Thinking against the Temptations of Simplicity

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Abstract

This essay considers the weaknesses of contemporary intellectual efforts to come to terms with the felt sense of chaos that increasingly marks the current context. It argues that there are two dimensions that have to be considered: first, the prevalent de-historicization of events, and second, the simplification of the analytic field. Specifically, it addresses how we treat economics, the organization of the political field, and the nature of political judgment. Against these, it proposes more complex and contextual ways of considering these issues, and argues that we must take culture more seriously, especially in the face of the increasingly affective nature of political contestations.

Keywords: chaos, history, economics, political multiplicity, culture, affect

Introduction

> Never consent to be completely comfortable with your own
> certainties. Never imagine that one can change them like arbitrary
> axioms.   –Michel Foucault

Let me start with the obvious. If it is banal to say that the world is in
trouble, it is equally banal to say that the world has been in trouble
before, at many times and in many places. And if we seem to be
confronting a growing number of apocalyptic scenarios, imagining
extraordinarily destructive forces, such visions have haunted humankind
since its beginnings. Yet something does feel different about the present
moment, although again, I do not claim that it is absolutely unique.

Contemporary politics comprises an almost impossible, chaotic,
situation. If culture—both the politics of culture and the culture of
politics—aims to allow us to navigate and even manage the chaos,
something seems amiss. Partly this involves the difficulty of locating
the many threats and their relations in time and space: starting with
particular nation-states, one is seamlessly pulled to generalize the
conditions into something approaching a global crisis. If one starts with
a transnational or global crisis, one nevertheless finds oneself having to
attend to the specific conditions of nation-states, to how they actually
appear out of different histories and geopolitical relations. We seem to be
in need of some logic—analogical, metaphorical, homological, allegorical,
universal,—that ties together the places and spaces of our simultaneously
specific and shared realities. I would argue for a relational or contextual
logic, which cannot be understood in either empiricist terms—the local
and the transnational—or in formalist terms—the singular and the
universal, but demands that we rethink the ways we think the relations
between limits and possibilities. If my location—in the U.S. and in the
U.S. academy—sets limits on where I start, on what I see, hear and
know, it does not inscribe them in stone for all time. On the contrary,
it also opens my experiences and discourses onto other horizons, other
possibilities and other realities. Thus, I admit and even embrace the fact
that I speak from a position of privilege—not a privilege defined by who
I am (a complicated question to be sure) and a certain parochialism, but

the privilege that comes from decades of political struggle, research and thinking—with others, across many places and spaces, that have defined my life as a political intellectual. All I can do is offer a dissident voice from "the north," drawing upon my analyses of the trajectory of political culture in the U.S., without assuming they are necessarily generalizable, to offer arguments that are hopefully not too abstract or pretentious.[1]

Another dimension of the contemporary chaos that saturates the political field is a profound sense of desperation and even depression, the result of the recognition that, despite heroic efforts and struggles, and despite significant victories, the results have been quite limited, and the victories often quickly undermined. Progressive forces—for convenience, I will use the "left"—a common, albeit disputed term in many places, including the U.S.—have had limited success in changing the political culture, mobilizing people and reshaping governance, constructing more humane and sustainable futures, finding and enacting viable solutions to even the most egregious problems, to take control of the tides of history. Perhaps we need to re-evaluate our assumptions about the relation between self-conscious, activist vanguard and the broader demands of democracy.

But this despair is only one manifestation of the broader condition in which problems—whether of a particular nation-state or the world—are circumscribed by and expressed in the growing identification of politics and passion, a sense that politics is not only inaugurated but also defined by a "hyperinflation" of emotion and enacted by disruptive insurgencies. Whether fear, resentment, grievance, panic or rage, people think we are living in a state of emergency, fighting the ultimate battle between good and evil, fighting for the soul of the nation (and the continued existence of civilization). I do not question the "validity" of such feelings, or the right, even the need, to scream against the oppression and pain that one feels—individually and collectively—in the immediate present, over a lifetime, and across histories. But I do wonder whether such passions and their insurgent expressions lead to effective political strategies. I am not suggesting that we put aside the urgencies of our passions in favor of some abstract notion of reason or objectivity. I am suggesting we displace them enough to embrace the need for rigorous, critical thinking

and contentious conversations.

Such thinking, however, has become difficult because we are inundated in a tripled chaos: first, the chaos resulting from the collapse of the "center," and the failure of existing state institutions and civil society to address the various threats and needs of contemporary societies; second, the chaos resulting from the failure of civil society groups and progressive movements to create an alternative unity-in-difference and to offer popular alternative futures that can win the consent of people who may not have committed to any single way forward; and third, the chaos of our own making—an endlessly proliferating and misplaced democracy of opinion, an overwhelming anarchy of commentary and diagnosis, full of disagreements and contradictions, ignorant redundancies, pretentious punditries, bloated oversimplifications, theoretical pontifications, unreflective empiricisms, trivial overspecializations, common sense assumptions, and occasionally, brilliant insights. In this chaos of information, interpretations, explanations and claims, it is hard to find the time to think about everything thrown at us, especially since we lack a shared, comparative calculus that might allow us to make judgments. We seem to have lost the ability to construct or enter into productive, impassioned and reasoned conversations, especially at national and trans-national levels (since I am inclined to believe that they are taking place locally, in more intimate groups). Such time, such a calculus, and such conversations might enable us to adjudicate competing claims, manage the chaos, create flexible and heterogeneous stories and alliances, and develop new and effective strategies.

The most common and influential accounts of our current failed situation—failures to confront crises of environmental destruction, capitalism gone mad, epistemic relativism, uncontrollable technologies, etc.—often point to the popularity of "strong-arm" and authoritarian leaders or political parties, the rise of insidious, transnational forces of demagoguery, nationalist populism, illiberalism, and perhaps most frighteningly, ethnic and racist supremacisms and violence (often directed, as well, in gender and sexual terms), and the growing expansion of power of an unbridled corporate capitalism. While all these are no doubt true, the stories being told about them often simply

repeat narratives that have been told for many decades: it is all the same old same old—it is all about capitalism's unbridled greed, or the continuation of forms of social injustice and hatred, revealing the racist-patriarchal soul of "Western" modernities, if not the inherent flaws of human nature, or an unbridled faith in science, or the contradictions of the European Enlightenment. Fortunately, there is a new "actor" on the scene whom we can blame for everything, and who allows us to decorate these old stories in new clothes: it is the media—in this case, the rise of the so-called social media (as if most media were not social)—that is the culprit, responsible for both neoliberalism, renewed racism, the reduction of politics to passion, etc.

