

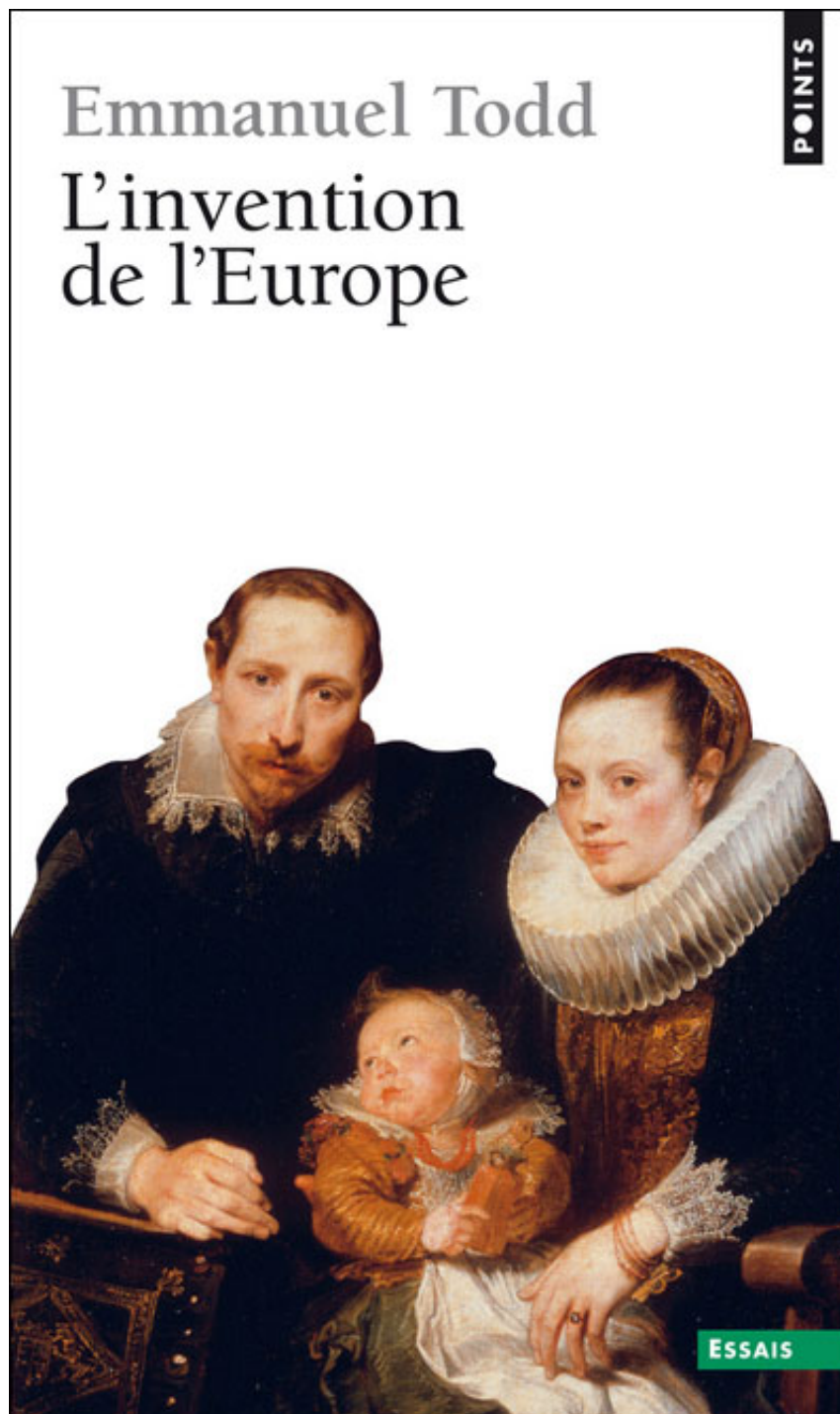
# Craig Willy | EU affairs journalist

No-nonsense analysis of France, Europe and beyond

## Emmanuel Todd's *L'invention de l'Europe*: A critical summary

In brief:

- [Todd's theory of modernization \(chart\)](#)
- [Europe's traditional family systems \(map\)](#)
- [Characteristics of Todd's family systems \(table\)](#)



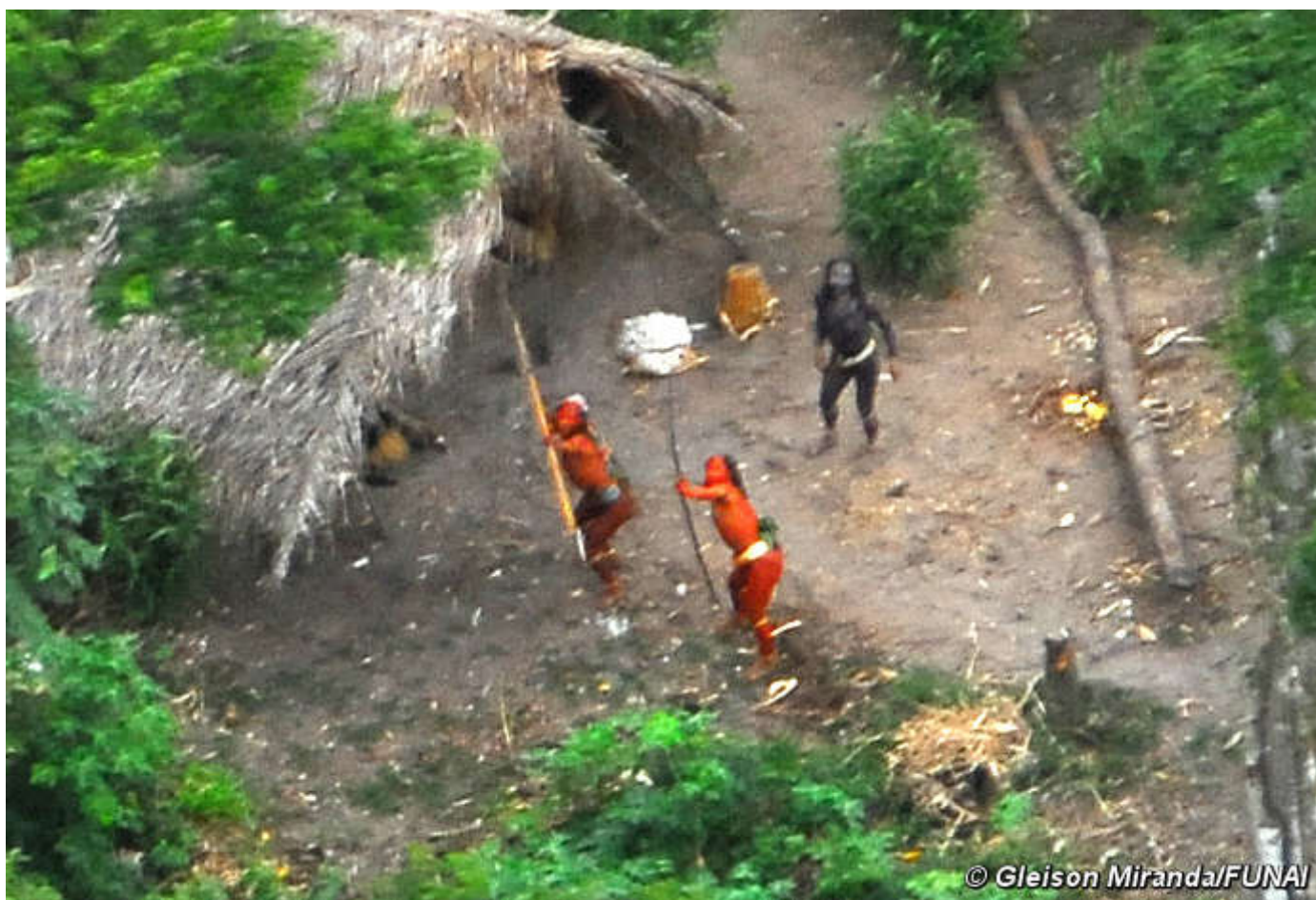
I came across Emmanuel Todd a few months ago on French talk shows. I found he was one of the few French intellectuals to not be in the usual state of willful denial, schizophrenia and babbling incoherence on the current economic and political crisis. I watched all the interviews and talk shows I could and read half of his books. Todd excels in the genre of the fact-based polemic: his [1976 \(at age 26!\) forecasting the collapse of the Soviet Union](#) and his [1997 critique of globalization and "postmodern" economics](#) are nothing short of brilliant. I came, last, to his *L'invention de l'Europe*, which is in principle not a polemic, but rather a dispassionate book of historical anthropology and demography which is Todd's academic *magnum opus*.

I say "in principle" because one is tempted to ask: What the hell is this book anyway? Over 650 pages of

text, statistics, graphs, maps and bibliography on the history of Western Europe? A comprehensive look at the correlations between family structures, modernization and ideology in Western Europe? An "Introductory Illustrated Atlas of Western European Socio-Political History"? I've already lost you. Who cares?

No, *L'invention de l'Europe* is actually about what is almost undoubtedly the most important historical development of all time: the rise of modernity since 1500, also known as the "[Great Divergence](#)" or the "European miracle." It was European civilization, and its various extra-European and notably North American offshoots, which invented "modernity," which sparked that fire of science and "rationality" which now dominates virtually the entire globe. Europe, as Todd notes on the first page, was "the midwife simultaneously of modernity and death." (p.13)

We have modernity: science, mass production, mass destruction, mass consumption, mass literacy, mass and instant telecommunication, long-life (sanitation, health, contraception), godlessness, ideology (including "totalitarianism," "democracy," "rule of law," and "freedom of thought"...), and so on. Europeans launched a truly unprecedented and violent "acceleration," so to speak, of history. Societies changed, for the first time, from ones overwhelmingly made up of illiterate peasants, to the incredibly affluent, educated and long-lived societies we know today. For better and for worse, no one has looked back, even among non-Westerners, despite the protestations of a few anti-Europeanists like one Frantz Fanon.



"Greetings from the other side": Aerial photo of members of an "[uncontacted tribe](#)" (source: Brazil's National Indian

*Foundation*)

I truly mean “for better and for worse.” Thousands of years ago, by an implacable historical logic, human beings gradually transformed themselves from small tribes of hunter-gatherers to large societies of peasants. The evidence suggests that that step of “modernization” was a great loss to human happiness, freedom and health. Now we are on the “other side” of history, the logic of modernization has gone far enough that we live incomparably “better” (one might dispute the metrics) than our predecessors. But who knows where the logic of history ends? Not long ago, one might have said the mass destruction of nuclear war. Now, the mass consumption-destruction of environmental exhaustion seems as plausible as anything. Or will technology, the emerging Internet-hive-mind and machine-body meshing ultimately rob us of our humanity? I often think, for humans as a whole, there is no question at all which really matters other than the (non-theological, not-entirely-deterministic) “direction” of history.

*Revenons à nos moutons.* Todd's *L'invention de l'Europe* is then a contribution, to be read beside Jared Diamond and Kenneth Pomeranz, to the literature on the “European miracle.” Todd's answer in short: “The diversity of European values largely explains the prodigious dynamism of a continent which can never, at any stage of its history, enclose itself in a single and definitive mental system.” (p. 13-14) Implicitly here, this carries with it anthropological, cultural and political diversity.

Given the book's length, I will not apologize for the fact that this “critical summary” is some 9,000 words long. I am sure those looking for an introduction will find it very useful.

In short, the book is a systematic historical atlas of 1500-1990 looking at the development across Western Europe and by country of what Todd identifies as the key markers of (European) modernity:

- Literacy
- Contraception
- Industrialization
- Dechristianization (decline of religious practice and/or belief)
- Ideology (as expressed through revolutions and elections)

Todd maps when and where these developments occurred across Europe. He notes that the rule of law is an English invention, universal suffrage a French one, social security a German one. He convincingly shows that, whereas no European nation has a monopoly on modernity, at every phase different nations pioneer the various breakthroughs:

- German and Protestant countries pioneer and glorify literacy (whereas peasants who remain under Catholic rule remain illiterate and completely intellectually dependent on the Priesthood).
- England pioneers industry (thanks in part to an individualistic, flexible and easily-uprooted peasantry).

