

Readers may redistribute this article to other individuals for noncommercial use, provided that the text and this note remain intact. This article may not be reprinted or redistributed for commercial use without prior written permission from the author. If you have any questions about permissions, please contact Klaus Nellen at IWM, Spittelauer Laende 3, A – 1090 Vienna, Fax +(431) 31358-30, e-mail <nellen@iwm.at>.

Preferred Citation: Dawson, Stephen, Jyoti Mistry, Thomas Schramme, and Michael Thurman. *Introduction*. In: *Extraordinary Times*, IWM Junior Visiting Fellows Conferences, Vol. 11: Vienna 2001



Introduction

Stephen Dawson, Jyoti Mistry,
Thomas Schramme, and Michael Thurman

The title ‘Extraordinary Times’ is not meant simply to impress upon the reader the incomparability of our contemporary historical moment. After all, few (if any) generations have considered its own time to lack some kind of extraordinary frisson or another. Rather, our title reflects on the extraordinary as a process, as a means of seeing the world through the lenses of various disciplines. One pleasant discovery made was that our varied academic backgrounds did not inhibit discussion but rather made for challenging scholarship and stimulating debate. Rather than retreating into the comfortable confines of our individual academic specialties, we turned those specialties into tools that disciplined our debates. A coming together of experiences, a blending of perceptions, and sharing ideas turns the ordinary into the extraordinary. This collection of papers is a testimony to an inter-disciplinary process. Each paper in this collection can be located on a continuum of history, political science and philosophical thought collating various subject positions, defined not simply by its geographic locations but rooted in an inquiry of the structural or institutional means and mechanisms which result in the emergence of the different, the birth of the new.

„Wir müssen nichts so machen wie wir’s kennen nur weil wir’s kennen wie wir’s kennen. Wir können das vermeiden, indem wir uns anders entscheiden.“ (Die Sterne) Stimmt. Aber auch bloß eine adrett verpackte Binsenweisheit. Sicher sind

unsere Entscheidungen nicht durch unsere Vergangenheit – wie wir's kennen – vollständig determiniert. Wir können uns anders entscheiden, unsere Geschichte transformieren. Nur, welche Kriterien sollen uns dabei leiten? Wie trifft man die richtige Entscheidung? Oft stellt sich hinterher heraus, dass sie falsch war. Denn dass es gut war, wie es war, das weiß man hinterher. Zudem sind unsere Möglichkeiten, durch bewusste Entscheidungen Veränderungen zu lenken, häufig nur eingeschränkt vorhanden. Veränderungen können Eigenlogiken entwickeln, systemische Zwänge produzieren. Insofern sind Transformationen immer problematisch, seien sie nun selbstbestimmt herbei – und durchgeführt oder „von außen“ gesteuert. Wie sie verlaufen, ist immer auch eine Frage der Interessen, Werte, Sichtweisen der Akteure. Konflikte sind dabei vorprogrammiert. Auf sehr verschiedene Weisen und an unterschiedlichen Gegenständen werden in den folgenden Artikeln Transformationen sowie ihre Grundlagen und Schwierigkeiten thematisiert.

The initial three papers focus on the state's relationship with its own people and with the world outside its borders. States are unique social institutions because they interact with both domestic and international players. The interests of these two players can often be contradictory thus putting the state in a difficult position as arbiter.

The title of Jaroslav Kiliás' contribution poses the question: "Is the Nation Really a Horizontal Community of Direct Access?" Kiliás provides an answer by considering Eric Hobsbawm's famous line that nations are "imagined communities." He argues that social institutions are critical for creating and maintaining national identity and that Hobsbawm, Charles Taylor, and other "constructivists," focus too heavily on individual agency while neglecting the more important role social institutions play.

Adrián Tokár's, "Something Happened: Sovereignty and European Integration" also looks at social institutions by considering state sovereignty in the European Union. He argues that sovereignty is being irrevocably limited because "pooled" sovereignty is the cost of remaining in the Union. The member states are not likely to leave for a number of reasons, so limited sovereignty will continue into the foreseeable future.