That is to say, too many responses to the chaos simply re-affirm people's beliefs and taken-for-granted certainties—whether moral, political or intellectual—and their inherited tactics; they tell the same old stories, the ones they have been telling themselves over and over, so that they can rest assured they know what is going on, know who the enemy is, know whom to blame. These common stories offer a choice between seeing history as a matter of either inevitability or accident. But history is funny that way, because neither option is salient. Nothing in history is inevitable; it is never so predictable, never guaranteed. And while accidents do happen (one of the sources of its unpredictability), the ground has always to be prepared for those accidents to serve as the expression of certain discontents, to actually impact society in particular ways, and to redirect the vectors of change.

What makes this situation all the more frustrating, contributing to the chaos as it were, is that such re-affirmations of what we "know" we know are often built on the erasure of fifty years of arguments and conversations around the very questions that are at the heart of contemporary political struggles—history, capitalism, knowledge, identity and difference. While many people assert that the existence of so many popular struggles and insurgencies is the ground of hope, I offer the possibilities of intellectual work as an alternative, and more promising, ground for optimism; not the sort of intellectual work that sees its function as political cheerleading and denunciation, but intellectual work that starts by deconstructing our certainties in order to

construct better stories, however provisional and incomplete, however much they will need to adapt and respond to other positions, other actualities, other struggles. That is, we need stories that aim to grasp the specificity, the contingency, and the complexity of what's going on, even as they reach beyond themselves to new planetary discourses, stories that can only be created through agonistic conversations. In order to push this project forward, I want to say some unpopular things, some risky things, to suggest, in both political and intellectual terms, that we have too often retreated into simplicity and certainty rather than thinking through the multiplicities and contradictions.

History 101

The point of thinking historically is not to be paralyzed by or even indentured to the past but to engage it, to question it, to see what lessons it has to offer us. This can be accomplished not only by posing questions to the past from the present (hermeneutics) but also by seeing what questions the past poses to the present. There are consequences to the different ways we use and abuse history. After all, there are various ways of constructing the stories of history, depending on how you answer two questions. First, what is the form of history? Is it the endless repetition (with minor variations) of the same structures and forces or the emergence of radically new structures and forces, a linear and never-ending tale of progress (or regress) or an apocalyptic story of destruction or salvation? Second, how is the form of history to be narrated? Is it to be the inevitable playing out of relations and structures that are necessarily what they are, guaranteed and largely fixed in place, or the illusion of relations created as the mask of power? The most common stories make history into the expression of essential tendencies or the inevitable repetition of the past: it's all about capitalism, or racism or patriarchy, etc. This does not leave much room for optimism or strategy, or even for thinking.

We need to find different—better—ways of constructing history by thinking relationally. To the first question, I would propose seeing history as a fluid, nonlinear assemblage of multiple forces and structures

in various relations. To the second, I suggest that history is the ongoing, contingent struggle—carried on by all sorts of human and non-human agents—to make, unmake and remake relations and structures, which are real (insofar as they have real effects beyond the simple conspiracies of power) but never guaranteed, i.e., they did not and do not have to be what they are. That is, the "nonlinear assemblage" of multiplicities is always being managed—configured—through struggles at various sites, across various forces. History becomes the continuous production of specific contexts, related across time and space, expressing the continually changing balance in the field of forces, the balance between continuity and emergence.

The crucial question of critical reflection then is: what's old, what's new, and how is the old made new? We must take great care to construct the histories of the present, to see what has emerged, what has remained, and what has changed. In this model of thinking, what is important is not any single or singular event or force, but the confluence, the condensation, the articulation together, of multiple—residual, dominant and emergent—forces, struggles and crises, and perhaps, in the contemporary world, the effort to construct an "organic" crisis that challenges previous forms of consensus, settlements and even common sense, as well as displacing many taken for granted assumptions, theoretical accounts and received political strategies.[2] In fact, I have argued elsewhere that our contemporary chaos results in part from a struggle between two distinct constructions of an organic crisis: on the one hand, a struggle over what it means to be "modern" and the possibility of other settlements, other configurations of (euro-) modernity, and on the other hand, a struggle against—to escape—modernity itself—in imaginations of non-, pre-, and post-modern forms of individuality and sociality.[3]

However, it is easier to fall back into simplifications that ignore history, fetishize it or dismiss it: despite the repetition of claims and diagnoses, one claims that it was not actually true then, but it is true now. Or one claims that, despite the apparent differences, really, there is nothing—or little of any significance—that is new. Or one claims that despite the apparent similarities, really, there is little connection because

what is happening is essentially new, depending on new forces, new powers, new relations, etc.

We forget that the battle between "the country and the city," between rural and urban sensibilities and demands, has a centuries-long history. We forget that antagonisms between class and race have often been used as a political wedge. We forget that the tense equilibrium between nationalism and immigration has often been a tinderbox. But that does not mean that they simply repeat themselves, for they are themselves reconstituted relationally and deployed in different ways in the context of unique historical struggles. Let me take a more specific example: in the context of the contemporary U.S.—and perhaps many other places, I would suggest one look back, at least as a first stop, at the 1960s, to locate the seeds of much of contemporary politics and the roots of the contemporary chaos.

Let me offer some simple examples. We easily forget or ignore that every Republican president since Nixon has been called a fascist, their administration marked by scandals (remember that Reagan was called "the Teflon president"), has repeatedly and systematically lied (even going so far as to create a phony drug bust, create a disinformation campaign against John Kerry, and start a war based on doctored evidence), has attacked the media, science and intellectuals (Nixon's vice-president constantly harangued the cultural elite as the "nattering nabobs of negativism"), and has presented himself as the representative of "the people." The question is not whether these previous Republican presidents were mistakenly identified as fascists, nor if we are witnessing a deteriorating condition of presidential politics (the growth of "the imperial presidency"). My point is that such judgments reproduce a series of serious tactical mistakes: focusing on the singular figure of the president rather than the broader tides of change, creating an affective politics of panic rather than intellectually-based strategic analyses.