- France (the Parisian Basin) pioneers godlessness, ideology and contraception (thanks to a particular combination of literacy and contestation of authority).

Already, we can see that the different parts of Europe react very differently to the various waves of modernity. Very concretely, if Germany, France and England had been the same, Europe could have had no early "pioneer" for each of these developments: No Protestantism/Germany = no early literacy (i.e., the norm for oppressive universal religions/empires, which outlaw scientific "thoughtcrimes" and suppress development), no England = no early industrialization, no France = no modern politics.

**The varying parts of Europe are different but exist in *dynamic interaction***, each part is influenced by the breakthroughs of others, they often copy breakthroughs they might not have been able to produce indigenously, which in turn allow them to reach *other breakthroughs* which others might not produce (this is the intra-West-European version of [Trotsky's uneven and combined development](#)). This, Todd argues, is the source of Europe's incredible historic dynamism.

Todd's system, indeed globally, sees the dynamic interaction of different but mutually-influencing masses of humanity (nations), with the mass and cohesion of a nation playing a key role in its own ability to develop autonomously and to influence others.

This is the big picture and I think it is persuasive.

Todd's method is to correlate everything. Though a historian, he is as interested in correlation across space as across time. Did I mention the book is also an atlas? The method in a word: Correlate, then speculate. The "speculate" part is definitely Todd's weakness. As [hbdchick writes](#):

“ he's definitely on to something here [on the correlation between family systems and political ideologies]; but his work, to my mind, is "only" descriptive (i put "only" in quotes because i don't mean to belittle his work in any way — it's an enormous contribution to understanding ideologies, i think!). but, he doesn't really get down to why family structures and kinship should affect ideologies in the ways that they appear to do.

Todd tends to be stronger on correlation than causation. Obviously the history of Europe, and Todd treats every Western European country's politics individually, is too vast for any individual to really master. It can be a little frustrating to read him trying to attribute every local event to family structures, with outliers explained away by this or that factor. I don't mean to belittle either. Speculation is useful and necessary, as are necessarily simplifying systems (and Todd acknowledges it is a simplification) to try to think usefully

about the "bloomin' buzzin' confusion" of human life.

### **Family structure + literacy + godlessness = political ideology**

Todd attempts to *systematically* correlate:

- Family systems and agrarian systems
- Modernization phases (literacy, industrialization, dechristianization, contraception)
- Ideology (nationalism, socialism, religious conservatism (*Christianisme réactionnelle*))

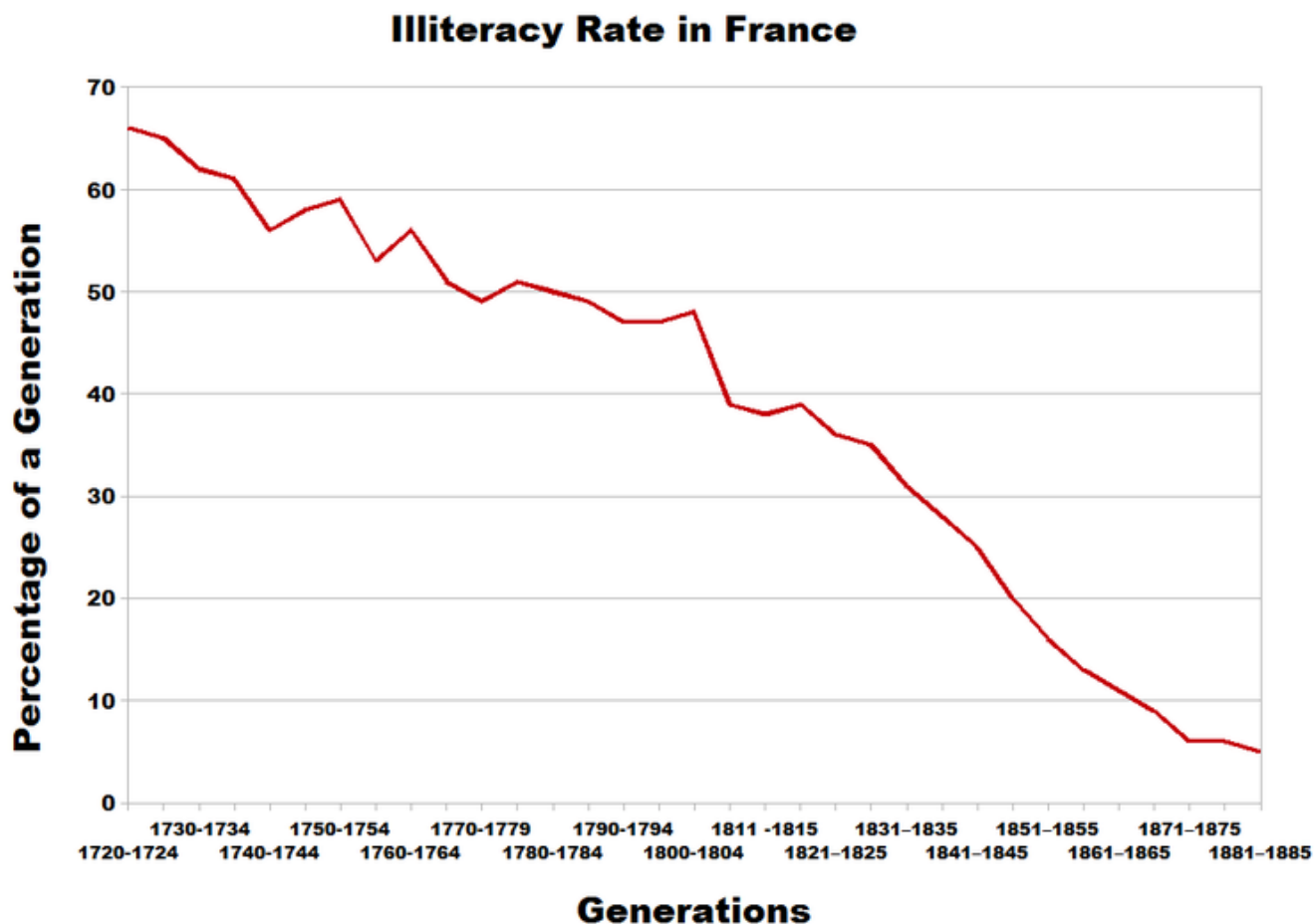
The correlations, though subject to interpretation, are highly interesting. In particular, he presents an extremely powerful interpretation for the rise of ideologies in the modern age.

A huge part of the book, perhaps the majority, is dedicated to Europeans' varying choices of religion and ideology. These concerns can seem very alien to us nihilist-apathetic postmoderns. Todd beautifully describes the need for ideology and religion (which is to say, the dream of a better life, in this one or the next) in his chapter on their mutual disappearance from the 1960s on:

“ Together all the dreams are extinguished: cities of God, socialist cities [as in "the polis"], nationalist cities, all these fine mental constructs are almost simultaneously devastated by the evolution of European societies. The dissolution of the religious and social metaphysical systems, which represent attempts by the mind to escape the real world, reveal at bottom a reconciliation between men and the world. The acceptance of society, of life as it is, logically kills religious, socialist or nationalist hereafters. [...] The disappearance of what we could call mass suffering, a very physical suffering, leading to a real metaphysical need, is no doubt the fundamental element of the transformation under way. Medical progress creates a world which does not banish death and pain, but one in which tragedy loses its collective dimension and becomes rare, terribly individual, not generalizable. [p. 546]

Todd argues that mass literacy, in freeing the individual from the Priesthood and allowing for mass communication, "triggers" political revolution and the "age of ideology." Ideological fervor is usually contained or limited so long as people remain practicing Christians: Life is brutish and short, but dreams

of a better world are relegated to a heavenly afterlife. But as soon people are "godless and literate," there is upheaval. Todd notes the close correlation between the advent of mass literacy and a country's first "ideological" political upheaval: the English Civil War, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the Spanish Civil War... Typically 50% male literacy in a given area is the sufficient "spark" and, by this measure, Todd says that southern Spain 1900-1940 should be compared with northern France 1700-1790.



But one is left with an important question: What is the *content* of the ideologies which resonate with the masses once they cease to be illiterate peasants? Why does this differ by country and region? Todd has an elegant and powerful answer: **political ideologies in the modern age are *projections of a people's unconscious premodern family values.***

Here there is a hole in my knowledge and that of the typical layman. I knew nothing of family systems before reading Todd. But family systems exist and are incredibly diverse across human societies. Let us take two extremely divergent examples.

So, whereas the liberal-individualism of the Anglo-nations is well-known, it has also been known since the

[work of Peter Laslett](#) that England has not had extended families, but rather “nuclear” families, *since the Middle Ages*. Contrary to what is sometimes thought, the individualistic English family is not a modern invention, the Industrial Revolution brutally breaking the “organic” extended family, but a reflection of a deep individualist tendency in English society with centuries-old roots.

Compare this with the traditional [Japanese family](#). There is neither individualism nor equality. A single son inherits the bulk of property and in particular “family headship,” having authority over collateral family branches (i.e. his brothers’ households). Multiple generations of couples can live in the same household as an extended family under the authority of the eldest patriarch.

These family structures contain deep-seated, conscious and unconscious, implicit and explicit, values and norms about an individual’s rights, responsibilities and place in the social universe. These family values and assumptions have “massive,” in the sense of existence-defining, implications. The Englishman is a “free” individual who upon adulthood leaves his parents and is responsible for himself. The Japanese is an “integrated” individual who upon adulthood remains closely bound with his family in a hierarchical system of solidarity and obedience.

For Todd, and this seems eminently plausible and intuitive, these families’ values are then projected, more or less crudely rationalized, as the country’s political ideologies once it enters the modern age. People’s fantasies of their “ideal politics” are just a projection of what they unconsciously consider “normal” according to their family values. In this case these would be Anglo-liberalism vs. Japanese nationalism. Philosophers can think up the most elegant and intricate justifications for their political systems, but ultimately, their ideologies only freely succeed when they resonate with the values, conscious or not, of a people.

In the Toddian system, the various masses of humanity develop in parallel and interdependence, in their diversity developing different worldviews which, in the modern age, have proven so irreconcilable as to only find resolution in war – that is death and coercion of the “wrongthinking” party. From this comes Todd’s strong respect for national sovereignty and diversity: Either we conquer or are conquered, one civilization extinguishing another, or we may be reasonable and respect each one’s sovereignty and difference.