Michael Thurman considers the origins of nations in "The Nature of Nations: the Dutch Challenge to Modernization Accounts of National Identity." He argues that contrary to accepted wisdom, nations are not the by-product of state-building and industrialization. Using the case of the Netherlands, he shows that national identity emerges independently from these other factors while suggesting another approach to understanding the origins of nations.

From here we move to two papers focused on the American experience of state-building. Jeremy Bailey's contribution focuses on Thomas Jefferson's theory of executive power. Bailey organizes his discussion around an interesting paradox regarding presidential power. The president as a popularly elected leader is charged with executing the majority will. In order that he carry this out, he requires a certain amount of "energy," or power. The Executive claims power by virtue of his unique position as a nationally elected leader. Executive power, however, is carefully limited in two principal ways. First, presidential power is delimited by means of the Constitution (in the familiar scheme of checks and balances), and, second, the rights of the people are enshrined in declarations (such as the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights) so that the Executive does not encroach upon popular liberty. In summation, the Executive requires sufficient energy in order to carry out his responsibilities as a nation-wide, popularly elected leader. However, in order that the president not abuse his powers, the Executive is bound by the Constitution as well as by various declarations. And now we come to the paradox: one aspect of presidential responsibility requires that the Executive meet the necessities that interrupt everyday life. How is the Executive to address extraordinary situations while not stepping outside of the Constitution or violating the rights of the people? Jefferson argues that the Constitution is silent with respect to executive prerogative, and hence the discretionary powers required by the Executive are not grounded in the Constitution. Furthermore, the necessary yet occasional practice of executive prerogative takes place in a sphere outside the law. Jefferson argues that executive prerogative should be exposed to popular judgment rather than swaddled in constitutional rhetoric. However, while the Executive assumes discretionary authority outside the law in extraordinary situations, the Executive is nevertheless bound by popular opinion as well as by the various declarations of rights that, if not providing legal restraints against Executive prerogative, supply a measure by which the Executive's actions can be judged.

Jefferson's reliance on the people sounds a common theme of republican politics: self-government is necessarily dependent upon the virtue of the people. Stephen Dawson's contribution takes up this republican axiom, and asks why, if virtue is considered necessary for republican government, is there no provision whatsoever for it in the US Constitution. He notes in fact that according to some contemporary interpretations, the Constitution pointedly *excludes* all official reference to virtue and morals. In order to untangle the paradox of the Constitution's silence in the face of the Founders' generous praise of public virtue, Dawson focuses on the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. He argues that this clause was not

originally meant to exclude religion from the public square, but to exclude the Federal government from interfering in areas left to the discretion of the individual states. Far from being an enshrinement of the principle of religious neutrality, the Establishment Clause was one of the many guarantees of states' rights built into the Constitution. In order to explain why the Establishment Clause evolved from a guarantee of states' rights to a mechanism used against the states, Dawson sketches the history of the Fourteenth Amendment with its concomitant doctrine of Incorporation. He argues that incorporation is a natural outcome of the reconstructed federalism wrought by Abraham Lincoln, who in a series of public speeches put forth the basis for federalism minus the doctrine of states' rights. There is much debate over Lincoln's motives here: some argue that he was morally repulsed by the institution of slavery and, since many Southern politicians had bound the cause of slavery to the doctrine of states' rights, he was forced to dispense with states' rights in order to restore the Union on a foundation free from the moral stain of slavery. Other scholars argue that Lincoln was not engaged in the conservative act of preserving the Union (whatever his personal feelings regarding slavery), but rather was creating a modern unitary state—one marked by centralization, consolidation, and nationalism—on the ruins of a federative polity. Under the terms of this second interpretation, Lincoln's actions are one of a piece with similar movements in Europe undertaken by the French revolutionaries, Bismarck, and Lenin. Dawson does not enter into this argument, but concludes that regardless of Lincoln's motives, his actions voided the original provisions put in place by the Founders for the promotion of virtue and have abetted in no small part the rise and putative establishment of a secular liberal ideology over the past fifty years or so.