We forget that over the years, many progressive formations have criticized civility, reason, and even science (it lies, it falsifies data, it serves establishment interests, it is corrupted, etc.); they have attacked the state—questioning the ability of representative democracy to solve our collective problems—and even the broader "establishment," both

of which inevitably actualize various forms of oppression.[4] Now we condemn others for doing what we have done.

We forget that since the 1930s—and probably longer—but especially since the 1960s, progressive formations—have accused the media of constantly lying (so it is somewhat surprising to find ourselves defending the very same media, because they are simply saying things we agree with this time around).[5] What we ridicule today as the absurdity of "alternative facts" or of statements such as "Everyone has their own way of interpreting whether a fact was true or not" may signal not merely the continuing presence of domestic propaganda, but the more frightening possibility that the right has learned the lessons of social constructionism. After all, these "ridiculous" statements could come straight out of popular readings of Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Consider Karl Rove's infamous claim that "We're an empire now and when we act, we create our own reality . . . We're history's actors and you, all of you [journalists, academics, etc.] will be left to just study what we do."[6] While the intellectual left has argued about social constructionism and its apparent relativism, with some defending the need to hold onto notions of truth as the representation of some objective reality, the right has been taking constructionism more seriously, if only as a strategic gamble. Many intellectuals who defended social constructionism against absolutist notions of Truth and the pretense of science have abandoned their arguments because they failed to see the different ends to which it could be appropriated. They retreat into a simple, unproblematic faith that "The truth, compellingly told, is enough."[7] What follows then is that either we are failing to speak compellingly, or the people who do not accede to the truth as we see it are . . . what? . . . idiots, weak-minded, evil?

We forget that many contemporary struggles were being fought in the 1960s, and that many of the feelings being expressed today were expressed in the 1960s. I would recommend taking an aural excursion through the soundtrack of the times (starting perhaps with Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction" and Country Joe's "Who am I?," going through Simon and Garfunkel's "My Little Town," and stopping along the way at the many musical expressions of hopelessness and despair

and the coming social catastrophe and abandonment). We forget (or at best selectively remember) the histories of tactics of resistance and practices of organization and end up repeating efforts with little critical consideration of their effectiveness in the past. This does not mean that there are not significant differences but that we must do the work that will enable us to see them.

A better knowledge of our own history may be the precondition for more imagination and more humility. I don't mean to say that what is going on is simply the same thing as the 1960s; for some things are different, some relations have changed: for example, considering "truth" claims and the problem of fake news. As I have suggested, the media have often been accused of lying by the left, but new technological affordances and capitalist investments have resulted in the glaring monetization—at the state, corporate and individual levels of what might be thought of as domestic propaganda; it has been publicly appropriated by those who seek to polarize and fracture the political field in ways that undermine the ability to establish consent across already established social and political feelings and allegiances; it has exploded through the field of social media; and beyond politics, it has become the common currency of many everyday relations. But without such careful consideration and the strategizing it allows, the forces for progressive change can easily look, at best, inconsistent and at worst hypocritical. After all, it is difficult to hide the fact that in many instances, the left is now defending the very institutions and practices that it had previously rejected. Such misuses and misrecognitions of history make it much harder to tell the kinds of stories and formulate the kinds of strategies we need.

The Temptations of Simplicity

These problems are further magnified when progressive intellectuals allow themselves to be seduced into simplifications; the alternative, however, is not (simply) to give in to the chaos that threatens to accompany complexity. Every story, every diagnosis, every political intervention, has to find that sweet spot between simplicity and

complexity, a way to manage the chaos. If we give up on the task, we allow the seductions of simplicity to let us off the hook of doing the work we need to do.

Too often, for example, we reduce the economic field to some single, magical description, the most common of which is "neoliberalism," which covers over many differences. It points to a number of related but distinct developments: the expansion of markets and market logics; structural adjustment policies; privatization of public goods and services; free market ideology; and deregulation, globalization, monetarism, the entrance of academics into state policy, etc.[8] But what exactly is "neoliberalism" describing? Is it a description of the everyday economic realities of the nation? (I don't think so.) Is it a tendency? An ideology? A national policy program or an international one? It has been applied to social relations, cultural forms, the production of subjects, and just about everything else under the sun. Neoliberalism as a concept or even worse, as a description, makes the critic's life too easy by assuming, on the one hand, that discourse and projects determine actuality and, on the other hand, that there is an equivalence, or at least a necessary relation, among all the different elements. Such economic simplifications are often linked to efforts to describe, in equally singular and simple terms, the contemporary political economy as plutocracy (a politics determined by wealth), oligarchy, and corporatocracy.[9] At the same time, the academic literature is replete with efforts to identify the leading edge of a new, emergent capitalist formation—cognitive capitalism, biocapitalism, finance capitalism, smart capitalism, affective capitalism.

The seductiveness of simplicity is even more consequential when we consider how we engage and manage the chaos of the political field. The easy way is to accept the dominant political common sense—also a political project—that sees it divided into two camps, making politics into a "war of maneuver" between two armies: Us versus Them, each seeking total victory.[10] Each camp is always confident about who can belong: as the Black Panthers famously put it, if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.[11] And insofar as any populist politics is structured by the opposition between "the people" and "the establishment"—even if "the people" is constructed rather than assumed,

it reproduces the unpassable frontier that irrevocably separates the two sides.

What if, instead, we reimagine the political field as an ongoing effort to create temporary alliances, fragile unities in-difference, organized around particular substantive struggles, with the enemies themselves being defined and located specifically in relation to each struggle. This view sees politics as the ongoing construction of ecologies of belonging. There is no single frontier between them and us, no absolute judgment of participants. In this model, what Gramsci called a war of positions, politics is the vital effort to organize the many diverse, fractured, and even contradictory positions, commitments and identities of people, recognizing that political, economic, social and cultural issues are not intrinsically, necessarily connected in advance or even in the same way in every struggle. People find allies where they can, often in unexpected places. A war of positions recognizes that people hold many, often contradictory positions, and therefore, they can and are likely to move across many different alliances.[12]

I am not denying that a major strategy in contemporary politics—whether intentionally or not—is to construct the field as a war of maneuver, to create a distribution which is not only defined by Us and Them, but to make this simple difference into the primary determination of political struggle. But I think it is important to recognize that the difference is often constructed emotionally, precisely the result of eliciting and configuring the very sorts of passions with which I began this essay, and articulated to ideological positions after the fact. And while progressives may have to start with "the fact" of such polarization, the best strategies for creating better futures may not involve simply accepting it as the inevitable truth of politics and the final configuration of political struggles.