Todd identifies four premodern European family types according to two major criteria: Is an individual free upon adulthood or does he continue to live with, and under the authority of, his parents? Are brothers equal, notably in terms of inheritance, or are they unequal? These categories are:

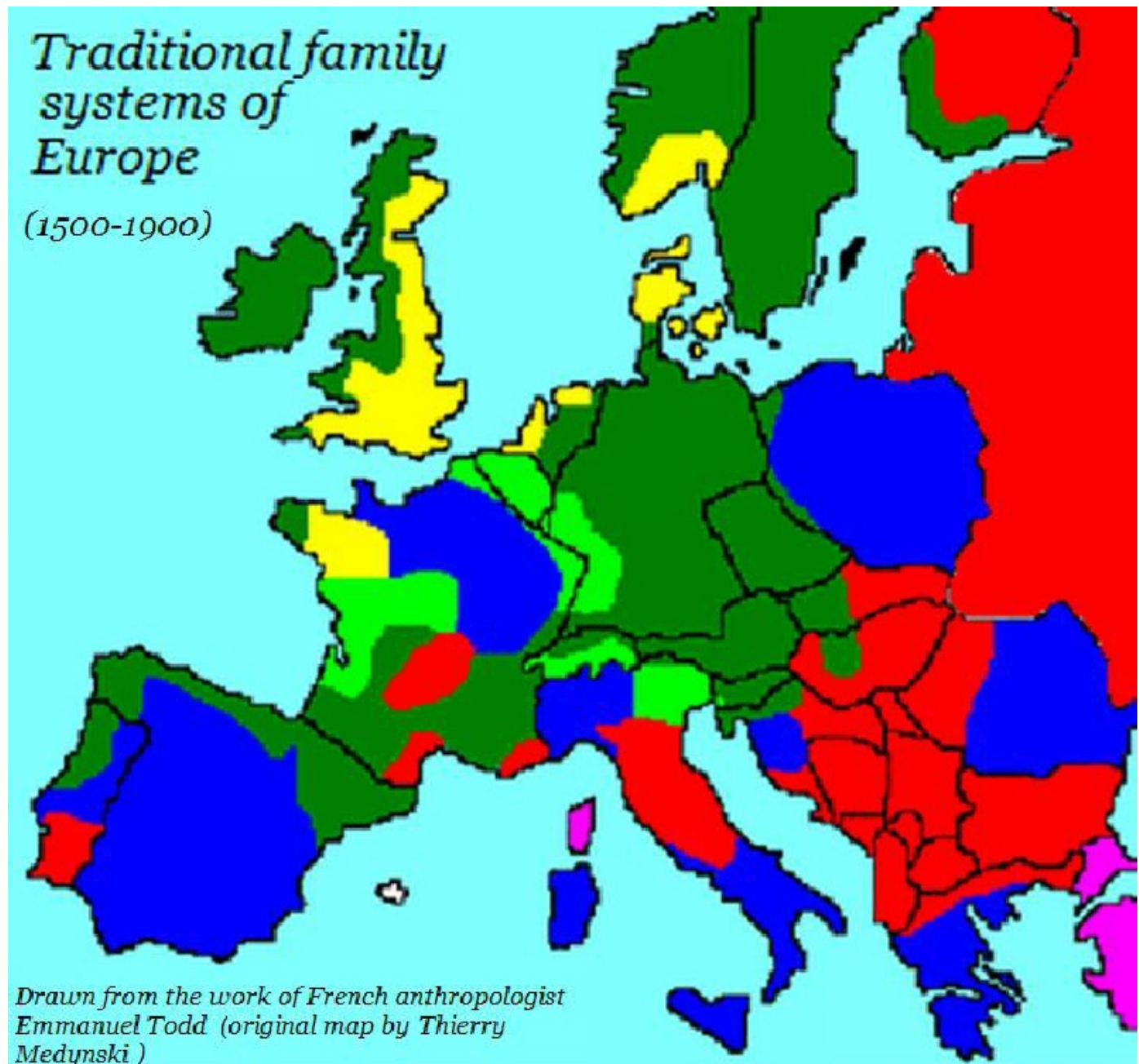
- The “**absolute nuclear**” family is liberal and non-egalitarian (that is, indifferent to equality). Children are completely free upon adulthood, founding independent families. Inheritance is freely distributed by will.
- The “**egalitarian nuclear**” family is liberal and egalitarian. Children are completely free upon adulthood, founding independent families. Inheritance is equally distributed, implying at least a








vestigial necessary link between parents and children throughout their lives.

- The **“stem” family** is authoritarian and inegalitarian. Several generations may live under one roof, notably the first-born, who will inherit the entirety of property and family headship (and thus perpetuate the family line). Other children typically leave the home to get married or become priests/soldiers.
- The **“communitarian” family** is authoritarian and equal. Several generations live under the same roof until the eldest die and the inheritance is divided equally.

These family types are roughly distributed as such:



-  Egalitarian nuclear family ['Unstable']
  -  Authoritarian family ['Stem']
  -  Community family (exogamous) ['Patriarchal']
-  Authoritarian family (incomplete) ['Stem']
  -  Community family (endogamous) ['Patriarchal']

Todd goes so far as to argue that the strength of the correlations between ideologies and family structures indicates: “a pure and simple determination of the content of the ideology by family values.” (p. 22)

Here are the family types and their characteristics (as *generalizations* these need to be taken with a grain of salt; the “naturally-emerging regime” column is partly my interpretation, the rest is fully Todd’s):

Family Type	Liberty	Equality	Characteristics	Examples	“Naturally-emerging” regime
<b>Absolute nuclear</b>	Liberal	Non-egalitarian (indifferent)	Hyper-individualist, isolationist, possible loss of heritage/ regression between generations, ( <b>early industrialization</b> )	England, Netherlands, Denmark, Norway	Constitutional oligarchy ruling over rootless, flexible individuals.
<b>Egalitarian nuclear</b>	Liberal	Egalitarian	Individualist, universalist, anarchist, ( <b>early godlessness</b> )	Northern France (Greater Parisian Basin), Spain, Portugal, southern and northern Italy	Oscillation between (social-)anarchism and limited (sometimes progressive) authoritarian regimes.
<b>Stem</b>	Authoritarian	Inegalitarian	Corporatist, ethnocentric (racist and/or regionalist), hegemonic or neutralist, disciplined, hierarchical, strong passing on of heritage between generations, <b>education</b>	Germany, Japan, Korea, Sweden, southern-peripheral France, Jews. Partial: Belgium, Scotland	Well- and vertically-organized regime, neutralist for small countries, racist hegemony for large ones.
<b>Communitarian</b>	Authoritarian	Egalitarian	Collectivist, universalist, <b>conservative</b>	Central Italy, Russia, China, Ancient Rome. Partial: Finland, central France, southern Portugal	“Asiatic” empire, Communism.

These four family types apply to most of Europe. An interesting other category prevalent in premodern Corsica, the Arab World and indeed most of the Muslim World west of India is that of the **endogamous communitarian family**, e.g. equal brothers, under fatherly authority, typically marrying their cousins. Under Christian influence, virtually all of Europe is in contrast exogamous.

By fatherly authority in all these systems, one has to understand *family (or community, or national) authority*, that is, an individual's responsibility and duties to his family, as opposed to his "freedom" to be selfishly irresponsible and do as he pleases.

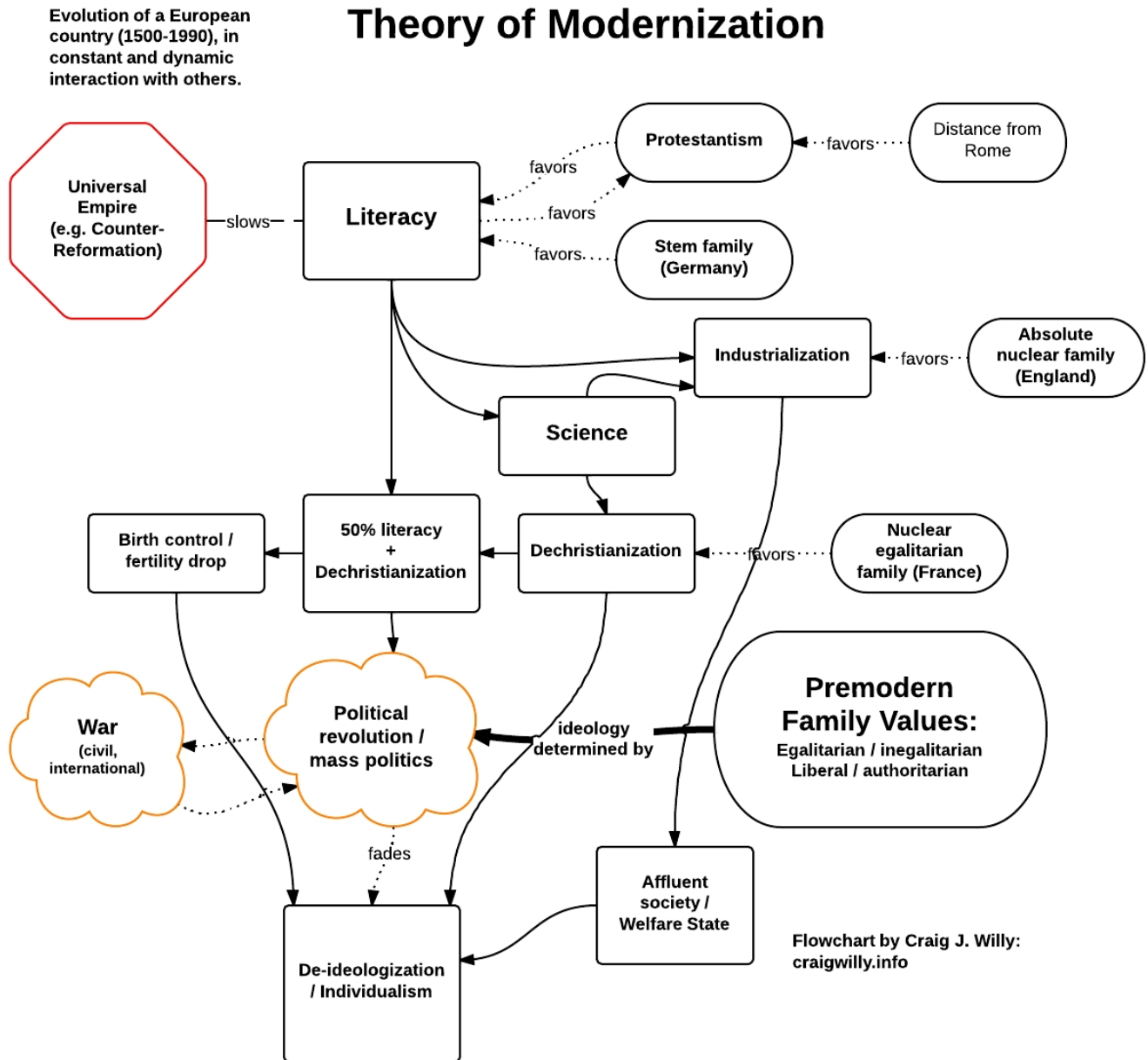
Endogamy adds an additional layer of family authority: *European marriage opens up contacts with another family, endogamous marriage contains one even more tightly within the family*. This may help to explain the weakness of national cohesion in many Arab countries and the very high degree of "tribalism" or clannishness. What Westerners call "tribalism" is, for Arab thinkers as far back as Ibn Khaldun, family/clan cohesion and, therefore, the ability of a given group to prosper and defeat other families/clans. However, the extreme intensity of family and clan cohesion appears to undermine national cohesion, helping to explain the intra-national "ethnic," "tribal" and confessional conflicts in Syria, Libya, Iraq, etc. (I am not dismissing the role of foreign powers in stoking these conflicts.)

Todd uses a rather complicated method to create this map, using archives, regressive statistical analysis and dozens of studies of local family structures. Suffice to say it is approximate, notwithstanding Todd's huge efforts to produce maps of Europe with the same national sub-units over 500 years and covering innumerable topics. Surely coming up with comparable historical statistics would be legitimate project for EU funding...

### **The Phases of Modernization: 1500-1965**

Todd's theory of modernization can be visualized thus.

# Emmanuel Todd's Theory of Modernization



Todd spends the first part of the book comparing the “anthropological foundations”: premodern family and agrarian systems. He establishes and compares the maps of the two. There is some correlation but one can almost smell disappointment when he ends the chapter with: “Practical conclusion: two distinct variables.”

Nonetheless, Todd posits that the following family structures make more likely the emergence of the following agrarian systems:

- Communitarian favors sharecropping (*métayage*, fixed proportion of crop taken as rent, somewhat egalitarian)
- Absolute nuclear favors rent (*fermage*, fixed gold/silver rent, individualist families being already

“proletariat-like” and less able to maintain a continuous property over generations, activity is already monetized)

- Egalitarian nuclear favors large properties (*grande exploitation*, egalitarian families are less able to maintain evenly-split properties across generations, also “proletariat-like” but activity less monetized, less individual)
- Stem favors family farms (*propriété*, stem families are very apt at maintaining property across generations)

Todd sometimes uses the agrarian system to explain a given historical development, but it has a rather lesser place in his theory.