The extraordinary changes in Russia since the fall of Communism and dissolution of the Soviet Union are well known. In the space of a few years, Russia went from facing off the might of the American military to being besieged by myriad foreign (and particularly American) organizations seeking to help restructure the Russian economy and society. The influx of these organizations brings to mind Irving Kristol's quip that American Jews are threatened less by the hatred of anti-Semitism than by the affections of Gentiles who desire marriage. The vaunted effects of economic shock-therapy, for example, were viewed by many Russians as all shock and no therapy. In her contribution, Inna Naletova discusses the clash between the Russian Orthodox Church and the crush of Protestant missionary organizations that flooded into Russia during the early 1990s. Naletova argues that attempts to include "religion" as a factor in Russian policy debates (both by outside organizations as well as by Russians themselves) fail in part because religion as a category of analy-

sis is improperly applied in the Russian context. That is, because both the Russian Orthodox Church and Protestant missionary organizations are Christian, conflicts between the two must necessarily spring from non-religious causes, such as the conflict between tradition and modernity or that between East and West. Drawing on such disparate sources as Eric Voegelin, Harold Bloom, and Nikolay Berdyaev, Naletova argues persuasively that conflicts between the Russian Orthodox Church and Protestant missionary organizations can be much better understood as an intra-religious conflict between orthodoxy and Gnosticism.

Gnosticism is an ancient worldview (one predating Christianity, in fact) that can be reduced to a single principle: salvation is found through knowledge, or Gnosis. Consequently, Gnosis dictates that the present world may (and sometimes must) be destroyed in order to usher in a new, better age. While Gnosticism can be found in many permutations, the source for modern Gnosticism is often attributed to the explosion of millennial sects in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Europe. While these millennial and apocalyptic groups varied widely in their particular doctrines, nearly all of them were founded or coalesced around a prophetic, charismatic leader who possessed knowledge of the end-time, or of the future more generally. Such knowledge could be gained by means of revelation (e.g., by dream or trance), by study of Holy Scripture, by study of secular history, or by some esoteric method. Gnostic movements tend to arise in times of social unrest and ferment and, once established, tend to foment unrest and disorder with calls for deep and widespread social transformation, often claiming warrant for such changes on the basis of Christ's imminent return and/or the expected establishment of heaven on earth. (One is here reminded of Freud's wry remark, when told that the Russian Revolution would result in a period of chaos followed by an earthly paradise, "I half believe it.") Naletova notes Berdyaev's argument that Russian Communism arose in the inability of the Orthodox Church to address adequately the spiritual yearnings of the Russian people, who then were swept up in the revolutionary Gnostic movement known as Marxism. She argues that the Russian Revolution brought to power a particular group of people who were clearly religious in their temperament and the zeal of their faith, yet were decidedly non-Orthodox. The Bolsheviks, in other words, were a particularly virulent kind of evangelical Gnosticism. But Naletova cautions against locating Gnosticism only within the Orthodox Church. Utilizing the work of Voegelin and Bloom, she argues that post-Reformation Western Christianity (and, by extension, Western civilization generally) is driven by the orthodox-Gnostic divide. Some commentators, in fact, call Gnosticism the modern heresy par excellence. Protestantism, no less than the Orthodox Church, struggles with Gnos-

ticism. (In fact, as Peter L. Berger has argued, Protestantism's vaunted openness to the spirit of modernity has left it much more susceptible to the charms of Gnosticism.) Naletova concludes with the observation that the present conflict between the Russian Orthodox Church and Protestant missionary organizations is particularly acute because of the Gnostic tendencies that marble both sides—an argument that policy makers, ignoring the role of religion properly understood in Russian society, ignore at their own peril.