While there is no doubt some truth in such descriptions, it may be that we are contributing to too simple constructions of order on top of the disorganization, even chaos, of contemporary life. It is only when we start by embracing the contradictions and multiplicity—a multiplicity that is always being reconfigured as a result of various forces and struggles—that we can begin to seriously engage with

contemporary realities. It is only then that we can make visible and begin to comprehend the active and effective contradictions that pose significant challenges to contemporary efforts to change the world. To offer one small example: the question of the relation between economic and social justice become more difficult when one begins to acknowledge that some sectors of capitalism are among the strongest proponents and agents of multiculturalism and other progressive values. Even the most cursory glance at mainstream corporate-sponsored and corporate-produced popular media would give one the impression of a successful multicultural society. Current managerial theory has—at least on the surface—changed the social configuration of corporate cultures, and many corporations (but certainly not all, or perhaps not even a majority) have explicitly acted in support of various social justice movements and ideas. I am not suggesting that corporations are our best allies, or that the forms of progressive values ("woke capitalism") they embrace are adequate, but it does mean that our task is more difficult—it is not a matter of friends and enemies, but of the possibilities of forming (temporary) alliances in a war of position.

Who Wants Identity?

The tendency to simplify the messiness of social life perhaps finds its most enduring expression when we think about the nature of social identities and their relations to political subjectivities. Increasingly, both the right and significant fractions of the left treat them as singular, coherent, and somehow inscribed in the very body of individuals. This concept of identity prepares the ground for the continuing power of binary thinking, on both the right and the left, and clears the ground for the operation of an "identitarian" politics.[13] Let me be very clear because I know I am walking on thin ice here. I am not suggesting that matters of social differentiation and social justice are not crucial, that they should be put aside or relegated to a secondary position. The problem is that, all too often, difference slides into a clarion call for identity, which is almost always understood to be defined by some essence, whether geographical origin, blood and genetics, skin color and physical features, or shared

experience, legitimating moral certainties, political absolutisms and zero
tolerance.[14] Identity becomes the first and primary ground on which a
war of maneuver is constructed.

Just as the political field can be and has been structured into stable,
and stably-defined opposing camps, so too the fields of social differences
are structured by particular social forces and alliances, and used to
organize particular forms of social inequality, oppression, and suffering,
and to produce forms of hatred: racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-
Semitism, ageism . . . the list goes on and on. That is the nature of the
dominant logic of difference and identity. This is, as Gilroy (2000) has
argued, precisely what the different forms of racism (or sexism, etc.)
do: they manufacture differences and distribute populations, creating
the very categories and material realities that they use to establish
inequalities.[15] That is, political identities are the result of political forces
of oppression and inequality. Race is the product of racism. So, how do
we contest and oppose the organizations of social difference that found
and legitimate essentialized identities, social inequalities, and forms of
inhumanity, brutality, and violence? How do we fight against forms of
suffering that have no necessity and no legitimacy outside their own
efforts to organize the field of difference?

The challenge has become even greater since the rise of various
reactionary rights and the increasing visibility of ethnic and racial
supremacisms. The understandably impassioned response to the rising
tide of racisms, sexisms, and other forms of hatred has, too often, not
just reaffirmed a polarizing—binary and essentialized—politics of
identity; it has often too quickly shaped a complex and contradictory
field of relations in terms of privilege and victimage. This has resulted
in both racist and anti-racist politics defined by a valorization of the
personal feelings of suffering, fear, discomfort, etc., of the victim, an
unquestionable politics of certainty that is grounded in experiences and
feelings. But I would suggest that the very experiences and feelings at
stake, and not only the identities, are the result of political struggles.
That is, such identity politics (and the hatreds, phobias, and resentment
that accompany them) are not simply the "liberation" of such negative
feelings, but the re-articulations of the anger and frustration that people

feel in the face of the collapse of established systems of social difference and hierarchy, and the disintegration of visions of a more equitable and positive future—for themselves and their children. Thus, for example, we have to recognize that xenophobic and nationalist feelings do not necessarily "belong" to the reactionary right. The image of the possibility of reconstructing older forms of group solidarity and antagonism may be less a desire for forms of authoritarian and reactionary regimes than the only position on offer promising to lead people out of the chaos, to take seriously people's fears and angers in the face of an overwhelming sense of uncertainties and, increasingly, despair.

This re-invigorated politics of essentialist notions of identity—based on a move from "the personal is political" to "the political is personal"—creates an impossible, comparative politics of suffering, where we have to develop a calculus of whose suffering matters, and whose is worse, and then, figure out how different degrees of suffering (actually knowable only to the one who suffers) translate into political priorities. While being "woke" to—conscious of—the suffering of others is crucial to imagining other futures, all too often, its most common and visible tactics are either symbolic (including marches) or personal, the latter involving the performance of shaming and humiliation (ending up in "cancel culture" in which all of a person's accomplishments are rejected and erased in the face of what are judged to be egregious past sins). But how much do such practices change the structural forces and formations, which, over time, have become institutional norms producing specific racisms? I wonder whether a politics of feeling simply continues the failures of the past, driving unacceptable feelings underground, trying to build structural change on invocations of guilt and the impossibility of forgiveness for or redemption from past "sins."

The reduction of politics to experiences and feelings, which are located in pre-given identities, and the moral certainty that grounds it, have a number of further consequences. It not only denies the need for and possibility of a pedagogy within political struggle; it denies that such educative efforts demand that people engage with some of those they want to change. It also apparently absolves the "victim" of any responsibility to engage with intellectual or strategic disagreement

and dissenting experiences, which are all reduced to expressions of privilege. And privilege itself is seen as a simple property, rather than an often-contradictory articulation of complex social relations, necessarily belonging to particular (dominant) identities. The result is that, apparently, people cannot understand and oppose suffering without having experienced it, in its particularity, themselves. And apparently, one cannot assume either the goodwill of those standing in other positions, or the value of the experiences and knowledge attached to them.