Todd gives an interesting account of the **Reformation**. In particular, he describes the paradox that while Catholicism posited an equality of souls (and a forgiving God), it enforced an inequality of men (only priests to have access to and interpret higher knowledge, laymen to remain illiterate). In contrast, Protestantism glorified literacy and individual worship, a sign of equality. As Martin Luther said: “we are all priests.” But Protestantism also posited an *inequality of souls*: Some souls are predestined for heaven and others for hell. God is cruel and uncaring.

Todd does not think it is a coincidence that predestination, the fundamental inequality of souls, was most popular in stem family countries, that is, places which were accustomed to the idea of the fundamental inequality of brothers. He argues non-stem, individualist countries developed softened versions of Protestantism when they had the critical mass to do so (namely, Arminianism in England, Netherlands).

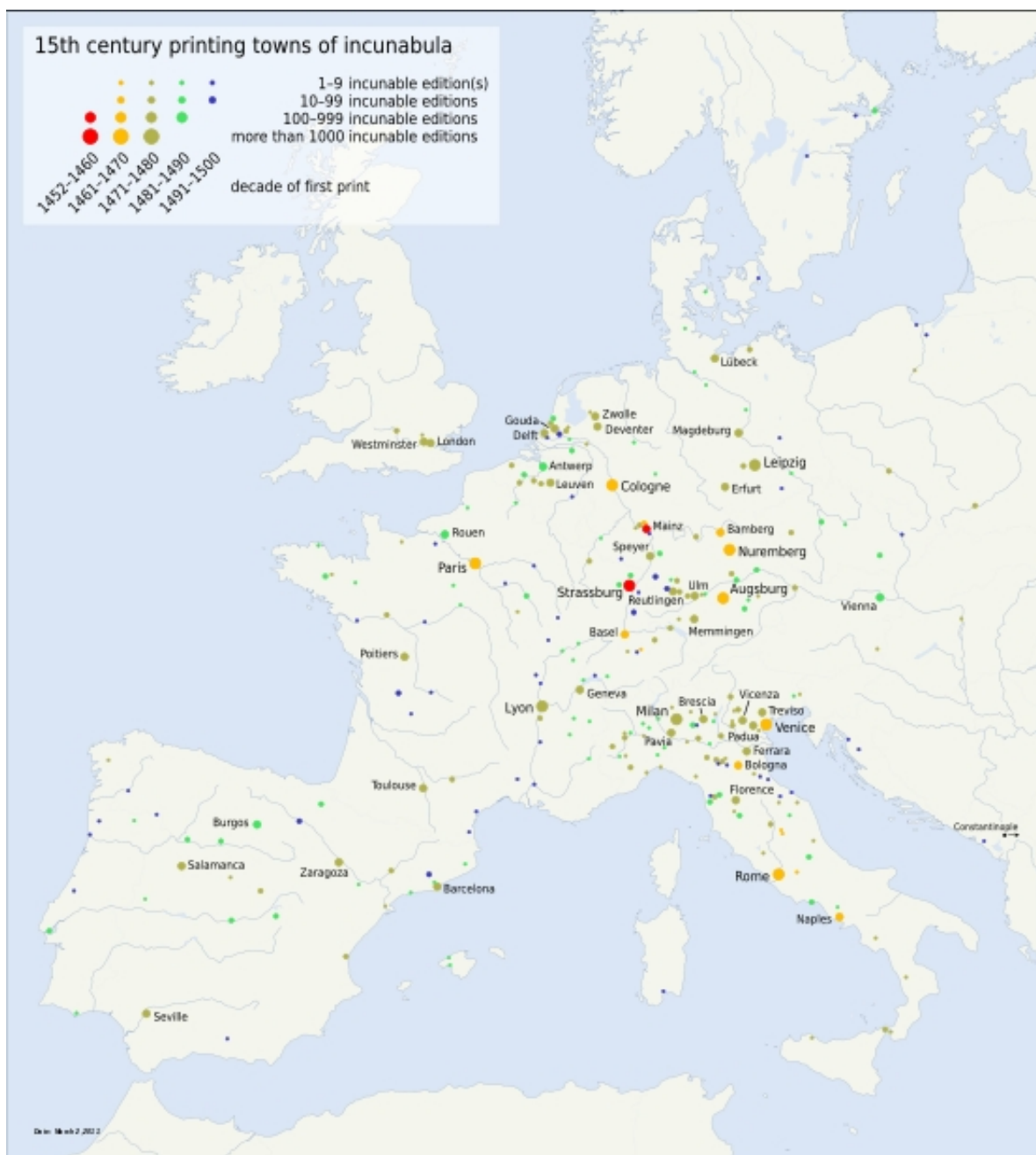
The Reformation can be seen as a rebellion of “Germanic” Europe (England, German-speaking countries, Netherlands, Nordics, including various political-cultural satellites, Scotland, Finland, Baltic countries) against the intellectual dictatorship of Latin Europe and, specifically, of the Catholic Church. But unlike your typical “Asiatic” universal empire, Europe was too physically and humanly diverse for the Catholic “intellectual empire’s” universalism to be militarily enforced. Catholicism, when rejected by the locals, was only maintained as far as the Habsburgs, those aspirants to a universal monarchy, could enforce it.

Protestant Europe became **literate** far, far faster than Catholic Europe, along a North-South German-Scandinavian core and in Britain. Practically the whole of Catholic and especially southern Europe remained largely illiterate and “retarded,” often lagging literally *centuries* behind the pioneers (Portugal and Spain did not achieve universal literacy until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century). This reactionary aspect of Catholicism is most visible in the condemnation of Galileo and the *Index librorum prohibitorum* (“a fascinating manifestation of an intellectual bureaucracy,” says Todd, p. 170). (That Protestant sects also banned books or oppressed intellectuals is irrelevant to this point: the nature of intellectual repression is entirely different whether or not a person can read.)

This is all the more remarkable when one considers that prior to the (Counter-)Reformation, though the first printing presses were active in Germany, very soon there was a *huge concentration* of presses in Italy.

(Northern) France is an interesting exception which became literate at an intermediate pace, apparently through sheer proximity with and diffusion of the Anglo-German pole of literacy.

Todd posits that the emergence of Protestantism in a given area depended partly on family type, but also the level of literacy and distance from Rome (e.g. the ability to stand and fight against Counter-Reformation states). He launches a small pique against Max Weber, who imagined Protestantism as the religion of the capital-accumulating urban bourgeoisie, but rather Todd argues it was the ideology of the "revolutionary" nobility.



Enlarged picture.

I hasten to add that all these things – universal empire, intellectual dictatorship, aspiration to individual

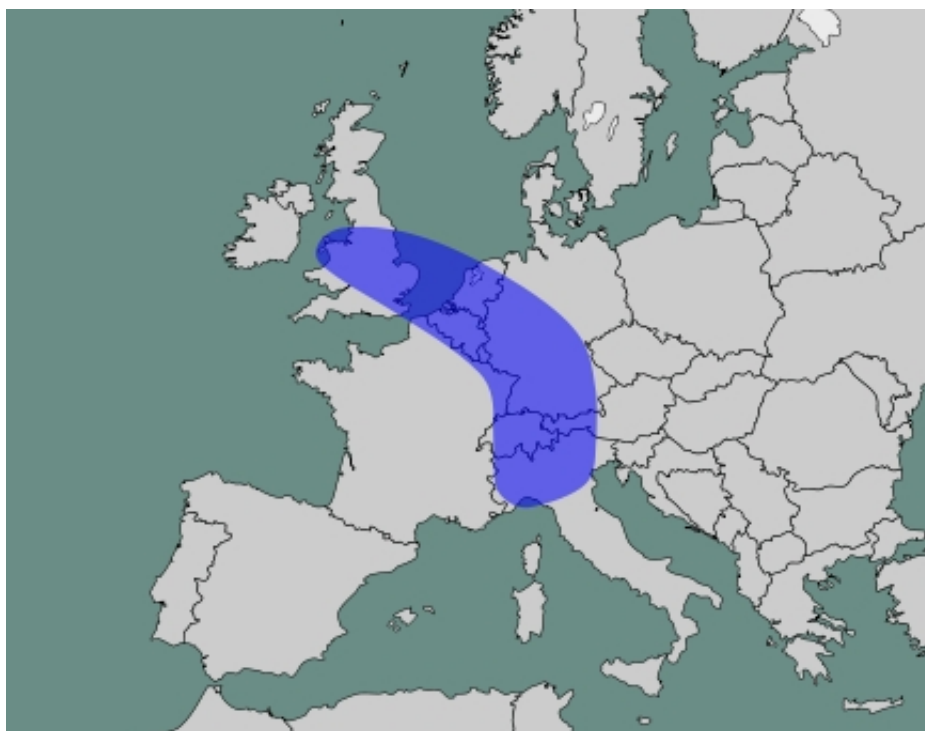
freedom, etc – all *exist for a reason*. There is no blanket condemnation as such. The struggle for Protestantism cost Germany *one third of its population* in the Thirty Years War. Catholicism may have meant illiteracy and scientific repression, but it also meant stability and cultural unity, whereas literacy paired with godlessness is a recipe for permanent ideological ferment (if you're lucky, French "permanent chaos" and regime change, you're unlucky German or Russian-style totalitarianism). Thinkers as different as Alexis de Tocqueville and Charles Maurras have argued the importance of religious belief – ironically for completely different regimes – to maintaining social cohesion and preserving civil peace in the face of political ideologies. For all intents and purposes, (Western) "Europe" is the cultural unity which the Catholic Church was able to maintain, and indeed expand, beyond the fall of Rome.

Todd nuances this picture. Catholic Austria and Bavaria have relatively high literacy by being within the German world. In general, the stem family – because of strong parental guidance and transmission of cultural and economic capital over generations – correlates with high and precocious educational achievement (Scotland, Germany, Sweden, Jews, Japan, Korea...). He also notes that in some places, namely Catholic and partially-stem Belgium and Ireland, literacy seems slower. He speculates that this is because stem families *reproduce themselves culturally better*, so if the culture is Catholic and non-literate, it will maintain itself better than non-stem Catholic countries. (One can identify here indeed a certain selectivity in Todd's use of a factor to explain this or that exception: "correlate then speculate.")

In contrast, the absolute nuclear family is more unstable and there is even a tendency for actual *regression* in such countries. While early on literacy spread in England, between 1750 and 1840 English literacy *stagnated or even declined*. In another book, *L'illusion économique*, Todd dryly notes the decline of educational achievement in the United States since the 1960s, also a traditionally "absolute nuclear" country.

On the complex process of **industrialization**, Todd is very brief. He attributes less-educated England's early industrialization to the combination of sufficient literacy and family structure: textiles, coal and ironworks do not require a very high level of literacy, the absolute nuclear family provides a flexible workforce. England then could "savagely transplant an unqualified rural population to transform it into an unqualified textiles proletariat." (p. 183)

In contrast the "second" industrial revolution from roughly 1870 onward implied much more complex technology, including electricity, chemicals, metalwork and automobiles. These industries required a much higher level of education and saw the success of Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and Japan. All things being equal, Todd believes educational and economic achievement should be comparable. He notes ironically that that map of "industrial Europe" in 1970 resembles that of 1500, dominated by the famous core "blue banana" of high population and economic density.



