

Starting from this very simple empirical observation, and from its explanation, I generalized the result obtained for communism to the competing ideologies of the era of educational and economic upswing. Then I linked each one of them – social democracy, Christian democracy, anarchism, ethnocentric nationalism, pure Anglo-American liberalism and French egalitarian liberalism – to an underlying family structure.

Educational dynamism – the modernizing subconscious, one of the main agents of the breakdown of the traditional anthropological system – seemed, for its part, to reach a maximum in regions dominated by authoritarian family systems that were favourable, or at least not too unfavourable, to women: in Germany, Sweden, Japan, Korea and Finland. But everywhere, a mechanism of diffusion led, whatever the family type, to the mass literacy achieved in Europe between the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century and the middle of the twentieth century.

To my great surprise, this identification of a family unconscious of ideological life, which I had arrived at in a purely empirical way, provoked violent resistance, rejection even, from specialists in the human sciences, particularly in societies that were freer in temperament and way of life. Reactions to the original publication of these two titles in French, as well as to their translations, convinced me that the relevance of the family was denied with particular vigour in individualistic societies, in France and the Anglo-American world in particular. In Japan, a country of stem families where the traditional custom, whether samurai or peasant in nature, had designated a single heir, usually by male primogeniture, the family hypothesis was not seen as shocking. The many lectures I have given in France have revealed that the southwest of that country is highly receptive to the family hypothesis. But this is because southwest France is our great stem-family area, a little Japan of our own, with its particularly strong centres in Béarn and the Basque Country.

It is as simple to explain the acceptance as it is the rejection. In an authoritarian and inegalitarian family culture, the resulting general collective constraint is obvious and comes as no revelation. On the other hand, in the liberal world, the hypothesis that ideology is determined by family structure collides head-on with the dominant ideology of individuals who think of themselves as autonomous, deciding and acting as they wish, without constraint.

The fundamental paradox of a theory that explains ideology by the family is that it suggests that *adherence to the ideal of freedom is itself determined*. This ideal flourishes in regions dominated by the nuclear family, an anthropological form that never contains more than a married