The foundation of such essentialized identity politics lies in moral certainty and leads to a polarized war of maneuver and an absolutist (albeit often inconsistently applied) definition of belonging. While it may be connected with other similarly defined struggles, it usually poses a set of litmus tests as the price of admission, with little room for the multiplicity, inconsistency and imperfection of actual lives. At the same time, there is little room for humility, for the recognition of its own contradictions and inconsistencies.

This re-invigorated essentialism easily renders all forms of racism equivalent, universalizing the charge of white supremacism. It has even sometimes embraced a reactionary tendency to conflate racism, ethnocentrism and xenophobia, simplifying and limiting the field of transformative struggles. At times, various immigrant groups have been represented in racist iconographies and discourses (despite the fact that they may have been "white"), but this does not make them equivalent organizations of difference and power.[16] They each have long but different histories, and they each may, at different times, be grounded in different fears and different organizations of power. But the politics of racism, ethnocentrism and xenophobia need to be disarticulated: each may depend on different calculations and fears, each may create different fields of opposition and struggle.

I am asking how we can do a politics of difference differently, at least more effectively in the present context. Such essential identities may feel real, and they do have real consequences in people's lives. The question is whether they provide the best foundation for thinking and enacting political change. The question is, to paraphrase Audre Lorde,

whether one can use the master's tools to tear down the master's house. Alternatively, I am suggesting, following Stuart Hall, that we think about how such relations are constructed, represented and deployed—both in the dominant relations of institutional power and everyday life, and in the forms of opposition that we raise against these.[17] I am suggesting that we start with the extraordinarily complicated distributions and expressions of widely varied and discordant experiences and feelings not only across populations but even more importantly, within individuals, constituting identities that are fractured, contradictory, and processual.

If we were to refuse such essentialized politics of feelings and moral certainty, we might consider the possibility of constructing the contemporary field of difference as a war of positions; after all, the field of social differences is itself an articulation of and by the broader field of political relations: differences are always multiple, relational and fluid, constructed in social relations, institutional structures and material forms of embodiment, as well as in the many discourses we speak and that speak to us. It is out of this entangled field—comprised of multiple, often contradictory, relations and discourses, that identities are constructed by us and for us. As a result, every identity is itself syncretic or hybridized. This is not merely saying that every individual exists at the intersection of various identities, each of which has its own stable content. It means that no claim of identity, no effort to construct equivalences and distribute populations, has a stable, fixed content. There is only hybridity all the way up or down, in every direction as it were. It follows that there is no necessary or guaranteed relation between constructed identities, experiences, or political positions. Consequently, there is no necessary and guaranteed way of constructing differences within a population nor is there such a way of organizing these differences into "identities."

This would also demand, at the very least, that we recognize that there is no singular racism, that there are always multiple and changing forms of racism, and that they are always historically and contextually specific. We need to differentiate them because they each demand different forms of resistance and struggle, different tactics. Universal condemnation may feel good, but it offers little in the way of a viable politics of transformation. We need to ask where we draw

the line, where we declare the limit of engagement to be. When can we no longer engage with the other? White supremacism, certainly. Overt, conscious racism, perhaps. But what about the various forms of everyday racisms, what Stuart Hall called inferential racisms, unreflective, unintentional, unnoticed, habitual, racisms—practices and attitudes the racist roots and even connotations of which have long been lost as they have come to occupy the collective spaces of common sense. Or the racism of unknowing ignorance—whether as a result of the lack of any actual experience or of media messages?[18] For that matter, when and how do we deal with the pervasiveness—but also the complexity, the contradictions—of racisms (sexisms, etc.) in popular culture and the media? What about those who evince an indifference to racial justice? Or the refusal to feel responsible for the consequences of structures one did not create and does not approve of? Is the fact that one unintentionally, and perhaps even unknowingly, benefits from racist distributions of power and resources sufficient to declare someone a racist? On the other hand, how do we get people to confront the fact that the very tolerance of explicit and extreme forms of racism (even if one tries to distance oneself from them) lends succor to them and cannot be accepted?[19] And how do we analyze the many ways these different practices of racism are related to, expressed in and reified into the various forms of systemic and structural racisms? How do we move beyond a politics of recognition and representation, given the impossibility of any claim to represent "the people" or the multiplicity of peoples, including their many different needs and sufferings, their struggles to survive, and their dreams of change? What sort of politics do we need to put in its place, or at least, to supplement existing possibilities?

These are all matters of thinking and analysis but they are, just as importantly, questions of strategies: if we are fighting a war of positions, if we are engaging in a long-term struggle to make the future (and perhaps the present) otherwise, we have to critically examine our tactics, to ask whether they are likely to accomplish our long-term goals or at least set us a bit further along the path, whether they have worked in the past, and whether we are undermining the possibilities of educating and moving those not already with us, and of creating new productive alliances.

Culture Matters!

This leads me to my final concern: Culture matters! If my previous arguments questioned the assumptions and practices of progressive struggles, this is about the substance and locus of our critical attention. Unfortunately, the right has always taken culture seriously, from Edmund Burke in the eighteenth century, to William Buckley in the 1960s and 70s, to Paul Weyrich's statement that "politics itself has failed . . . because of the collapse of culture" and finally, to the famous *Breitbart* headline in the new millennium that "politics is downstream from culture."[20] The right understands that the political revolution they have envisioned demands that they change the culture.[21]

Yet, for the most part, the left has either ignored culture, treated it as false consciousness ("ideology'), or reduced it to rather simplistic reflections of identity. For example, returning for a moment to questions of identity, Gilroy argues that the forms of ethnic absolutism he has criticized often equate political and cultural identities, and assume that there is a necessary, guaranteed relation between them, so that cultural expressions are necessarily attached to political identities and anti-racist political struggles are equated with the celebration of forms of cultural expression.[22]

Stuart Hall, perhaps the leading cultural theorist of our time, recognized that culture and ideology—systems and productions of meaning and representation—were both more significant, more complicated and more productive than usually assumed. But he also observed that taking culture seriously meant recognizing its historical contingency, its contextuality, and its complexity. It meant understanding it as a rich, multi-dimensional field, as the locus of the discursive production of the lived. And as the place of culture became ever more important and powerful in modern societies, thinking about how you change (a) culture had become a crucial question for political struggle.