**Dechristianization**, the decline of religious practice and belief in God, is fascinatingly spread out across time (1730-1990) and space. There are three phases:

- 1730-1800: Catholicism collapses in Parisian France, central and southern Spain, southern Portugal, probably southern Italy.
- 1880-1930: Protestantism collapses in England, the German-speaking world, Nordics. Only Catholicism remains.
- 1965-1990: Catholicism is finished off in Belgium, Rhenish and southern Germany, bit of Switzerland, French periphery, northern Spain/Portugal.

Todd sees religious practice and belief as falling due to scientific discoveries, in particular the Copernican and Darwinian revolutions: "The development of science reveals the circular nature of theological debate." (Who are the "theologians" of today, I wonder?) Todd argues that religious practice can survive the attacks of Heliocentrism, the Enlightenment and evolution, it can last longer, depending on religion and family type.

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**Strength of the Fatherly Image of God**

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God/Priest	Strong (Catholicism)	Weak (Protestantism)
Strong (stem family)	"Harmonic" Catholicism  (ends in 1960s)	Classic Protestantism (Lutheranism or Calvinism)



(ends 1880-1930)

Weak (nuclear family)

Classic Catholicism

Arminian Protestantism

(ends in 1750s)

(ends 1880-1930)

The fall of religion, like the rise of literacy, is not necessarily linear. In England, again, there were religious revivals in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Whereas in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century intellectuals, monarchs and even high priests are often agnostic or at best deist, by the 19<sup>th</sup>, "Skeptical aristocrats, anticlerical or atheist sovereigns, products of Enlightenment philosophy, disappear from the social landscape." (p. 211)

Todd posits the equation: literacy + dechristianization = **birth control**. There are remarkable correlations in France (1770-1830), northern (Protestant) Europe (1880-1930) and "peripheral" (Catholic) Europe (1920-1940).

There is an equally powerful equation: literacy + dechristianization = **ideology**. The threshold appears to be 50% male literacy in a given area. Todd writes: "The death of religion allows for the birth of ideology." (p. 237) As the heavenly father dies so does the physical one's authority: "Economic dependence [in an industrial economy] makes the authority of the father abstract." (p. 197-8) Todd speculates that the authoritarianism of the family in Germany, the strength of both the earthly and the heavenly fathers' image, made their "deaths" particularly traumatic (with Nietzsche's famous and resonant 1882 cry: "God is dead!").

A minority case, apparently prevalent in southern Italy and Spain, is of illiteracy *and* dechristianization. Lack of religious practice precedes education, although it's impossible to determine whether these people "believe" or not. Todd speculates that there would be a quiet nihilism, ready to spark political activism the moment literacy is achieved.

### The age of ideology: 1789-1965

The death of God means individuals need to find new identities with corresponding ideologies:

- National consciousness (awareness of one's place within a national-State system) leads to **nationalism**
- Class consciousness (awareness of one's place within the economic system) leads to **socialism**
- Vestigial religious consciousness leads to **religious conservatism** (a "counter-ideology" reacting to nationalism and socialism)

Here I suggest the "natural" *indigenous* regimes for each family type (obviously regime type will depend

massively on external circumstances and the hazard of events) and the motto that might correspond:

- Absolute nuclear: liberal-constitutional oligarchy, segregationist ("People are different.")
- Stem: variable, racial hegemonist or "regionalist-autonomist-neutralist" ("We are different.")
- Communitarian: "Asiatic" empire ceding to Communism, pseudo-universalist. ("All men are the same.")
- Nuclear egalitarian: Instability, oscillation between anarcho-socialism, liberal oligarchy and limited authoritarianism, pseudo-universalist. ("All men are the same/You're not the boss of me.")

Todd provides a more nuanced system. He sees each family type as producing distinct *versions* of each kind of ideology (p. 539):

	<b>Fundamental values</b>	<b>Socialist ideology</b>	<b>Nationalist ideology</b>	<b>"Reactionary" religious ideology</b>
<b>Nuclear-egalitarian family</b>	Liberty and equality	Anarcho-socialism	Liberal-militarism	Christian-republicanism
<b>Stem family</b>	Authority and inequality	Social democracy	Ethnocentrism	Christian-democracy
<b>Communitarian family</b>	Authority and equality	Communism	Fascism	
<b>Absolute nuclear family</b>	Liberty	Laborism (zero-socialism)	Liberal-isolationism	

In Todd's model, the trauma and crises of modernization, paired with the ability of the population to read and dream of politics, leads to the "*hystericization*" of the country's fundamental ideals. So for example, Leninism may have been a "hystericized" expression of Russian peasants' egalitarian and authoritarian ideals and, but this does not exclude that these same Russian peasants might oppose this hysterically exaggerated version of their beliefs (because godless and revolutionary).

Todd considers each set of ideals in turn. **Liberty and equality** concerns the nuclear egalitarian family, that is France and the bulk of the Latin world. He notes that Rousseau's description of the normal family in the *Contrat social*, where the individual is free of parents the moment he can support himself, is in fact of one nuclear families. (p. 252)

But France is actually a very diverse country in terms of family structures: Brittany largely absolute nuclear, the south and periphery largely stem, the center semi-communitarian, but with the greater Parisian Basin nuclear-egalitarian (roughly 40% of the country). Catholic France is unusually literate and

precociously godless: the core of the country enters the ideological age a century before other countries, while much of the periphery remains religious and hostile to liberal-egalitarian ideals.

Todd explains the French Revolution (which was also a civil war) writing: "It is the very conflict between liberal-egalitarian center and inegalitarian-authoritarian periphery which leads to the revolutionary explosion, that is to say *the hysterical implementation of the ideals of the center.*" (p. 264, emphasis in the original). Regions that were traditionally hostile to the rising power of the monarchy become monarchist regions hostile to... the republic.

French history then oscillates: both liberal and egalitarian, the politicized mass of the population rejects all authority. The 1790s *sans-culottes*, the 1871 *communards* and indeed the Parisian "mob" in general tend towards an anarcho-socialism and periodically reject all authority to the extent that political control devolves to the *neighborhood*.

French socialist movements develop faster (1880-1900) than the country's slow industrialization and actual proletariat. They tend to be disorganized and Utopian, often forming tiny sects (*groupuscules*). Todd gives this description of the "fairly typical 'Latin' socialist party" that emerged in post-Franco Spain: "The PSEO (Spanish Socialist Workers Party) combines from the beginning organizational inability and verbal revolutionarism; it is very close in its form and behavior to its brothers of the Parisian Basin." (p. 289)

(In contrast, English socialism is pragmatically anti-Utopian while German socialism is highly organized and disciplined.)

Liberal-egalitarian values lead to constant contestation and regime change: the people are too egalitarian to accept a given regime, too individualist to actually organize a stable new regime. This paradoxically leads to a desire among large parts of the population (especially anyone with property: peasants and petty-to-high bourgeois) for a limited authoritarianism (what Todd calls "liberal-militarism") to stabilize the situation: in French history this has been incarnated in the figures of generals Bonaparte, Boulanger and De Gaulle. Todd notes, again paradoxically, that the popularity of anarcho-socialism, Bonapartism and Gaullism (as expressed by political movements and votes) overlap in the greater Parisian Basin. He argues this is because *both* anarcho-socialism and "liberal-militarism" are a product of the liberal-egalitarian mindset.

The other largely liberal-egalitarian country studied is Spain. The country is 60% liberal-egalitarian, coinciding with the areas lost to Al-Andalus and then regained during the *Reconquista*, while the unconquered northern and eastern fringes have stem families.

In Spain, as in France, there is political instability throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, including numerous, sometimes progressive, military coups: "It's again a *pronunciamento* which imposes, in 1868, universal suffrage." (p. 284) Mass politics is largely dormant so long as the country is illiterate, southern Spain only becomes literate between 1900 and 1940. Stem areas become centers of conservatism and would

provide territories for Franco's uprising. The Caudillo met the wishes both of reactionary Catholics in stem areas and those desiring "order" in liberal-egalitarian areas. Liberal-egalitarian areas become hysterically anticlerical, even more so than during the French Revolution, and embrace an *anti-Leninist* anarcho-socialism.

Todd briefly discusses southern Italy. He argues that liberal-egalitarianism there appears as a kind of total contestation of authority and anarchy, with the Mafia as representing both anarchy and order (I suppose it depends on how one looks at it).

There is an ineffectual character to (Latin) liberal-egalitarian (anarcho-)socialism. As a rule, it is too disorganized and Utopian to survive: "Latin anarcho-socialism, which wants all men to be equal, can be termed 'revolutionary', even if its hostility to organization condemns it in practice to impotence." (p. 464)

Todd argues that in Spain, France and Italy, areas of anarcho-socialist sentiment (nuclear-egalitarian family values) tend to fall under the superficial control of better organized communist organizations (which only have deep roots in communitarian family areas). The Spanish anarcho-socialists were dependent on Stalinist aid, the southern Italian socialists were overwhelmed by the central Italian Communist Party machine, and the French Communist Party did not have deep roots in the Parisian Basin where it nonetheless drew electoral support.

It would be highly interesting to have similar historical sketches of other liberal-egalitarian countries, namely most of Latin America, Greece and Poland. We very often have disorganization and regime instability punctuated by non-totalitarian militarism. How does the so-called "liberal-militarism" of Spain and France compare with Piłsudski, Chavism or Peronism? The French case according to Todd: "Gaullism defines a savior, legitimizes him through direct universal suffrage; it dreams of national greatness, it has social preoccupations." (p. 281)

A final characteristic of liberal-egalitarian countries is *pseudo-universalism*, "assimilation" and miscegenation. This is most visible whenever a country has to deal with ethnic minorities. Revolutionary France emancipated Jews saying it must "Refuse everything to the Jews as a nation, grant them everything as individuals." (p. 268) A subject of any part of Napoleon's Empire could hope to be an "equally free" French subject (as indeed was the case legally for the vast swathes of Europe that were directly annexed). A subject of Hitler's Empire, unless he was "biologically" German, could have no such hope. French colonial universalism was a pseudo-universalism, racism was systemic, but it is not *insignificant* that there were naturalized and born-free black French citizens. The symbol says something about national character. Todd, whose personal values are liberal-egalitarian, also writes of Revolutionary-Napoleonic France: "The '*Grande Nation*', which defines all men as free and equal, is not the most unlikable of all the European ideological dreams." (p. 269)

One could make a similar point about Italian fascism, founded more on communitarian than liberal-egalitarian family values, which was not spontaneously particularly racist or antisemitic.

There is also this interesting and massive divergence between the various Latin and Germanic colonial empires. Liberal-egalitarian Catholics and Latins (same thing) *almost systematically miscegenate*: in Brazil, Mexico, Québec, etc. Purely liberal Protestants and Germanics (same thing) *even more systematically segregate* (American South, South Africa, Australia). Todd speculates that egalitarian nations (mostly Latin and Slavic), being used to thinking of brothers as equal, project this as meaning all men are the same (universalism).

In contrast, purely liberal nations think of each individual, and therefore each nation, as separate and different, separate "communities" within the country are considered normal. Stem nations see every individual as both different and unequal *within a commonly defined hierarchy*, projected internationally this leads to an acute feeling of difference and, on occasion, racial hegemonism.

**Authority and inequality** characterized stem family countries: the existence of unequal brothers who must submit to the family is unconsciously accepted as normal. These principles of discrimination and hierarchy are projected both onto both domestic and international politics. Todd quotes Fichte's praise of Germany's ethnic purity and on language. On language it is highly interesting:

“ One can guess without difficulty the huge influence which the structure of one's language exercises on the human development of a people, of this language which accompanies, limits and animates the individual in the most intimate depths of his thought and of his will, which makes the human collection speaking this language a community led by a common intelligence. [I am translating from the French, unfortunately, p. 306, quoted from the *Addresses to the German Nation*.]