South Africa since 1994, with its first democratic elections, has been the focus of international attention. The liberation of its people from apartheid some thirty years later than any other country on the African continent has resulted in ambiguous expectations. It seems fitting that a place steeped in a legacy of oppression and discrimination would try to correct the injustices in its society first before proceeding with the task of rebuilding the spirit of its fragmented society through restitutive politics. The innovations of the new South African constitution may be “over the top” to some, as a survey in *The Economist* (February 24th - March 2nd 2001) described it, but its anti-discrimination law expresses a moral will and commitment that such heinous legislation as apartheid will never plague South African society again. The law forbids discrimination on the grounds of: “race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.” The injustices and inequalities, not just between blacks and whites but the divisions perpetuated by apartheid in the society, is reflected by the over [sic] compensation of the anti-discriminatory law. Seven years after its transformation to democracy, the more important and challenging question would be to reflect on how this society is dealing with this shift in discourse. Democracy replaces the old epistemic foundations of apartheid, introducing the language of rights and equality, truth and justice where previously this was absent (the former), while the latter was propagated in the service of the white minority hegemony.

The success of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), championed by Nelson Mandela and helmed by his prophet Archbishop Desmond Tutu, attempted to reconcile the racial divide and to facilitate the nation-building program. The significance of recovering a lost history of the black majority by the work of the TRC was an instrumental mechanism in providing catharsis for healing the nation. In the words of Desmond Tutu “By telling their stories both victims and perpetrators gave meaning to the multi-layered experiences of the South African story [providing] a perspective of the truth about the past.” (TRC Final Report 1998:VI)

Ernest Renan has remarked in his article “*What is a Nation?*” that “suffering in common unifies ... and to have common glories in the past and to have common will in the present are essential conditions to being a people.” This common desire to see South Africa prosper, resisting the expectation that it too will turn into “another African basket case” (*The Economist*, February 24th - March 2nd 2001) fuels its people towards building a new nation. The complexity of negotiating the values and problems inherited from apartheid while infusing new faith in democracy is reflected in the stories and experiences collated by Veronika Wittmann. Her field research in South Africa led her to the vine region in the Cape. Her analysis and insight addresses the over-determined oppression of Colored women, not just on the basis of gender but racial hierarchies still prevalent as well in South Africa. Her observations grapple with reconciling the political rhetoric of “equality” based on the new constitution with the *realpolitik* of race and gender relations as they affect the lives of these women. The Colored women working on the wine estates represent the most economically impoverished migrant communities, their positions further over-determined by racial patriarchy (white farmers and their Colored husbands) and lack of representation. Wittmann’s description does not simply present the women as “victims” of apartheid legacy, but discloses the skewed social and cultural circumstances reproducing the cycle of their impoverishment. As she thoughtfully reflects, women paid in alcohol (wine) rather than monetary remuneration not only become alcoholics but are confined by a economic cycle of dependency; dependent on the farmers seasonally and on their husbands throughout the year. Furthermore, she points out that these women are alienated on the farms with no access to urban resources, health care nor legal aid, thus subjecting them often to abuse and violence.

To counter these narratives of struggle and desperation, Wittmann carefully balances her research and findings with illustrations of successful interventions by grassroots organizations and political activism. She shows how once Colored women with no resources for representation during apartheid, now have non-governmental organizations, trade unions and women’s support groups at their disposal. The women’s stories collected by Wittmann are invaluable, for they provide (as the TRC did) an occasion for those once silenced by apartheid to reveal their experiences, to tell their stories, and, in so doing, to be heard for the first time.

While Wittmann’s research deals with the “lived experiences” of one of the most disenfranchised communities in South Africa, Jyoti Mistry’s analysis uncovers the inconsistencies of political agendas and policy in this emerging democracy. Using culture as a starting point, she begins by suggesting that identity is fluid, placed