For example, when Hall and his colleagues predicted the rise of the new right in Britain in the 1980s (Thatcherism) as partly the result of strategies aiming to re-articulate a series of crises and problems facing the nation, and depended on winning people to vote not against their

own interests (the traditional Marxist view of false consciousness) but against their apparent political commitments (beliefs, even ideologies), he expanded the concept of culture.[23] He argued that Thatcherism did not seek ideological consensus (the normal understanding of hegemony) but instead fought a hegemonic struggle to win the population's consent to lead the nation. And the question of consent led him to rethink notions of the popular, which he argued was comprised of common sense (a contradictory and even inchoate collection of beliefs, "truths," and assumptions without any inventory, that is, without any record of where they came from or how they were originally conceived and legitimated,) everyday languages and the logics people use to calculate their choices.

The effort to understand contemporary politics, and to formulate an alternative, opens yet another set of cultural questions—about affect, which can be thought of as the intensities that give depth and texture to our experiences; they are what make our lives "lived." Thinking about affect forces us to acknowledge that peoples' lives are organized by more than maps of meaning and systems of representation, more than ideology and common sense. The ways we encounter and experience the socio-natural world are as much defined by different types and organizations of "feelings." Unfortunately, we often reduce such affective dimensions to emotion and talk about it as if it was always individual, unstructured, irrational, and yet, guaranteed. When we talk about the use of emotion in contemporary politics, it is as if the fear, anger, rage and outrage somehow appear as the spontaneous response to circumstances. Or we are seduced into the simplicities of materialisms—ontologies, biologisms, etc.—that offer little in the way of political insight (what's going on) or hope (how we get out of this place).

Whether consciously or not, whether through intellection or the development of technological capacities, both the conservative right and the reactionary right seem more attuned to the possibilities, even necessities, of affective politics. The latter in particular has understood that affect is more complicated, that different affective relations to particular elements, events and structures have to be called into existence and organized, and that they can be reshaped and reconfigured. Even more importantly, the right has understood that affects are not politically

guaranteed (as if particular emotions were always and already delivered over to particular political positions); they can be connected to different political positions and identities. These constructions and articulations of affect, a form of cultural politics that is anything but irrational, are increasingly where political commitments and identities are formed. Affect has become both a condition of and a resource for political struggle.

While not meaning to separate affect and meaning, passion and reason, I do think the left faces an urgent task: it must recognize that just as politics—and any specific political or ideological position or struggle—is always located in material and ideological fields of struggle, contemporary politics are increasingly determined by changing affective landscapes, which are constructed, contingent and complex. If affective landscapes define the "key"—as in music, the historically changing "key of life"—in which life is lived, and provide the energy and vitality of political struggle, and the directions and limits of political possibility, we need to know more about how they can be changed. We need to recognize the variety of ways in which affects are organized and expressed: including emotions, moods, consent, identifications, care, attention, etc. But we also need to understand how these expressions are constructed, organized, mobilized and located on the broader field of an affective landscape. For example, Raymond Williams introduced "structures of feeling;" Gilroy and others have talked about ecologies or geographies of belonging, and I have, in previous works, used the notion of mattering maps.[24] There is still much work to be done.

Consider the utility of a concept of mattering maps for understanding what's going on in the contemporary U.S. Let me offer two examples. Consider the narcissistic nationalism that Trump and his reactionary allies construct.[25] While the nationalism of post-war ("new right") conservatism was often about specifying the common "creed" that defined "America," the reactionary right's America is semantically empty. It understands that nations are not just imagined communities (as Benedict Anderson argued) but more importantly, affective communities. There is no creed; nationalism is defined only by the primacy and intensity of one's investment in being "American." One's identity as an American

must exist before and above all other identifications, if one is to be an American. Anyone who does not put their American-ness first ("America first") is therefore, by definition, not an American. Those who would argue that it is just as important that they are black, or women, or Latino, or gay or whatever, are actually excluding themselves because America is not front and center on their mattering map. Hence, the politics of this form of patriotism is not necessarily racist (it depends on whether one's race is more important than one's nationality), which does not deny that it can be and has been articulated to racisms, but it is, almost inevitably, xenophobic. The immigrant is, by definition, not American and therefore, in a wonderful inversion of logic, not one who puts America first.

Or consider the problem of knowledge and truth. I have already talked about this historically and theoretically, but now I want to ask the question in affective terms. Why do people believe Trump's lies? Is it that they are simply stupid, or completely duped by the media, or somehow evil? What if the issue is not a matter of belief but of what matters? What if the question of truth does not matter to them? It is not that they cannot distinguish between lies and truth but that the difference is not significant to them. Nietzsche thought that European modernity was driven by the will to truth. Given the reactionary right's widespread opposition to modernity, does it not stand to reason that they would not care about truth or even reason? If truth is nothing but an affective performance, one can decide not to care about it.

Conclusions

In conclusion, I want to make some suggestions. First, progressive forces should move, strategically, from a war of maneuvers to a war of positions; they should refuse to accept the binary polarization of politics and enter upon a field of relations, movements and distances, a field that they construct through their very actions. On this field, they can create temporary communities of struggle, and imagine new forms of identity, organization and unity that embrace and enable difference and heterogeneity, without succumbing to chaos. Returning to my opening query, the concept of a unity-in-difference is built upon a relational logic,

which opens up a necessary dialectic between the parochial and the planetary. Following Meaghan Morris, I want to reimagine parochialism as a future-oriented pedagogy constitutive of hope. Parochialism is a matter of learning how to tell the "stories we do not yet know how to write," offering a new model of social agency; it is a matter of the capacity to make connections, to imagine affinities. Parochialism involves "modes of involvement in neighborhoods of thought and practices," and the affective capacity to relate to "cultural strangers." Rather than being opposed to the cosmopolitan, the parochial becomes "a portable way of dwelling."[26]

The openness, mobility and hopefulness of the parochial enables me to articulate it not against the global but towards the planetary, evoking Gilroy's invocation of Fanon's and Césaire's efforts to "re-enchant" humanism, to reach for a new planetary humanism, embodied in new, "more complex and compelling ecologies of belonging," built on humanity's shared capacity for suffering (fragility, vulnerability) and solicitude (a shared capacity for caring and growth).[27] This "disalienation of humanity" (in Fanon's felicitous phrase) requires a "decisive change of orientation," involving ethical and political adjustments that "could not proceed without a change in the consciousness of time and significant adjustments to the threshold of contemporaneity."[28] It demands a utopian imagination that is both politically abstract and personally concrete. That is, there is a dialectic, each being the condition of possibility of the other, between a re-imagined parochialism and a planetary humanism.