In both cases, what is stressed is the individual's lack of autonomy relative to the whole. Anglo and (to a lesser extent) French liberty and reason are *individual* faculties. For Luther and Hegel, liberty is "a transcendental principle above individuals, an inner compulsion to only follow the given direction, the right one" while reason "is a transcendental principle that animates the State but not individuals." (Todd's descriptions, p. 308)

Stem families in particular are remarkably good at *reproducing the family's heritage and culture* over generations. The eldest son (typically) carries the weight and authority of the entire family name and heritage, not to mention of the family itself. Stem families *invest in their children as an investment in the family*, the child conversely serves the family in an ascribed role; there is not the chaos, loss or individual "freedom" of liberal families.

Todd argues that the hierarchy, inequality and continuity of the stem family become projected into ethno-nationalism. He says this in particular of regionalist/nationalist movements which perceive an "eternal nation" that exists despite enduring integration in another nation: "Emerging from time immemorial, wanting to survive in the centuries of centuries, this lineage-people is but the grandiose projection of the stem family itself." (p. 408) This continuity also accounts for the survival, non-assimilation and educational achievement of Jewish peoples over the centuries.

Scotland, Wales, Ireland (north and south), Galicia, Basque Country, Catalonia, Western Norway, Flanders, Wallonia and South Tyrol are the major areas of regionalist-autonomist demands in 1975. They are all partial or full stem areas. The stem family encourages a self-perception as irreducibly different. One can ask why southern France, which is stem, had no major ethnocentric regional movement despite the presence of the langue d'Oc.

When the nation is small and sovereign, it tends towards neutralism (Ireland, Switzerland, Sweden). In the case of Switzerland, stem particularism expresses itself as an attachment to both neutrality and the canton (in both cases, very Swiss, so overlapping with nationalism). Todd argues that, unlike in Belgium, as Switzerland's Latins (French- and Italian-speaking) are liberal-egalitarian and therefore universalist, they are tolerant of the stem German-speaking Swiss's particularism.

The overwhelmingly stem countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden) tend to be well- and vertically-organized. German and Austrian social democracy is unlike its moderate-pragmatic Anglo and disorganized-Utopian Latin equivalents. Catholicism survives much longer, into the 1960s, creating Christian democratic parties (prewar *Zentrum*, postwar CDU). Voting patterns tend to be more stable than other countries and indeed Todd is astonished to find almost complete regional continuity in CDU/SPD voting patterns before and after the Nazi period (a particularly traumatic and revolutionary 12-year gap).

In the Japanese and German cases, Todd argues that because these countries are large enough to make it plausible, the stem family's inegalitarian ethno-nationalist ideals leads to the dream racial hegemony. Assimilation of those representing "the Other" (Jews) is considered impossible. Interestingly, Todd notes that Hitler's inegalitarianism went *beyond Germany* because the country was not a case of pure (imagined) Aryanism; some other nations might be more Aryan: "[Hitler] was not nationalist in the traditional sense of the term. He takes the ideal of the inequality of men beyond the concept of nationhood." (p. 335) Todd argues family types account for the diametrically opposed responses of Britain, the United States, France and Germany to the otherwise similar economic crises of the 1930s.

**Equality and authority** characterize communitarian family countries. No Western European country is fully communitarian. However, Todd finds almost perfect correlation for communist party support in free elections and areas with communitarian family structure: southern Portugal, central Italy, and parts of central-southern France.

Indeed correlation is quite remarkable and, in the case of Italy and Portugal, being in a communitarian

family region correlates far higher with the communist vote than, for example, the number of industrial workers (that would be north-west Italy). Todd is particularly satisfied when he sees the maps for the votes for Italian social democracy, socialism and communism correlate perfectly with family types (stem northeast, liberal-egalitarian north and south, and communitarian center respectively, p. 423).

The other case is Finland which is partially communitarian: There is a strong indigenous communist movement, a brutal civil war, then communism as a movement is largely discredited by proximity with Soviet reality (unlike in Western Europe proper, which can still fantasize about Stalinism at length).

Other communitarian countries fall outside of Todd's study, but they include Russia, Hungary, Serbia, China, Vietnam and parts of India. Russia, Serbia, China, Vietnam and (briefly) Hungary produced indigenous communist regimes, either in the form of a political revolution or because the insurrection against foreign occupiers chose to be communist. The communist vote in India (including recurring communist governments of certain states) appears to largely correlate with the communitarian family.

As with liberal-egalitarian countries, these countries embraced a pseudo-universalist ideology that explicitly rejected racism of the Nazi type.

Whereas all the other family types tend to favor one or other aspect of modernity, Todd finds that the communitarian family appears to correlate with stability (or "backwardness"), remaining peasant nations even as other modernize around them, until the tensions become such that they are (often brutally) jolted out of their conservatism. The overwhelming majority of humanity (i.e. Eurasia) is communitarian. Todd speculates that as this family type develops it then slows down historical development, leaving only peripheral non-communitarian areas to be dynamic (i.e. Western Europe, Japan).

**Liberty alone** characterizes absolute nuclear countries. The child leaves the family household as soon as he reaches adulthood and parents are free to dispose of their property as they wish. He sees a connection with the Lockean vision of liberal, non-egalitarian and *contractual* nature of government (which also characterizes America, with the added propensity for westward emigration and "fleeing" problems).

Todd argues that the perception of autonomous and different individuals within the family translates into Anglo-liberal politics, a preference for isolationism and a high tolerance for ethnic "ghettos" (that is, as "normal," not necessarily considered a problem (as the French do)). Anglo-segregation and Dutch Apartheid are the norm whenever these peoples come into contact with non-whites.

Todd argues: "The English conception of the nation is particularly tolerable because it is tolerant. Unlike the French and German visions, which deny the right of peoples to an autonomous cultural existence." (p. 482)

Otherwise the main characteristics of pure liberal nations appears to be a certain atomization of

individuals, a certain political stability and respect for liberal oligarchic regimes (most monarchies in Europe are in pure liberal nations and have been rarely if ever toppled). There is little hard ideology. British Labourism is for Todd a "zero-socialism," an organized labor movement which in practice very early accepted an unequal and individualist society as tolerable. The Conservative Party stands for nothing in particular except hostility to change in all its forms, hence nicknamed the "stupid party." He says absolute liberal electorates may be largely immune to protectionist appeals (the Conservative Party having lost several elections on this theme).

### **The end of ideology: 1965-1990**

The 1960s, era of verbal political tumult, were in fact in the last throes of ideological politics: "Faith, in the broadest sense of the term, ideological as well as religious, leaves European political life." (p. 545) The causes are wealth and education: "The two fundamental causes of the dissolution are indeed the rise of the cultural [educational] level of the populations and the achievement of an acceptable earthly city. [...] It is indeed the compensatory ideology which disappears." (p. 599)

There is the universalization of secondary education and the democratization of tertiary education. A person with only primary education is still highly dependent intellectually on his educational "betters" and may have only learned the holy texts he must submit to. Todd: "On the ideological level, [secondary education] dissolves the religious or quasi-religious submission to traditional sacred formulas." (p. 550) Todd notes that this level of education also coincides with teen and young adult rebellion.

Individuals vote less and no longer live more-or-less *encadrés* by organizations (church, trade union, party...). The emancipation of the individual from the family coincides with the political disorganization of society.

There is then an unprecedented peace and a religious reunification of Europe through indifference:

“As we near the year 2000 a new map of Europe is emerging, religious unified, but by indifference. In this world where religious practice is tending towards zero we cannot speak anymore of confrontations between Catholics and Protestants, between secularists and Christians. The continent remains of Christian tradition and civilization, but the Churches are socially insignificant there. [p. 560]

The proletariat begins shrinking and, very quickly, intellectuals and workers cease to believe in its "inevitable" historic mission and destiny to change humanity. The *débâcle*, which often precedes the



Soviet collapse, is particularly dramatic in France and Italy. Nominally "socialist" center-left parties, more or less ingloriously, cease to be workers' movements and move on to be embraced by the conformist and well-thinking elements of the rapidly-growing middle classes. In the 1980s, the "new" French Socialist Party and the German Social Democrats make gains in the formerly Catholic areas (when disappointed these voters often then turn to Greens).

The collapse of collective religion and political beliefs, indeed of authorities, leaves the individual "free" and alone in the world, free and alone to find meaning, through his own limited capacities, in an unfathomably complex universe. On the rise of free and anxious individualism-nihilism:

“*Identification with any traditional ideological force allowed every individual to develop a feeling of being part of a group and a powerful feeling of security. The disintegration of collective beliefs isolates individuals and atomizes, in the area of representations, European societies at the very moment when they are reaching, for the first time in their history, a certain degree of material homogeneity, through mass consumption. [...]*  
*The disappearance of ideological encadrement adds to the concrete disappearance of the social class to cause a genuine feeling of panic. Workers, threatened by an unemployment which is no longer temporary but definitive, who are no longer able to believe in the Church, in the radiant future of communism, social-democracy or anarcho-socialism, or even in the greatness of their nation, experience the social transformation like an abandonment, like a cataclysm. Despite their relatively high living standard. An automobile, a refrigerator, a television, a telephone do not compensate for the feeling of social uselessness. [p. 599-600]*

Thus, despite high standards of living, anxieties emerge and these are addressed by what Todd calls "micro-ideologies": environmentalism, regionalism and xenophobia. In the case of Austria:

“*[The Austrian Freedom Party] is designating Yugoslavs as a whole, who make up the largest immigrant group in Austria, as scapegoats for a fairly undefined anxiety caused by the decline of the Church. [p. 604-5]*

Todd apparently considers these micro-ideologies to be marginal phenomena, the expression of minorities who are only heard because of rising electoral absenteeism and apathy. He calls regionalism a "parody of nationalism." He remarks ironically that both immigrants and xenophobic voters tend to be "workers, artisans or small shopkeepers". He argues:

“*Micro-ideologies do not try to dream or create new societies. They are conservative, trying to protect the ideal city of the present. Environmentalist movements want to prevent environmental degradation by technology, whether nuclear or chemical. Xenophobic movements worry of the destruction of society by immigrants. Greens and Greys want to stop history.* (p. 605)

Whatever its "marginal" origins, environmentalism is officially a major issue for almost all nations and capable of providing an "ideal city" as valid as any.

"Nationalism," whether of the xenophobic, regionalist or sovereignist type, also appears resurgent and plausible in Europe. Todd speaks of immigration with his usual candor and indifference to political correctness, speaking of "immigration's problematic, non-European core – Muslim, African or West Indian." (p. 609) Again:

“*One of the commonalities of current sociological literature is to speculate on the ability of various immigrant groups to integrate. They stress that, until recently, immigrants were of a European, Christian origin, and that the existence of a common cultural foundation between the indigenous populations and the immigrants facilitated the process of integration. They also stress that immigration from the Third World poses specific problems, because it places in contact peoples with different family and religious traditions, sometimes opposed.* [p. 616]

Todd considers the Front National untouchable. There is a scarcely a TV appearance in which he does not very vocally disown the FN, all the more so because it is the only major party which actually shares his political ideas on protectionism and Europeanism. Presumably this is because Todd, though having no

patience for political correctness, is himself clearly a well-meaning, non-revolutionary moderate progressive, a "good liberal." He also writes for example: "As we near the year 2000, Turks, Arabs and Pakistanis seem perfectly apt to assimilation." (p. 617)

In any event, this is what Todd has to say about the FN in the book:

“*Front National voters themselves are undoubtedly, unbeknownst to leftwing and rightwing politicians, unnoticed universalists. They demand less the throwing into the sea of immigrant populations than their absolute alignment on majority French habits and customs. The inability of political elites to produce a brutally assimilationist discourse of the type, “Immigrants will become Frenchmen like the others whether they like it or not,” has encouraged the emergence of the Front National. Elitist discourse on the right to difference generates incoherence and anxiety in the land of the universal man. [p. 614]*

### **The persistence of values: Modernization does not mean total convergence**

Today, nuclear families are the overwhelming family structure across the West. This does not necessarily mean the end of differing national value systems. Today we can say without ambiguity that the dreams of the globalizers and Europeanists, of perfect “convergence” through globalism-Europeanism and the end of nations, were a fantasy. The very divergent responses to postmodern capitalism in Japan, Germany, France, southern Europe, Britain, the United States, etc – split between variably “producerist,” “consumerist” and “austere” capitalisms with great diversity in socioeconomic situations, fertility, immigration, welfare states, democracy, etc – is a testament to the persistence of national differences and indeed *rationalities*.