most noticeably on the margins—particularly for minorities and the oppressed—and existing in reaction to a center. This idea is developed fully by Homi K. Bhabha, whom Mistry quotes to show how cultures and identities are formed. Positioning culture and identity in a political context enables Mistry to focus on the political conditions in post-apartheid South Africa. An examination of the conditions of cultural production addresses the African National Congress (ANC) government objectives in reconciling the problems inherited from apartheid with the aspirations to rebuild the nation, first through the “Rainbow Nation” campaign under Nelson Mandela and later the propagation of the “African Renaissance” project by Thabo Mbeki. Mistry discusses the strengths of each of these government initiatives, but goes on to caution that Mbeki’s vision and leadership is dogged with contradictions, confusing not only to outside observers but to the South African population as well. Implicit in this work is the recognition that the “African Renaissance” project is an attempt by an ambitious leader to save Africa from itself. The mainstream press have dubbed South Africa “Africa’s Last Hope.” Pessimists are likely to quote figures on the AIDS epidemic, the growing concern with unemployment, and the escalating incidences of violence. On the other hand, its history of apartheid (itself resolved through a negotiated settlement rather than the anticipated bloody revolution), the remarkable Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the slow economic improvements since its democracy leads one to be hopeful. Even skeptics are likely to acknowledge that under the circumstances—that is, with the problems inherited from apartheid, the radical socio-political transformation, and the enthusiasm of its population—conditions are better than during apartheid. It seems that one is swayed to share some optimism expressed in these research initiatives expressed here on South Africa.

Urte Helduser zeigt in ihrer Arbeit, wie sich in literarischen Werken ein Modell des „Weiblichen“ – eine bestimmte Geschlechterrolle – herausbildet. Ihr Beispiel ist dabei die Pathologisierung weiblicher Unfruchtbarkeit. Eine scheinbar objektive, medizinische Kategorie wird durch kulturelle und wissenschaftliche Diskurse zu einem Bild der Dekadenz, der Unnatürlichkeit transformiert. Im Verlauf ihrer Untersuchung wird auch ein grundlegender Konflikt jeder Theorie oder auch schon Interpretation deutlich. In einem bestimmten Sinne sind nämlich alle theoretischen Aussagen über die Welt Konstruktionen. Wir sind als interpretierende Wesen eben immer schon Teil des zu interpretierenden Objekts Welt. Wir tragen dabei unsere Vorstellungen, Perspektiven, ja möglicherweise Werte an sie heran. Dabei ergeben sich Konfliktpotentiale zwischen verschiedenen Sichtweisen. Problematisch wird diese Situation dann, wenn eine bestimmte Perspektive „objektiviert“ wird, als all-

gemeingütig ausgegeben wird. Das heißt nicht, dass Objektivität niemals möglich ist. Im genannten Fall der weiblichen Unfruchtbarkeit kann Urte Helduser allerdings überzeugend aufzeigen, wie ein solcher Perspektivenimperialismus funktioniert, indem nämlich ein zentraler Bereich der Selbstbestimmung von außen durch kulturelle Bilder kolonialisiert wird.

Ulrich Brinkmann beschäftigt sich mit den betrieblichen Veränderungen der Nachwendezeit in Ostdeutschland. In seiner Untersuchung wird deutlich, wie unterschiedliche Sichtweisen nicht nur problematisch werden, sondern sogar handfeste Konflikte hervorbringen können. Gerade Zeiten der Veränderung bringen ja häufig Unsicherheit darüber mit sich, was die richtige Sichtweise ist. Solange wir so handeln, wie wir's kennen, beschäftigt uns dieses Problem weniger. Die genannten betrieblichen Umstrukturierungen und die damit einhergehenden Massenentlassungen aber lassen ein solches Vergessen nicht zu. Ulrich Brinkmann unterscheidet verschiedene Konfliktformen betrieblicher Akteure, die außerdem noch in unterschiedlichen Rollen – z.B. als Betriebsrat, Manager Familienmitglied, Freund – auftreten und damit Konflikte mit sich selbst austragen mussten, wenn sie mehrere Rollen innehatten. Die Tatsache, dass bestimmte gesellschaftliche Rollen dazu benötigen, bestimmte Perspektiven einzunehmen, zeigt einmal mehr, wie illusorisch die Selbstbestimmung häufig ist.