Second, this dialectic is not simply spatial; it is also temporal. That is, it demands that we re-imagine the very nature of—and the relation between—the present (as already encompassing the present-past and the present-future) and the temporal unity-in-difference that is both the transcendental condition of possibility of the present, and its transcendent possibility. One immediate consequence of such a temporal dialectic is that we should not give in entirely to the urgent immediacy of political struggle, however important it may be to fight some of the short-term struggles. "We want the world and we want it now" is not a very good principle for political transformation and social change. The struggles to re-imagine and reconstruct the realities of modern

social life will—and should—take time, for they will need the time to make mistakes, recognize them, and make the necessary changes in its strategies and directions. The revolutionary impulses of insurgency are useful starting points, but it is not revolutions that have changed the world, at least not in the immediacy of their efforts. It is the long-term struggles and changes that they set in motion, and the people who enter these struggles and take up the banners after the originary moment, that make a difference.

Third, we should seek a "popular" politics rather than a populist politics, a politics that starts where people are, recognizing that they are likely in many different places at different times and in relation to different needs, hopes and desires.[29] A popular politics cannot be primarily about policies, partly because our problems seem to overwhelm the capacities of the contemporary state, as well as of participatory decision-making, group-thinking, and crowd-sourcing, but also because in the contemporary context, policies are likely to set us up for failure, especially since the right will not go away and will not give up. Still, it has to offer practical ideas about how to accomplish social and political changes. It has to reimagine—reinvent—the state as a complex assemblage of political agencies, even as it reaches out for new understandings of democracy.

This will have to be a struggle in which culture leads politics, involving not only battles over ideologies, common sense, identities and subjectivities, but also on the terrain of affect. It will involve imagining affect in other than the instrumentalist terms of marketing or targeted political messaging (e.g., Cambridge Analytica). It will, to paraphrase Eve Sedgewick, stop telling people what they should feel and begin to figure out what they do feel, and how we might go about trying to change such feelings. That means asking different sorts of questions: How do people consent (e.g., to Trump) given that there are many forms and degrees of consent? What are they consenting to? How have conspiracy theories been mainstreamed, shorn of their paranoid auras? What do people hear or feel when confronting actions or statements we find repugnant? How are particular observations—e.g., the state has failed to keep its promises—articulated to different political affects, such as apathy, rage,

or resolve? How have policies of restorative justice (e.g., affirmative action) been reconstructed as "unfounded" assertions of blame? How have demands for self-criticism and a commitment to change been made into an expression of moral superiority? How has the right invoked passionate investments in the very things it is constructing?[30]

A popular politics does not start off by judging or blaming people, because its effort is to move them, to win them closer to one's own vision of the future. It is an educative project, in which one's own visions, one's own certainties, have to be put at risk as well, for the encounter with other people has to at least have the possibility of changing your position as well. One has to be willing to admit that one could—and actually may—be wrong, in a context in which there is little incentive to do so.

Only in this way can the left find more effective tactics to respond otherwise to such threats as performances of racism and xenophobia, the increasing militarization of society, and the willing alliances of conservatives with white supremacists and neo-fascists. In the end, it will have to re-imagine the possibility of changing the affective landscape itself. But all of this is only possible if we do not allow morality to slide into certainty, which negates the very possibility of disagreement, conversation and education. Whatever moralities provide the ground for one's politics, these should not be allowed to fall back into simplicity, absolutism, puritanism, and almost inevitably, hypocrisy. What does a morality performed humbly and self-reflectively look like?

Finally, I have to say that, in the end, I am, like many people around me, pessimistic about the future, but perhaps for different reasons. As I have tried to argue, I think the most basic crisis we face is a crisis of thinking (aimed against the rule of certainty). As Heidegger suggested, "The most thought-provoking thing in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking," although I doubt he would have approved of how I am using him here. I have little faith that the political and intellectual lefts, especially in the U.S., are capable of thinking beyond its own certainties, of abandoning habits forged over decades, even centuries, or of moving beyond a politics defined by the immediacy, the urgency and self-righteousness of anger, outrage and revenge. These are the deep questions that remain unanswered. But still I go on; I hold to

my faith in the power of thinking and intellectual conversations. I hold on to the possibility that we can tell better stories, change the culture, and together realize the other worlds that are possible. Intellectuals of the world unite . . .

Notes

[1] I am drawing upon my empirical and interpretive analyses of U.S. political culture and its relation to popular ideologies (common sense) and sentiments. See Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992); *Caught in the Crossfire: Kids, Politics and America's Future* (Boulder: Paradigm Books, 2005); *Under the Cover of Chaos: Trump and the Battle for the American Right* (London: Pluto, 2018); "Pessimism of the Will, Optimism of the intellect," *Cultural Studies* 32, no. 6 (2018): 855-88 as well as *We All Want to Change the World: The Paradox of the U.S. Left(A POLEMIC)*, https://www.lwbooks.co.uk/sites/default/files/free-book/we_all_want_to_change_the_world.pdf

[2] Such forces include the various transformations of economic relations across multiple sectors (especially changes in finance capitalism and the resurgence of logistical and extraction economies) and the growing radical disparities of wealth and well-being, the rise of new forms of conservatism culminating in the re-articulation of forms of popular reactionary politics built on racist, sexist and ultranationalist appeals, the rise of authoritarian populisms and the increasing militarization of both international relations and everyday life, the technological and economic reconstruction of media and culture, changing necessities and patterns of migration, threats of ecological disasters, etc. These changes have highlighted the failures of many euro-modern and post-war forms of liberal and colonial capitalism and representative democracy, the legal protections of equality and justice, and the faith in progress.

[3] Lawrence Grossberg, "This Is Not an Essay about Trump," *Soundings* 73 (2019): 38-55.

[4] Feminists were particularly articulate in their attacks on civility, as even a cursory Internet search will reveal.