Each nation has habits, customs, values which together form an almost irresistible socioeconomic logic, which “works” more or less well in the era of globalization. There are obviously common trends: **each nation is destined, or doomed, to modernity, but each nation becomes modern in its own way.** Todd: “The passage to postindustrial society does not seem therefore capable of liquidating the national anthropological foundations.” (p. 576)

On the contrary, the implicit values of the value reproduce themselves, albeit unmeasurably:

“ It seems more reasonable to posit a diffusion of authoritarian or liberal values in multiple primary units: residual family cores, schools, local communities, companies... The inventory remains to be done. But it is certain that the disintegration of family structures, a phenomenon visible in our times, does not immediately lead to a destruction of regional and national traditions, does not cause any convergence of political behaviors. The destruction of ideologies is on the contrary an opportunity to see a very marked reemergence of fundamental temperaments. [p. 598]

And again: “The ideal city, once achieved, is structured by these [anthropological] values as surely as the city dreamed by socialists, nationalists or Christians.” (p. 612)

Ironically Todd takes the example of immigration, treated very differently (in theory) by the UK (which accepts ghettos of citizens, “liberal-segregation” as in the U.S.), by France (which wants to “assimilate” all) and by Germany (which accepts ghettos of non-citizens). The Muslim today represents “the Other,” like the Jew in the past, the symbol which shows how countries deal with difference. Today, these countries have largely converged on this issue, and the differences seem slighter.

### **What of the Nation in all this?**

Curiously, Todd does not really *explicitly* address the issue of nationhood in his theory of modernization. This is surprising as family structures and nations typically do not overlap. Todd takes national unity – implicitly a State and/or linguistic unit – for granted.

And indeed his system quite elegantly takes these two, national unity and family structures, as roughly co-equal determinants: whereas a nation’s temperament as a whole will in large part be determined by its family structures, a region’s particularities *relative to the nation as a whole* tend to be determined by its particular family structure. Put another way, if the various national units of Europe are in dynamic interaction, the regions within a national unit are in *particularly intense* dynamic interaction that overlays family structure (presumably this heightened interaction is due to common language and the State).

Todd does use the concept of *endomorphosis*, which is to say the characteristics of a human unit can change over time (France today is incredibly different from France just 100 years ago) and yet still remain a discrete thing (France today is different from Germany, as France 100 years was different from Germany, “France” remains). This very simple concept is sometimes lost upon some historians who, seeing a nation change often quite dramatically over time, come to conclude that there is no such thing as said nation.

The case of **the Nordic countries** is an interesting case in that *clearly* there are massive cultural and socioeconomic commonalities despite apparently different family structures. Todd's account of their politics somewhat fits into his system: social democracy is overwhelming and stable in stem Sweden, socialism is fairly weak and unstable in absolute nuclear Denmark, and mostly-absolute nuclear Norway's socialism is weakened by stem regionalist nationalism. But whatever these nuances, the Nordic countries clearly form some sort of national-cultural unit, speaking with, emulating and depending upon each other.

For my part, I would say:

- Family systems heavily influence national and regional character.
- There is no account of nationhood as such, nor a systemic account of the variation in the nature of family systems' impact by nation.
- Todd's family structures can only approximate unconscious premodern values. (What about values other than equality/liberty?)

These are surely interesting areas for exploration: How do we define and measure a nation's unconscious values in the premodern, modern and postmodern ages?

The fact that Todd does not really explicitly address nationhood is all the more surprising in that it forms the core of the polemical 1995 preface (the book was first published in 1990). In particular, Todd had voted against and become even more opposed to the 1992 Maastricht Treaty which was creating European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), at a tremendous cost in terms of French deindustrialization and unemployment.

Todd, being a "good liberal," was also a "good European," and therefore *a priori* in favor of European integration in general. But, presumably reading standard critical accounts in the Anglo-American press rather than falling for the siren of euro-theology, he decided to oppose EMU. Todd has this characteristic that his head is usually stronger than his heart.

The preface has aged very well:

“*My opposition to the Maastricht Treaty stems very directly from my knowledge of the anthropology and history of our continent. A real sensibility to the diversity of European customs and values can only lead to one conclusion: the central monetary management of societies as different as, for example, France and Germany, must lead to a massive dysfunction, first, of one or other society, and, then, of both. There is, in the ideology of unification,*

*a will to break human and social realities which recalls, strangely but invincibly, Marxism-Leninism. [...]*

*I then hope that this book, which was written outside of any polemical context and of which I haven't changed a line, will allow some unprejudiced Europeanists to think serenely about the problems posed, to delve into the anthropological and historical depth of the nations that are to be fused. I hope especially that some of them, starting as I do from good European sentiments, will come to the conclusion that the Maastricht Treaty is a work of amateurs, ignorant of the history and life of societies. [...]*

*Either the single currency is not realized, and L'invention de l'Europe will seem a contribution to the understanding of certain historical impossibilities. Or the single currency is realized, in which case this book will help to understand, in twenty years, why a statist unification imposed in the absence of a common consciousness will have produced a jungle rather than a consciousness. [p. 10-11]*

I will add, on Utopianism, that one has to bear in mind that the French Socialist Party went, with no real transition, from the quasi-Marxism (French hard left) of the "Common Program" in 1981 to the ordoliberalism (German hard right) of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. The only explanation for this I can see, among educated individuals, is the traditional economic weak-mindedness (nihilism?) and contempt for reality of a certain kind of French socialism.

Todd does not explicitly explain why diverse family structures, if they are reconcilable within nations, are not reconcilable at a continental level. The implicit answer is evident enough at the reading of the book, through the repeated statistics, revealing both the self-evident national reality and the incredible diversity of Europe.

### **Prophet of Nations**

In fact, all of Todd's books, including his "academic" ones, are quiet polemics. Even in the 1990 edition, before the economic failure of EMU, he argues that while it would "present obvious intellectual risks" it would be "a bit cowardly" to not draw the consequences of his studies for European integration. (p. 30) He also writes in the 1990 foreword:

“*The Europe which is treated here is not the clean, peaceful, rational continent of economists or technocrats, a prosperous and amnesiac world whose history is entirely written between the treaties of Rome of 1956 and of the great market of 1993. Thirty-five years is a bit short to understand a civilization born of the Roman conquest, the Germanic invasions and the Christianization of the peoples. [p. 13]*

Todd is addicted to the “power” of the prophet. His various books have forecasted: the fall of the Soviet Union (1976), the failure of EMU (1995), the dysfunction of globalization (1997), the decline of the United States (2002), the democratization of the Muslim World (2007), and I probably missed one. Todd has no divine knowledge – he can hedge his bets or be inaccurate, he tends to over-generalize from the news of the day and dismiss things that do not neatly fit into his system – but he has a very solid data-based method, looking at the *longue durée*, which allows him to be far more interesting and worthy of attention than your standard pundit. He writes: “Like all prophecy, the Nietzschean verb is above all a good perception of the present.” (p. 311)

Todd is a fixture of French radio and television shows but he is mysteriously little-known outside of France (despite the fact he has an Anglo-sensibility, his grandfather was American and he studied for his Ph.D. at Cambridge). I suspect it is because, like Glenn Greenwald's, Todd's style of polemicking is deeply *national*, indignation and meaning being aroused in reference to their nation's values and assumptions: Greenwald's obsession with legal niceties is incomprehensible in a country which does not venerate its Constitution like a Bible, Todd's obsession with egalitarian democracy and contempt for the “fake economy” is very French.

Notwithstanding this, I suspect Todd's influence will grow. He's enough of a subverter of political correctness to be useful to heterodox intellectuals. His ideas have, despite his protestations, been heralded by the Front National and French sovereignists in general. He's been picked up by a strange variety of Anglo-bloggers including [hbdchick](#), [Brian Micklethwait](#) and [Frank Jacobs](#). [T. Greer's](#) enthusiasm upon discovering him is typical: “I came across Mr. Todd's work a few months ago, and concluded immediately that he is the most under-rated ‘big idea’ thinker in the field of world history.”

Certainly there are potentially vast areas of study that could be based on this, I would love to see the method applied to Eastern Europe, the Muslim World, Latin America and Asia for example. One [College of Europe paper](#) looks at correlations between Todd's family structures and continuing regional disparities. In many ways, and this goes beyond the work on family structures, Todd has for decades been blazing the trails that many, myself included, have only now discovered. I don't think he has all the answers, but after reading him I'd say I'm starting to ask the right questions: to understand a country is concretely to understand the individuals that make it up (demography), the things that bind them together, their lived

reality, and to really appreciate the depth and nuance of human diversity. We've got a lot of promising leads.

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## 27 thoughts on “Emmanuel Todd’s *L’invention de l’Europe*: A critical summary”



@ruitavares

07/07/2013 at 10:42

Very interesting “@CraigWilly: NEW POST: “Emmanuel Todd’s *L’invention de l’Europe*: A critical summary” <http://t.co/2L9uFwcTVe>”

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Protesilaos Stavrou

07/07/2013 at 10:47

Hi Craig,

You’ve done an excellent work. Congratulations! I was already fascinated with Todd’s work the first time you had mentioned him and yes he is indeed a prolific intellectual. There is much that can be said and written to criticize constructively these findings, but I will remain limited to some overriding elements of concern:

1) family, as being a micro-society or a primary nucleus of a polity, is important in the formulation of imaginary institutions and the data furnished by Todd seems to confirm that. I do however have the



feeling that this essentially macro approach, can conceal a number of qualitative parameters or factors that can be important in explaining certain “deviations” from the “naturally” projected beliefs, orientations, values etc. For instance, how can siblings end up having profoundly different ideological predispositions, one being e.g. an anarchist (individualism) and the other a fascist (collectivism) with them eventually ending up fighting each other in a civil war?

2) on Table 1 (the second picture from above) I take note of some nations/groups that are provided as examples to certain types of families and projected/expected ideologies-imaginaries. One such group that is mentioned is the Jews. Now this is interesting given the diversity and heterogeneity of those people. So I was wondering how come a specific family structure engender such plurality? Put differently, my epistemological objections to this kind of categorization are two: (i) “the Jews” are seen as a somewhat unified entity thus disregarding the profound differences between their numerous subgroups and, further, between the individuals comprising those groups—so why are there Jews who are communists, others who are anarcho-capitalists, some ultra-religious, others atheist etc. even in those cases where they may share similar spatio-temporal characteristics? and (ii) I believe that the concatenation and interpretation of data in all things human is more demanding than it is in the natural sciences, since the human qua object of study is in itself capable of determining or influencing that very data and the very milieu/circumstances in which it is made manifest; hence, without questioning the factual validity of Todd's correlations, I do have the feeling that these need to be treated as broad/general indicators that may or may not be applicable to specific states of affairs, including those that would otherwise fit into some expected pattern or structure (as you may know, I always extend the same skepticism to economics and politics).

I shall keep this comment short, so that more can be said in additional comments.

Keep up the good work!



**craigjameswilly** Post author

09/07/2013 at 16:51

1) It is indeed an explicitly macro perspective: It's about what resonates with populations as a whole (as expressed in electoral votes and indigenous revolutions), not about specific individuals.