Karel Novotný setzt sich mit einer scheinbar schwer vermittelbaren Doppeldeutigkeit im Werk des tschechischen Philosophen Jan Patočka auseinander. Auf der einen Seite kritisierte dieser den Eurozentrismus in Teilen der philosophischen Diskussion, auf der anderen Seite formulierte er anscheinend selbst eurozentristische Thesen, die in dem Satz gipfelten: „Die Geschichte ist die Geschichte Europas, es gibt keine andere Geschichte.“ Karel Novotný versucht diese gegenläufigen Tendenzen zusammen zu denken und zeigt dabei auf, wie Perspektivität und scheinbare Aperspektivität (Objektivität) in Konflikt liegen können. *Die* Geschichte als eine Geschichte zu denken erweist sich als problematisch. Allerdings kann man die Geschichte als einen „Ort“ der Auseinandersetzung verschiedener Kulturen, Lebensweisen, Ideale begreifen. Versteht man diese Sichtweise als eine spezifisch europäische (nicht notwendigerweise im geographischen Sinn, sondern im Sinne einer Denkart), dann wird die These Patockas verständlicher, wenn auch nicht unbedingt überzeugender. Formulierte er hier ein generelles Merkmal historischer Transformationen und wenn ja, setzt er sich damit nicht auch dem Vorwurf aus, partikuläre Perspektiven einzuebnen?

Thomas Schramme thematisiert anhand der Frage nach der moralischen Bewertung sogenannter humanitärer Interventionen ein weiteres Problem gegenwärtiger

Transformationsprozesse. Die Welt wird kleiner, könnte man sagen. Internationale Abhängigkeiten verstärken sich; und damit auch die Verantwortlichkeiten. Zur Zeit des kalten Krieges hätte die Nato wohl keinen militärischen Eingriff in das Hoheitsgebiet eines fremden Staates gewagt. Heute wird der Schutz der Menschenrechte von vielen über das Souveränitätsrecht der Staaten gesetzt. Mit einem militärischen Eingriff zur *Verteidigung* der Menschenrechte einiger gehen aber möglicherweise *Verletzungen* der Menschenrechte anderer einher. Insofern konfrontiert uns eine humanitäre Intervention mit einem moralischen Dilemma. Die normative Bewertung solcher Einsätze und damit die Frage, ob das Dilemma auflösbar erscheint, ist letztlich geprägt von unterschiedlichen grundlegenden Perspektiven, welche Werte man am höchsten einschätzt. Insofern ist selbst die eigentlich begrüßenswerte Transformation, die zu einer Aufwertung der Menschenrechte führte, problematisch.

It is altogether fitting that a collection of essays organized around the theme of extraordinary times should close with a meditation on wonder. In the *Theaetetus*, Plato declares that philosophy begins in wonder. In this dialogue, the young Theaetetus is astonished by a mathematical puzzle posed by Socrates. David Bollert proceeds to give other examples of wonder in Plato's corpus as well: Socrates recounts in the *Symposium* the astonishment of Diotima in the presence of the beautiful, and Glaucon's retelling of the myth of Gyges in Book II of the *Republic*. Here, a shepherd goes down into the earth and views many wondrous things, including a hollow bronze horse containing inside a super-human corpse. Bollert observes that man's capacity for wonder is well-established in the Platonic dialogues, and then asks if man can be object of wonder as well. After reviewing various examples culled from a number of different dialogues, Bollert concludes that man is not merely a being who is astonished; he is a worthy object of wonder as well. This is not, however, to suggest that the proper focus of philosophy is anything other than the eternal. Rather, wonder serves as a signal of eternity that serves to direct the attention of man toward contemplation of that which is universal, unchanging, and eternal. In times of extraordinary change (perhaps we should say *especially* in times of extraordinary change), we would be well-served by Plato's dictum to temper astonishment with contemplation of the permanent things.

A Note on Editing

In assembling the papers for this volume, the editors have been content to edit lightly for basic sense, to eliminate obvious typographical errors or clear infelicity of syntax, and to allow idiosyncrasy of expression (and, by extension, the individual voices of the authors) to prevail over consistency of style across the entire collection. The editors would like to thank our colleagues for the attention they gave to preparing their papers for publication and the promptness with which they submitted them. Three of the editors (Dawson, Schramme, and Thurman) would like to single out Jyoti Mistry for her work in preparing this volume for publication. As fate would have it, Jyoti is the one member of the editorial team who remained in Vienna after the other members returned to their home countries. The burden of correspondence and shepherding the volume through its final stages fell exclusively on her shoulders. Thank you, Jyoti!