[5] One might revisit Herb Schiller's famous video reading *New York Times*, or remember Vietnam and Cambodia, or the Iraq Wars. One might even refer to Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1963).

[6] See Karl Rove's comment in Ron Suskind, "Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush," *New York Times Magazine*, October 17, 2004.

[7] Mark Hertsgaard, "How to Fight Fox and Friends," *Nation*, March 3, 2019.

[8] While many of these developments are laid on the shoulders of the Austrian liberals, especially Friedrich Hayek, it is clearly not a Hayekian program since

Hayek defined free markets not by deregulation but by competition. He insisted that governments had to regulate economies in order to produce and sustain markets and to maintain competition. It was the Chicago school of economics, primarily Milton Friedman, who brought a highly conservative interpretation of Hayek to the U.S. For a critique of neoliberalism, see Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

[9] The latter raise questions about the changing nature of the corporate form (with its increasing claims of "citizenship"), and the changing role of corporations (as they increasingly take over functions of the state). Thanks to Megan Wood and Andrew Davis.

[10] It is odd how often we fall back into binary thinking, despite the fact that we often criticize it: party politics versus movement politics, vertical versus horizontal, authoritarian versus democratic, homogeneity versus heterogeneity, organization versus anarchy, dominant versus subjugated, privileged versus victim.

[11] Ironically, while Gramsci rejected such a politics, many theorists—including such stalwart Gramscians as Laclau and Mouffe, in their theory of the hegemonic frontier—have reread Gramsci through the work of the fascist political theorist Carl Schmitt. Yet there are significant similarities—as well as significant differences—between the cultural studies' perspective I am advocating here, and the work of Chantal Mouffe—especially her concept of an agonistic democracy.

[12] John Clarke and Janet Newman, "What's the Subject? Brexit and Politics as Articulation," *Journal of Community Applied Social Psychology* 29 (2016): 67-77.

[13] While this term is often ascribed to (and by) elements of the reactionary right, I use it here to identify politics built on the absolute primacy of identities, and which treat identity in rather simple binary terms.

[14] My friend Meaghan Morris has always argued that "identity politics" is an American export. She does not mean that questions of social difference originated in or are somehow only appreciated in the U.S. She means that only in the U.S. do we tend to reduce such complicated heterogeneous matters to simple notions of identity.

[15] Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[16] Even those elements of the reactionary right who talk about a coming race war often (intentionally?) conflate multiple conflicts: civilizational or cultural conflicts, economic conflicts (North/South), and ethnic/nationalist conflicts, and racial conflicts.

[17] Stuart Hall, *The Fateful Triangle: Race Ethnicity Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017).

[18] The racism of the media has to be understood not only in terms of stereotypes but in terms of the cultural production of identities in representation. One might also point to ways the media continue to produce a sense of the world as more dangerous, more threatening, than "the facts" would justify. The media—especially but not only in journalism, do construct a world in which we are surrounded by an almost infinite

number of threats.

[19] This is a serious problem about the all-too-common identification of the critique of Israel's policies with anti-Zionism (which, in some of its forms, would seem to deny the right of a Jewish homeland), and anti-Semitism. While I do not agree with the easy ascription of anti-Semitism to critics of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and its treatment of Palestinians, I do think that too many critics of Israel do seem willing, whether intentionally or not, to allow themselves to be articulated to more anti-Semitic sentiments even if they do not hold them. They attack others for similar metonymic relations but apparently, excuse themselves.

[20] Paul M. Weyrich, "Letter to Conservatives by Paul M. Weyrich," *National Center for Public Policy Research*, February 16, 1999, https://nationalcenter.org/ncppr/1999/02/16/letter-to-conservatives-by-paul-m-weyrich/; Lawrence Meyers, "Politics Really Is Downstream from Culture," *Breitbart*, August 22, 2011, https://www.breitbart.com/entertainment/2011/08/22/politics-really-is-downstream-from-culture/.

[21] There is another strand of conservatism that sees the fundamental crisis of our society in social terms, often referring back to Alexis de Toqueville. In such views, our crisis is one of loneliness and social isolation, the absence of those voluntary associations and communities that would have traditionally served as resources for social support. David Brooks, for example, wonders whether "economic anxiety is now downstream from and merged with sociological, psychological and spiritual decay." See David Brooks, "It's Not the Economy, Stupid," *New York Times*, November 29, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/29/opinion/american-economy-working-class.html.

[22] For example, in recent debates in the U.S., cultural experiences and expressions have become possessions to be protected from the improper appropriations of those not authorized to claim "ownership," i.e., those who do not have the identity.

[23] Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

[24] I have also suggested other concepts, including structured mobilizations, affective magnets, epidemics and billboards.

[25] I have discussed this notion as part of my efforts to analyze the "affective landscape" of the political culture of the U.S. See my two publications from 2018 for details. As one reviewer pointed out, this is no doubt partly linked to the change in American foreign policy, from an effort to impose American values on the world and a commitment to global stability, to an expression of American "greatness" through continuous warfare.

[26] Meaghan Morris, "The Man from Hong Kong in Sydney," in *Imagining Australia; Literature and Culture in the New, New World*, eds. Judith Ryan and Chris Wallace-Crabbe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 235-66.

[27] See both Gilroy, *Against Race,* and "The Tanner Lectures on Human Values" (lecture, Yale University, February 21, 2014), https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/Gilroy%20manuscript%20PDF.pdf. I would distinguish this argument from a politics of empathy.

[28] Cf. Gilroy, *Against Race*, 336.

[29] Populist policies can often appear as simply a "better deal" rather than as real change, but they often fail to consider the complexities of the problems they purport to address e.g., the inequalities of higher education.

[30] In an incident in New York, a lawyer verbally attacked two restaurant workers for speaking Spanish. Instead of shaming him on social media as a racist, might it not have been more broadly effective to use affective tactics to remind people that their grandparents (or great-grandparents) similarly spoke their native tongue when they emigrated and, in many cases, continued to speak it to each throughout their lives? Can we not imagine powerful affective appeals aimed at Republicans and even Trump supporters, asking whether they are so desperate to hold onto power that they are willing to hand over the country to fascists, the very people that their grandparents ("the greatest generation") fought to defeat and to keep out of the U.S., the very sort of people the principled conservatives like Russell Kirk and William Buckley renounced? Might we find ways of splitting the right, of turning them against each other?