2) Todd on the traditional Jewish family: “Japan would seem completely isolated, by its combination of a stem form and endogamy, if traditional Jewish culture didn't offer a comparable example. The Jewish family associates a weakly-authoritarian and weakly-inegalitarian stem structure with the possibility, often realized in the past, of an in-family marriage. As in the case of Japan, the effective practice of

cosanguinous marriage has been erased by modernity. But we can put Israel in the same endogamous stem category as Japan..." <http://www.ses.ac-versailles.fr/extras/reserve/pages/inceste-consanguinite.html> I have no idea if this "traditional Jewish family" applies as much to Ashkenazi, Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews.

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@Scholars\_Stage

07/07/2013 at 22:09

Great post on Immanuel Todd's family structures and world history! <http://t.co/3TgHl7Hgn0>  
@LexingtonGreen @zenpundit

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Pingback: [linkfest - 07/08/13 | hbd\\* chick](#)



Euronomist (@Euronomist\_Blog)

11/07/2013 at 07:16

Amazing read by @CraigWilly on Emmanuel Todd's L'invention de l'Europe. Probably the best read in politics <http://t.co/T2p4jM4QiS>

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Pingback: [Brussels blog round-up for 6 - 12 July: Forward for the ECB, Romania's retro railways, and is Europe the 'sick man of the world'? | EUROPP](#)

Pingback: [Chicago Boyz » Blog Archive » Emmanuel Todd's Theory of Modernity](#)



T. Greer

15/07/2013 at 00:04

"I would love to see the method applied to Eastern Europe, the Muslim World, Latin America and Asia for example."

Agreed. His strong point seems to be Europe, and it really shows in his work. My impression is that his picture of Asia is grossly over simplified. China is a key example. According to his maps, France is divided between four family types. We are supposed to believe that China's 1 billion people and hundred ethnic groups are all communitarian family types? SE Asia is similarly simplified – I know, for example, that Cambodia and Vietnam are more mixed up than he suggests in *Explanation of Ideology*.

It would be really nice if a scholar was to take his approach and apply it to East and South Asia with the type of detail he applies to Europe. This seems like the next logical step in the research.



**craigjameswilly** Post author

15/07/2013 at 11:07

All valid points. I would add:

1) To the extent Todd has recognized China's diversity, he mentions the stem family in southern-coastal China, which he links to those regions' Sino-German-style export prowess.

2) I would really want to read a global introduction to premodern family systems or really just get a feel for the literature. It's a vast field of study with potentially huge ramifications of which I personally know next to nothing. And there's precious little about it online, even on Wikipedia.



**Thomas Gray**

16/07/2013 at 13:49

Although it would be an interesting read to see how certain family structures and ideological systems came to be in Asia, I believe it would still be less interesting and insightful than Todd's work on Europe.

First of all is the scale of diversity that is unique to Europe and that makes it incomparable to for example China, let alone the fact that you can not compare a country such as France to China (670.000 square km vs 9.700.000 square km). If literacy already had trouble reaching the south of Spain, then imagine what a nightmare achieving literacy in China must've been. (EDIT: Looking up literacy graphs for China it shows that they went from almost 30% male literacy in 1910 to 95% male literacy in 1980, smells institutionalized, so unfortunately incomparable again)

Factoring into this extreme diversity in Europe, and a point that's instrumental to Todd's analysis I believe,

are languages. Not only does every European country have their own official language, they have dozens of other languages. All completely different. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages\\_of\\_Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_Europe)

So you have not only familial structures that are diverse, but also the structures (nations) that are formed by these families are diversified, and all these super-structures speak a different language and thus have a different thought system. And that on a geographical scale the size of China. (Europe is 10.000.000 square km.)

The only binding factor in Europe was Catholicism. Todd illustrates the death of this system and all of its consequences in his epic as greatly summarised by craigjameswilly.

Secondly, the nucleus of our current knowledge base is embedded in this European diversity. This means all our frames of reference are in essence European. So the way the familial structures are classified in Europe might work for European families, but it has to be seen if Asian (or other cultures) can be fitted into the same types. This is also one of the critiques I have on Todd's work, when he speaks of Japanese and other societies is that he tries to fit them into his system too much with disregard to the differences there might be. But I believe that is one of Todd's known characteristics.

The conclusion from this work I find very interesting. The high amount of diversity in Europe sustained a climate in which rapid growth of modernization was accelerated and that diversity itself is the key to evolving this process. It fills me with dread to see the actions of the European Union in trying to abolish this diversity that has given us so much. And just as Todd predicted we are now witnessing the failure of this excessive social experiment.



T. Greer

18/07/2013 at 06:49

I strongly disagree on the China diversity bit. I talked a little bit about China's political, ecological, and linguistic diversity in an earlier post over at my place:

["Geography and Chinese History – The Fractured Land Hypothesis"](#)

T. Greer. The Scholar's Stage. 4 June 2013.

Family structures possibly played a very large role in Chinese history – the sinification of the Chinese south, for example, took a millennia complete. Is this because they were trying to force one family structure on top of that already existing? Why did the Manchu sinicize so much easier than the Mongols – perhaps here too family structure played a part? What areas of China industrialized first? heck, did

Japanese family structure allow them an advantage over the rest of Asia on this count? It is hard to answer questions like these because the data has not been compiled.

The key is not to think of China as the modern unitary state it is now, but as the host of societies it has been through out its history. It has often been divided between rival empires, states, and tribal confederacies. Even when the borders took its current shape in the Qing, China was no more homogenous than European powers like Russia or the Austro-Hungarian empire. A lot of this still carries on today – China is linguistically as diverse as Europe. “Dialects” like Cantonese, Wu, and Mandarin are more different from each other than Spanish and Portuguese, to say nothing of the different language families found in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Yunan.

“The way the familial structures are classified in Europe might work for European families, but it has to be seen if Asian (or other cultures) can be fitted into the same types.”

This strikes me as a strong argument for this research. We need to find out what works and what doesn't.

All fo this applies to SE Asia as well – but even crazier levels of diversity.

P.S. Also of interest – Avner Grief's work suggesting that Chinese lineage-based society created a very different sort of capitalism than the Western nuclear-family based version:

See

“The Clan and the City: Sustaining Cooperation in China and Europe”

[http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2101460](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2101460)

or his review essay:

“Risk, Institutions and Growth: Why England and Not China?”

[http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1801664](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1801664)



**craigjameswilly** Post author

22/07/2013 at 21:00

Thanks for these very interesting links. Admittedly I don't know Chinese history well enough to really

comment. I would however say this:

1) The unity of the Mediterranean World (Rome) – as distinct from Europe – is favored by geography. And indeed, after Rome, Byzantium, the Habsburgs and the Ottomans each partially restored that unity. The question of Europe's division is then also that of the reasons of the fall of Rome, an endless question, but I would posit that the demographic shift away from the Mediterranean towards \*Europe\* (namely the Germanic and Slavic peoples) seems to have been critical. Europe is not geographically predisposed towards unity, unlike the Mediterranean World, which was first split from "Europe" (Christendom) by the Muslim conquests, and then divided between the Ottomans and various European powers.

2) China's geographic unity relative to Europe (not the Mediterranean) is clear through the fact of Han predominance. Maybe it wasn't a historical inevitability, but it seems to have been made more likely by geography. In China, only the Han are large enough to impose unity, so unity is natural (as unity in France, for instance, could only be done by some sort of Celto-Latins, even if there were significant minorities). In contrast Europe has numerous peoples, none of whom were large enough for natural hegemony, and consequently which competed: the Habsburg Empire (doomed by its Spanish-Austrian-Hungarian character?), the French, the Germans, the Russians and the Turks. Admittedly I don't know the emergence of the Han well and the extent to which their rise (or that of a comparable group) was "inevitable" given China's geography.



**craigjameswilly** Post author

22/07/2013 at 21:21

Indeed, I am told that in Todd's latest historical book, *L'origine des systèmes familiaux*, he nuances further and has 15 family categories. Perhaps that would better account for China's diversity.



**@heartiste**

15/07/2013 at 23:21

Emmanuel Todd's Theory of Modernity: A CH reading recommendation of the week.

<http://t.co/Ayt90K3N7c>

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VXXC



20/07/2013 at 00:01

What happens when the family unit itself regardless of type is severely degraded across a group? It certainly didn't bode well for the Irish.

I have in mind a more contemporary problem – shall we say Fishtown by whatever hue of fish?



Bill

20/07/2013 at 23:15

I tried to find L'invention de l'Europe in English, but was only able to find it in French. Do you know if there is an English translation?

Thanks for taking the time to write this review.



**craigjameswilly** Post author

22/07/2013 at 21:15

Unfortunately, while many of Todd's works have been translated, as far as I know two of his core works have not: *L'invention de l'Europe* and *L'illusion économique*. I would highly recommend *The Final Fall*, his analysis predicting the collapse of the Soviet Union, as a great read in itself and good introduction to his data-based method.



Pascal

22/07/2013 at 09:26

Je suis d'accord avec vous, "L'invention de l'Europe" est le livre incontournable d'E.Todd. Je pense qu'il va faire grand bruit si, comme le pense l'auteur, la monnaie européenne s'écroule dans les prochains mois. Les travaux de Todd sont trop sous estimés, mais sa forte médiatisation et les faits historiques vont

bientôt lui donner la place qu'il mérite.

Le monde anglo-saxon n'a pas adopté les thèses de E.Todd, le plus anglo-saxon des intellectuels français. Cela dit, je vous signale le très important livre de deux américains, James Bennett et Michael Lotus qui ont publié en mai 2013, "America 3.0" dans lequel l'hypothèse familiale est centrale, s'appuyant en particulier sur les travaux de Todd, mais aussi ceux de Macfarlane (tous deux collègues de recherche à Cambridge dans les années 70)

Sur la Chine, il est vrai que Todd est généraliste dans ses premiers livres, mais depuis il est intarissable. "The explanation of ideology" est maintenant un vieux livre. Il a publié en 1992 dans la Revue Diogène, une étude sur la famille communautaire dans l'Ancien monde en compagnie du Linguiste Laurent Sagard, spécialiste du monde chinois. Il a par ailleurs publié en 2011, "L'origine des systèmes familiaux, Tome 1: l'Ancien Monde" où il remanie sa classification des familles (15 types) et où il donne notamment des cartes actualisées du monde chinois. Il va bientôt publier le Tome 2 sur l'Afrique et l'Océanie.

Je vous signale enfin mon blog en lien direct, mes deux études sur l'hypothèse familiale à l'Institut Coppet (<http://www.institutcoppet.org>), l'une sur Alexis de Tocqueville et Frédéric Le Play, l'autre sur l'individualisme méthodologique et l'influence du groupe familial sur la motivation des acteurs.

Bien cordialement

Pascal



**craigjameswilly** Post author

22/07/2013 at 20:53

Bonjour Pascal,

En effet je pense que Todd a un public original ! D'ailleurs c'est souvent des gens qu'il n'apprécie pas : Front national en France et, dans le monde anglophone, des "libertariens" (America 3.0) et des "réacs" ("biodiversité humaine").

Merci beaucoup d'avoir signalé votre blogue qui a l'air très intéressant. Je vais jeter un coup d'oeil sur vos travaux ! D'ailleurs je crois que je vais inclure la carte du vote communiste 1975 dans mon billet ;-) Merci.

J'ajoute, qu'en fait, le rejet de Todd par les Anglo-Américains, notamment au moment de la Guerre d'Irak et *Après l'empire*, est plutôt cruel. Todd est un Français libéral-égalitaire, mais il apprécie le monde anglo-américain, libéral, démocrate-constitutionnel, et plutôt pacifique. Enfin, avant qu'il ne soit devenu complètement fou commençant à peu près avec les années Reagan.. Mais je pense que les autres grands



représentant de l'école anglophile de France – Tocqueville et Aron par exemple – auraient eux aussi rejeter cette Anglo-Amérique corrompue.

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